



Caring for Youth and Young Adults-A Guide from the
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

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Introduction

Caring for youth and young adults can be both challenging and rewarding. You may become frustrated at their careless mistakes or failure to consider the consequences of their actions, but they can also amaze you with their courage and perseverance. Knowing that you helped a youth evolve into an adult can be joyous and inspiring.

Youth and young adults need a supportive environment where they can learn and practice life skills they will need as they leave care particularly if they are will be staying in care after age 18. Caregivers need to provide information, guidance, and opportunities for these youth and young adults, and help them appreciate their successes and learn from their mistakes.

Helping foster youth grow into successful, independent adults is critical work for DFPS, residential providers, stakeholders, caregivers, advocates, and society at large. Statistics indicate that we need to improve this service to our youth particularly if they are staying in care after age 18. Studies show:

- Within 18 months of emancipation, 50% of foster youth become homeless.
- 54% of foster youth age out of foster care without a high school diploma.
- 50% of emancipated youth have income at or below the federal poverty level.
- 42% of foster youth, including 60% of women, become parents within 2-4 years after exiting foster care.
- 25% of former foster youth will be incarcerated within the first 2 years of leaving foster care.

* Statistics taken from BARRIERS FACING FOSTER CARE YOUTH: *National and Local Statistics about Emancipating Foster Youth*, Honoring Emancipated Youth, <https://prollow.s3.amazonaws.com/files/0266e33d3f546cb5436a10798e657d97/1335227502/FosterYouthStatistics.pdf>

Young adults who remain in foster care after turning age 18 have the following advantages:

- More likely to attend college
- Each year in foster care after age 18 is associated with increased earnings
- Reduced risk of teen pregnancy
- More likely to develop and maintain connections to family, caring adults, community, and supports, such as health care

* Survey of research by the National Coalition on Foster Care

Purpose of this Guide

This guide was collectively developed with input from CPS program, Residential Child Care Licensing, Residential Child Care Contracts and Minimum Standards staff. The purpose of this guide is to encourage more realistic practices, strategies and opportunities for older youth and young adults served in CPS foster care. This guide is intended to assist CPS providers to help youth and young adults acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will need to succeed to live independently. Additionally, this guide allows providers opportunities to develop Transitional Living programs that give youth and young adults the freedom and independence needed for a smoother transition to adulthood with supports and assistance established prior to leaving foster care.

Definitions

Below are DFPS terms specific to youth and young adults in care. These terms are important when working with youth and young adults ages 14 and older.

Transitional Living Services

Transitional Living Services (TLS) include services, programs, and benefits that assist a youth in preparing for independent living. These include but are not limited to learning basic household tasks, personal financial management, locating and making use of community resources as taught by the foster parent or provider. Additional TLS services and benefits include the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program, the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, the state college tuition and fee waiver, the driver license waiver, and Transitional Medicaid.

More Information about Transitional Living Services is available at:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/default.asp.

Transitional Living Program

A Transitional Living Program is a residential services program specifically designed to serve youth 14 years old or older for whom the service or treatment goal is basic life skills development toward independent living. A transitional living program includes basic life skills training and the opportunity for youth to practice those skills. A transitional living program is not an independent living program.

Extended Foster Care Program:

A CPS program for young adults ages 18 up to 22 years old who want to remain in foster care to achieve their educational and employment goals. Young adults will continue to be eligible for extended foster care provided there is an available placement, the young adults signs a voluntary agreement, understands that court jurisdiction may be extended, and meets one of the following conditions:

18 up to 22 year olds, and:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is

18 up to 21 years old and;

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum 6 hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- is incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

A Young adult remains eligible for EFC services through the end of the month in which the young adult reaches the age limit for the conditions listed above.

Return to Extended Foster Care:

Young adults who aged out of DFPS care may return to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program until the month a young adult reaches the age of 21. The young adult must meet requirements of the Extended Foster Care program.

Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care.

Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Program

The SIL Program is a component of the Extended Foster Care program and allows young adults to live independently in a minimally supervised living arrangement with oversight by a DFPS contractor. A young adult is not supervised 24 hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities and freedoms, such as managing his/her finances, buying groceries/personal items, and actively participating in identified employment, education, and personal activities. Living arrangements may include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings.

Voluntary Agreement for Extended Foster Care (VEFCA)

The VEFCA is an agreement between DFPS and the young adult, signed by both parties, in which the young adult voluntarily authorizes DFPS to provide services to the young adult after he or she turns 18, when the department's legal custody ends. In the agreement, the young adult indicates her or she will maintain eligibility for this program (as described above). The Extended Foster Care agreement is signed by the young adult within 30 days before or after his/her 18th birthday or as soon as possible thereafter.

Strategies and Techniques for Working with Young Adults

Giving Youth and Young Adults the Opportunity to Fail

When DFPS surveyed providers in 2009, responses regarding youth or young adults who commit a serious rules violation (coming home intoxicated, drug possession, fighting) seemed to fall into two distinct categories: "give them another chance" or "discharge immediately". DFPS encourages providers to work with youth and young adults around these behaviors whenever possible.

Transitioning youth and young adults need time and the ability to learn from mistakes. As with any youth testing his or her boundaries and rules, these youth should have opportunities to demonstrate self-awareness, and learn to discern boundary options. Suggested strategies and techniques in working with young adults are identified in this section.

- Involve young adults in every level of service delivery, this may be achieved by:
 - Scheduling meetings with the young adult-not the caretaker;
 - Accommodating the young adult's schedules (classes, work, activities, evenings/weekends, etc.); or
 - Combine meetings with activities the young adult is involved in.

- Involve young adults in decision-making and teachable moments, such as:
 - How to budget time and money;

- What academic courses to take to achieve educational goals;
- Use of public transportation;
- Planning and scheduling for future events or appointments;
- Identification of support systems and caring adults;
- Development of personal goals and strategies;
- Recommendations for service plans and court reports;
- Daily living activities;
 - Buying, preparing, and cooking food
 - Doing laundry and housekeeping
 - Balancing work, education, and other personal commitments
- Balance adult privileges and adult responsibilities. This may be achieved by:
 - Unsupervised participation in church and community events, groups, and activities;
 - Unsupervised time away from the placement to include:
 - Out of town visits
 - Overnight stays
 - Negotiating age appropriate or placement curfews
 - Social and personal activities including dating.
- Provide opportunities for young adults to succeed and fail by:
 - Acknowledging and praising successful activities, accomplishments, new skills, and personal efforts;
 - Discussing disappointments, rejections and missed opportunities to learn from the experience and what could be done differently;
 - Allowing to learn by mistake;
 - Preparing for and taking reasonable risks; and
 - Sharing successes and failures.
- Develop conflict resolution strategies for young adults to:
 - Help acknowledge anger and frustrations;
 - Learn positive ways to manage these
 - Develop time-limited contracts;
 - Help consider other options and consequences;
 - Help remember priorities and goals;
 - Educate to self-advocate; and
 - Educate to consider needs/wants/viewpoints of others.

Young adults are strongly encouraged or required to do for themselves, instead of the caregiver or caseworker doing for them. This includes filling out applications for employment or scholarships, using the public transportation system, reading maps, making appointments, doing research, shopping, and other daily living activities.

Consent to Share Personal Information-Young Adults

Young adults must give written permission or consent for others to act on their behalf if the young adult is unavailable or unable to do this. This includes the sharing of personal information with providers to obtain other placements or needed services. This teaches young adults to protect their personal information and to prevent identity

theft. Providers that serve young adults should develop a standardized consent for release of information form to be signed by the young adult if the provider must share the young adult's personal information.

Requirements to remain eligible for Extended Foster Care

As a stipulation for Extended Foster Care eligibility, young adults must agree to maintain documentation of all education and/or employment related activities. Upon request, the young adult must be able to provide verification of attendance, participation, or enrollment in the selected activity at least once a month.

