

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE: October 1, 2009

Policy #: SSA # 10-13

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors of Social Services
Local Department of Social Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White, Executive Director, Social Services
Administration 

RE: Transitional Planning for Youth- Benchmarks

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Permanency) and
Transitioning Youth Services

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Child Welfare Practice & Policy

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Core areas of service to be provided to foster youth

ACTION DUE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Ramelmeier, Director
Child Welfare Practice & Policy
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Background

Transition from adolescence to adulthood is often complex and complicated. Many youth, particularly those in the state's care, need extra assistance in order to successfully navigate this path. To help address some of the unmet needs of foster youth, specific strategies and action steps needed to be developed to assist youth in meeting their goals.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to provide local departments with a comprehensive plan of action that focuses on preparing 14-21 year olds as they transition to adulthood.

Transitional planning for youth shall begin at age 14. The plan shall include: the agreed upon steps to be taken to meet the goals; the youth's responsibility for aspects of the plan; the responsibility of the agency and other persons who shall assist the youth to accomplish those steps; the date of the plan; the date when the plan was reviewed or updated; and signatures of the youth, DSS representatives, and other participants responsible for the plan and activities. The Ansell-Casey Assessment Tool shall also be administered to youth, on a yearly basis, beginning at age 14.

During the course of transitional planning, it is the responsibility of the caseworker to ensure that the youth has acquired skills and has overcome barriers to completing school, obtaining and maintaining gainful employment, finding adequate and affordable housing, financial literacy, identifying family/friend support, self care, and accessing health and mental health care.

The caseworker shall ensure that the core areas of service, in the transitional plan, are reviewed and have been achieved by the youth. In order to ensure this, the caseworker shall be aware of the youth's level of learning. The Casey Family's Life Skills Guidebook identified four levels of learning: Awareness; Knowledge & Understanding; Knows How; and, Can or is Able to. Level one, awareness, focuses on the youth's familiarity with a particular area of service. Level two, knowledge & understanding, focuses on the youth's ability to describe or explain the subject matter being taught. Level three, knows how, refers to the youth's ability to somewhat apply what is learned through instruction. And finally, level four can or is able to do, refers to the youth's ability to apply learned knowledge outside of the teaching environment.

All information shall be recorded in the youth's case record. The core areas of service shall include: Education, Employment, Health/ Mental Health, Housing, Financial Literacy/ Resources, and Family/Friends Support.

EDUCATION	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall begin to participate in life skills classes and begin to acquire skills that are appropriate to his/her functioning level. Youth in every school system understand graduation requirements. Youth shall have basic literacy and numeracy skills (at least 5th grade proficient). If applicable, youth shall have an appropriate identification of special education. If applicable, an appropriate parent surrogate shall be identified for youth. Youth shall begin to obtain the needed student service learning hours towards graduation.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall have a concrete plan detailing how he/she shall complete high school, earn a certificate of program completion, or obtain a GED, which includes specific steps to meet any gaps in required courses. Plans shall be signed by appropriate school personnel, parent, and youth and maintained in school records. Youth shall have an awareness of colleges, trade schools, or technical trainings and what is needed to reach goals. Youth shall have an opportunity to participate in a driver's education program. Youth shall be assisted in obtaining a driver's license or Maryland identification card. Disconnected youth shall have an established re-engagement plan.
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall obtain the necessary student service-learning hours to graduate. Youth shall have a concrete plan for postsecondary education, employment and/or training. All youth shall complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), unless otherwise noted. Transition plans for youth shall include specific educational goals and financial assistance plans. Youth shall understand how to utilize the Maryland Tuition Waiver and/or ETV. Youth shall be enrolled in college, or if not interested in college, youth shall take advantage of vocation programs that allow certifications to be earned. Graduating disabled youth shall understand their service needs and shall receive information on how to access Disability Support Services. Youth shall register to vote and shall understand the voting process.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall have access to postsecondary supportive services (e.g., financial aid, counseling, tutorial). Youth with disabilities exiting school shall be aware and engage with community supports.

EMPLOYMENT	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall obtain a work permit from the school. Youth shall begin to explore career interest.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall receive assistance in the exploration of employment and/or occupational interests and the skills and/or training required for possible fields of interest. Youth shall understand what minimum wage means. Youth shall develop a realistic concept of the type of jobs available to youth. Youth shall explore options for summer youth employment. Youth shall engage in work experience, job shadowing and/or volunteer activities. Youth shall be aware of appropriate attire for job interviews and work. Youth shall understand how to access transportation to and from work.
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall have an opportunity to participate in an internship, externship or volunteer opportunity relevant to a career field of his/her choice. Youth shall understand the opportunities that shall allow him/her to increase employment skills. Youth shall be assisted in developing a resume. Youth shall have had at least two summer jobs by age 18. Youth shall be engaged in planning for employment that shall increase his/her earnings and marketable potential. Youth with special needs shall be educated about the employment transition services and resources available. Youth shall receive assistance in enrolling in any desired occupational skills training.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall continue to maintain progressive, responsible work experience opportunities within their chosen career pathway. Youth shall understand unfair job practices and know how to seek guidance.

HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall participate in sessions on sexual relationships- sexual education that includes forms of birth control, how to practice safe sex, practices to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, and the HIV virus. Youth shall understand the risks associated with drug and alcohol use. Youth shall understand the importance of preventive and routine health care. Youth shall understand the importance of medications and how to use medicine properly. Youth shall identify the providers he/she shall use. Youth shall understand his/her diagnosis. Youth shall be able to communicate his/her needs to the psychiatrist/therapist.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall be provided with information that shall assist him/her in understanding

HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH	
	<p>the importance of medical conditions, family medical history, and how to be responsible with healthy diet and exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall understand the importance of maintaining medical documents. Youth shall be able to identify supports. Youth shall understand safe and healthy relationships (in regards to dating).
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall understand the importance of following through with medical care and appointments. Youth shall be able to ask the doctor questions and obtain information needed to understand his/her health and any existing medical conditions. Youth shall understand the importance of medical insurance and take advantage of obtaining the services needed with their medical insurance. Youth shall be able to identify and utilize community resources. Youth shall understand his/her rights. Disabled youth shall be referred to other programs/services for additional assistance prior to exiting care.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall understand how to obtain medical services after he/she leaves care. Youth shall be aware of health care coverage options if he/she is not insured through the employer. Youth shall understand how to manage any medical condition he/she may have. Youth shall be able to identify the providers he/she shall use for health, dental, and mental health care. Youth shall have his/her updated medical records and psychological/psychiatric evaluation upon exiting care. Youth shall be assisted in applying for medical assistance, if needed.

HOUSING	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall live in an approved safe placement with a caring, competent adult. Youth shall demonstrate the ability to purchase items and understand the purchase process – including cost, sales, tax, and tips.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall be able to go shopping for food, prepare simple food and meals, and safely store food. Youth shall be able to identify a safe haven for short stay housing, if needed. Youth shall begin to acquire necessary household items and caring for them, whether school-based or prepaid.
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall be able to identify possible housing options, if needed, including prospective roommates, subsidized housing, Youth shall have a “safety plan” if current housing fails and assistance with re-engaging with family. Youth shall understand housing history. Youth shall be able to understand tenant rights and tenant- landlord relationships.

HOUSING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall understand the importance of safety and being selective in who is allowed to enter his/her personal space. Youth shall possess the life skills needed to maintain an apartment and make some independent decisions.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall possess the life skills required to maintain housing, with support. Youth shall be prepared for SILA or private vendors that provide independent living in arranged placements. Youth shall have a plan developed that includes a budget and all services needed to maintain an apartment or home. Youth shall have a developed plan for living after foster care.

FINANCIAL LITERACY/RESOURCES	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall have a bank account (savings and/or checking) and understand how to utilize services from the bank. Youth shall demonstrate the ability to purchase items and understand the purchase process – including cost, sales, tax, and tips.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall be able to safely and effectively manage their money; establish alternatives to using check cashing services, payday lending, etc. Youth shall understand basic financial skills – checking/savings, loans/contract/budgets, and credit cards use. Youth shall establish savings goals. Youth shall have a budgeted clothing allowance.
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall have basic knowledge of entitlement programs, qualifications and how to apply/receive assistance with application for SSI (Social Security Insurance), MA (Medical Assistance), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), TCA (Temporary Cash Assistance), WIC (Women, Infants and Children), etc. Youth shall obtain a free credit report. Youth shall understand how to avoid identity theft or correct it. Youth shall understand the benefits of remaining in care until age 21. He/she shall understand the policy, eligibility requirements, and supportive services of After Care Services that he/she can receive if leaving care prior to age 21. Youth shall obtain his/her original birth certificate and social security card.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth shall understand the importance of financial investments. Youth shall maintain a financial cushion. Youth shall understand the need for budgeting funds and shall demonstrate the ability to manage money, and obtain necessary resources. Youth shall understand budget management, priority spending, and the income sources shall be used to supplement his/her expenses. Youth shall be able to maintain a savings account.

FAMILY & FRIENDS SUPPORT	
Age	Benchmarks
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth shall develop an understanding of positive, safe relationships.• Youth shall develop a photo history.• Youth shall be assisted in developing a genogram.
15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth shall identify appropriate, committed adult supports.• Youth shall understand the importance of developing life long relationships with caring adults.
17/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth shall develop a community resources guide.
19-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth shall obtain adequate child-care services, if applicable.• If desired, youth shall learn how to positively develop relationships with his/her family of origin.