Service Plans / Transition Plans for Young Adults 18 to 21

Service and Transition Plans should focus on helping the young adult meet his or her own needs with support from the provider as requested or needed.

Providers need to offer guidance & support to young adults to enable them to assume primary responsibility for implementing service plan strategies designed to meet their needs and achieve their goals. The plans should support opportunities for young adults to experience normalcy in their care. This includes having opportunities to make and learn from mistakes, even if negative consequences result. Young adults need and are encouraged to make decisions on their own and to handle the consequences or results of those decisions.

Other assistance includes providing access to or information about transportation services; discussing progress and offering suggestions; helping the young adult work through difficulties, and helping fill out applications for employment and education (loans, scholarships and grants for financial aid).

Rights and Responsibilities of a Young Adult in Care

For a listing of extended care rights and responsibilities, see [Form 2541](#)

Temporary Absences from Extended Foster Care

Young adults may continue to receive Title IV-E extended foster care assistance if there is a temporary absence from the setting of up to 14 days. If an absence extends beyond 14 days but is no longer than 30 days, state-paid assistance may be available, with DFPS approval. An absence that exceeds 30 days does not necessarily mean that a young adult has left care if he or she continues to participate in an eligible activity, has not indicated that he or she no longer wishes to remain in care, and is simply in an ineligible setting temporarily. The provider will need to work with DFPS to ensure continued eligibility for care. DFPS must approve absences exceeding 30 days.

Examples of temporary absences include:

- Short-term hospitalization;
- Arrest that results in a short stay in a city or county jail facility;
- Visit with family; or
- Vacation.

Young adults in extended foster care are expected to notify the caregiver and DFPS of planned absences, such as scheduled surgeries or vacations.

Resources for Youth and Young Adults:

Transition Centers

The link below provides a list of the current transition centers in Texas, including contact information and a contact person.

<https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/contacts/transition.asp>

Texas Youth Connection website

The website was specifically designed with input from youth and young adults and is a resource for youth in the Texas foster care system and alumni of foster care seeking general tips and information about a variety of subjects such as employment, education, finances, diversity, etc. <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/>

Texas Youth Connection Facebook

This Facebook page was launched to provide another source for youth and young adults to find resources, benefits, and other relevant topics such as NYTD updates, accessing current education and career resources, learning about current trends and fun topics of interest. www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection

Healthcare Coverage

For information about healthcare coverage for young adults ages 18 up to age 25 visit the Texas Youth Connection website-

<http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/health/default.asp>

Or, the Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) website

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Medical_Services/guide-star.asp

2-1-1 Texas and Your Texas Benefits

To report any changes to an address or other contact information for healthcare coverage, young adults must contact 2-1-1. Young adults may also go to <https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp> to set up an account, update contact information, report changes to his or her case and apply for other benefits.

Making College a Financial Reality

When the youth begins his/her senior year of high school, or when completing the GED requirements, assist the youth with the application process to colleges/universities if this is a goal for the youth. The application process needs to begin at least 8 to 12 months before a planned college entrance date, if possible. This includes filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form for financial aid, researching colleges/universities, taking required entrance exams, talking with admission departments, and visiting campuses. The FAFSA website can be accessed at: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/index.htm>

Information can be found on the Texas Youth Connection Web site for financial assistance regarding education options, scholarship information, college tuition waivers,

and ETV program:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/paying_for_college.asp.

Youth or Young Adults as Parents

When youth or young adults in care have a baby, DFPS makes an assessment about what response is needed. When possible, DFPS makes arrangements for the infant to stay with the youth or young adult parent in the foster care placement. In this situation, DFPS pays the foster care per diem reimbursement for the infant and provides health care coverage through the STAR Health program. DFPS may or may not file for legal custody of the baby.

The youth or young adult parent's service plan should reflect actions they are taking to care for the child. The caregivers should help the youth or young adult learn parenting skills and allow the youth or young adult to exercise those skills with the baby as much as is appropriate.

Child Care Licensing Standards for Youth and Young Adults

Applicable Minimum Standards

While transitional living services are generally expected for all youth 14 years old or older, as appropriate, there are no minimum standards specific to transitional living services. As you will see below, there are specific service planning requirements for this age group, but these are not directly tied to transitional living services. Transitional living services consist of preparing youth for eventual independence, just as you would a youth in your own home: teaching them how to do their own laundry, how to prepare a nutritious meal, how to use a bank account, etc.

Transitional Living Programs versus Transitional Living Services

Minimum Standards requirements include transitional living programs. A transitional living program is different from transitional living services in that it involves an environment set aside for transitional living and programmatic services that are generally designed for a group of youth or young adults, rather than services specifically designed for an individual youth or young adult. Transitional living programs in facility settings also have more flexibility than foster homes related to supervision, as described in the rules below. (Foster homes also have flexibility regarding supervision of teenagers, which is outlined in the next section.)

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR YOUTH UNDER AGE 18

§748.65. What children are eligible to participate in a transitional living program?

(§749.65 is similar)

- a) For a child to be eligible to participate in a transitional living program, the child must:
 1. Be 14 years old or older; and
 2. Not be receiving therapeutic camp services.
- b) For a child to be eligible to receive the level of caregiver supervision described in §748.1019 of this title (relating to What are the supervision requirements for a

transitional living program?) or §748.1021 of this title (relating to When does a child who is in a transitional living program not need supervision?), the child must be 16 years old or older.

§748.67 and §749.67. What are the requirements for a transitional living program?

A transitional living program must have a training program for children that develop competency in the following areas:

- 1) Health, general safety, and fire safety practices;
- 2) Money management;
- 3) Transportation skills;
- 4) Accessing community and other resources; and
- 5) Child health and safety, child development, and parenting skills, if the child is a parent of a child living with him.

§748.1019. What are the supervision requirements for a transitional living program?

(no comparable rule in Chapter 749)

A caregiver counted in the child/caregiver ratio who is responsible for supervising children of the same gender in a transitional living program must:

1. Reside in or within close physical proximity of the children's living quarters;
2. Be onsite at the operation during times when children are awake, but the caregiver is not physically present with the children;
3. Be physically available to the children at all times;
4. Be capable of responding quickly in an emergency; and
5. Be capable of monitoring the comings and goings of the children in the program.

§748.1021. When does a child who is in a transitional living program not need supervision?

(no comparable rule in Chapter 749)

- a) You must evaluate each child in a transitional living program to determine whether the child needs supervision. The evaluation must:
 - 1) Include a written plan defining the periods of time the child may be left unsupervised;
 - 2) Include a written plan for addressing behavioral problems that a child may have while in the transitional living program; and
 - 3) Identify how the child may contact the caregivers when caregivers are not physically present with the child, such as being available to the child by telephone or other means of contact.
- b) The child's service planning team must approve the evaluation.

- c) You must document the evaluation of the child and the approval in the child's record. You must review and update the evaluation during the child's service planning meetings.

§748.1023. Is my operation permitted to have a transitional living program with living quarters, a cottage, or a house with both male and female residents?

(no comparable rule in Chapter 749)

You must not have living quarters, a cottage, or a house with both male and female residents, unless caregivers are always present when children are at the living quarters, cottage, or house of the transitional living program.

§748.1261. For which of my programs may I accept emergency admissions?

Neither a transitional living program nor a therapeutic camp program may accept emergency admissions. All other programs may accept emergency admissions.

(§749.1181 is similar)

§748.1337 and §749.1309. What must a child's initial service plan include?

From Minimum Standards:

"(b)(1) Child-care services:

- (F) If the child is 14 years old or older, plans for the caregivers to assist the child in obtaining experiential life-skills training to improve his transition to independent living. Plans must:
 - (i) Be tailored to a child's skills and abilities; and
 - (ii) Include training in practical activities that include, but are not limited to, grocery shopping, meal preparation, cooking, using public transportation, performing basic household tasks, and balancing a checkbook;
- (G) For children 16 years old and older, preparation for independent living;

(b)(4) Transitional living program:

- (A) Child-care service planning requirements;
- (B) Plans for encouraging the child to participate in community life and to form interpersonal relationships/friendships outside the transitional living program, such as community team sports, Eagle Scouts, and employment after school;
- (C) Consumer education, such as meal planning, meal preparation, grocery shopping, public transportation, searching for an apartment, and obtaining utility services;
- (D) Career planning, including assisting the child in enrolling in an educational or vocational job training program;
- (E) Money management and assisting the child in establishing a personal bank account;

- (F) Assisting the child with how to access resources, such as medical and dental care, therapy, mental health care, an attorney, the police, and other emergency assistance;
- (G) Assisting the child in obtaining the child's social security number, birth certificate, and a driver's license or a Department of Public Safety identification card, as needed; and
- (H) Problem-solving, such as assessing personal strengths and needs, stress management, reviewing options, assessing consequences for actions taken and possible short-term and long-term results, and establishing goals and planning for the future."

Residential Child Care Licensing Supervision

As noted above, minimum standards §748.1019 to §748.1023 outline supervision expectations for a transitional living program in a facility setting. But what about transitional living services in a facility setting and what about transitional living services or a transitional living program offered by a foster home? Both sets of minimum standards contain the following in §748.685 and §749.2593:

A child may be away from the operation and caregivers in order to participate in an unsupervised activity, as appropriate based on the caregiver's assessment of the child and the supervision instructions in the child's service plan. The caregiver's assessment of the child must include the factors outlined in subsection (b) of this section. The child's service plan must specify if unsupervised activities are allowed, and under what circumstances. The unsupervised activity may extend into sleeping hours. If a child is participating in an unsupervised activity, the caregiver must:

- (1) Know where the child will be;
- (2) Give the child a specific time to return to the operation or the caregiver's location;
- (3) Give the child a way to contact the caregiver in an emergency; and
- (4) Be available to respond if the child contacts the caregiver and needs immediate assistance.

This "permission" to offer unsupervised activities may apply to younger children who want to walk to school on their own or ride their bike down the street. However, it was primarily designed to clarify that youth are allowed to participate in age-appropriate unsupervised activities, unless the service planning team or caregiver has a specific concern about the youth (such as suicidal gestures or known drug abuse).

Licensing fully expects and encourages providers to allow children to experience age-appropriate unsupervised activities, unless there is a specific concern. For youth, this may mean:

- Getting a job
- Riding the city bus
- Recreational activities with friends (mall, movies, etc.)
- Grocery shopping
- Participating in after school or community activities and events

While Licensing expects that a provider will temporarily curtail a youth's freedoms when necessary, we also expect that the youth will make mistakes and recognize that this is

part of normal adolescent growth and development. Unless the provider has been negligent in allowing the youth inappropriate freedoms, a provider is not held liable when a youth makes a mistake.

Licensing Rules for Young Adults

Licensing rules allow you to house a young adult until his/her 21st or 22nd birthday in order for the young adult to complete an identified program and to transition to independence. Licensing rules also allow you to admit a young adult after he/she has turned 18 years old if the young adult is being admitted into a transitional living program. Any young adult in the CPS Extended Foster Care Program may be admitted or remain in care under Licensing rules, as long as the young adult:

- meets your admission criteria;
- meets CPS program requirements;
- meets Residential Contract requirements, and
- can be appropriately cared for in your program/setting.

A Supervised Independent Living arrangement is not required to meet DFPS licensing rules since a young adult is allowed to live in a minimally supervised living arrangement that may not be part of the providers existing transitional living program.

A young adult in care at your operation does not affect the age range on your license or a foster home's verification, as Child Care Licensing does not regulate the care of adults. However, the care of these young adults must comply with relevant minimum standards, as outlined below. (Facilities can also refer to the minimum standards in Subchapter K of Chapter 748, Operations That Provide Care for Children and Adults.)

Facilities:

- **Admission policies** must address admission of young adults into your program.
- **Serious incidents** for young adult residents are not reported to Licensing, but are documented and reported to law enforcement as required by minimum standards; serious incidents are reported to parents as required by minimum standards if the young adult resident is not capable of making decisions about his/her own care.
- **Child/caregiver ratio** must include all residents in care, OR caregivers must be assigned to work exclusively with the children or exclusively with the young adults.
- **Tuberculosis screening** – All persons living at the facility, including adults, must be screened for tuberculosis. This applies regardless of whether or not the person is in care.
- **Background check** – You are NOT required to conduct a background check on young adults while in care.
- **Bedroom space** – A young adult in care can share a bedroom with a child in care if the conditions in §748.1937 are met. Square footage requirements must be met as if the adult were a child in care.

- **General living space** – Square footage requirements must be met as if the young adult were a child in care.
-

Child-placing agencies:

- **Admission policies** must address admission of young adults into your program.
 - **Serious incidents** for young adults are not reported to Licensing, but are documented and reported to law enforcement as required by minimum standards; serious incidents are reported to parents as required by minimum standards if the adult resident is not capable of making decisions about his/her own care.
 - **Child/caregiver ratio** does NOT include young adults in care, but young adults in care are counted in the capacity of the home. Care and supervision provided to foster children must not be adversely impacted.
 - **Tuberculosis screening** – Young adults in care must be screened for tuberculosis, just as any other person living in the home.
 - **Background check** – You are NOT required to conduct a background check on young adults in care.
-

While many of the minimum standards do not apply to young adults in care, such as admission assessments, service plans, and discharge documentation, the CPS Contract still requires this documentation for young adults placed by CPS. The expectation for young adults in care, however, is that service plans are focused on how the:

- young adult will meet his or her own needs, with the provider offering assistance and support; and
- provider will assist the young adult in meeting their transition goals.

Background Checks

There are many myths about which background checks are required by Licensing. We will address the most common here, particularly as they relate to teens and young adults:

- Children and young adults who are in your care are not required to have background checks.
- Friends of a person in care who would like to visit the person at the facility/foster home are not required to have background checks.
- Neighbors or friends who the person in care would like to visit for the day or attend a one-night sleepover are not required to have background checks.

Residential Child-Care Contracts

The Fostering Connections initiative has prompted DFPS to enhance services for youth and young adults as they prepare to leave foster care. This initiative was developed to give youth the tools they need to become successful adults. DFPS has collaborated with residential providers to revise the Residential Child-Care Contract (Contract) to

include areas that will allow youth to be more involved in decision making for their future and emphasize more opportunities for receiving experiential life skills.

Applicable Contract Sections/Terms

The following sections of the Contract were added to encourage contractors to support youth while transitioning to adulthood. The information below includes language from the Contract and will utilize the term "Child" since this wording is copied directly from the Contract. Youth and young adults are incorporated into the definition of "Child".

Voluntary Extended Foster Care and Return for Extended Foster Care (Contract Section 8)

- Children 18 to 22 years of age who meet eligibility criteria and voluntarily agree to participate in the Extended Foster Care programs, as defined in applicable sections of 40 TAC §§700.316 and 700.346, are also eligible for Medicaid and may be served under the terms of this Contract once approved by the Department.
- The Contractor must offer assistance to the Child in maintaining documentation such as school transcripts or pay stubs to demonstrate that any such Child 18 to 22 years of age is qualified to remain in Extended Foster Care.
- The Contractor shall assist the Child in the completion of the Voluntary Extended Foster Care Agreement, Form 2540 upon request by CPS.
- If a Child seeks to return for Extended Foster Care during or after participating in the Trial Independence period and has not yet turned 21 years of age, the Contractor shall direct the Child to contact the regional DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff.
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp

Basic Living and Social Skills (Contract Section 10)

- Teach Basic Living and Social Skills;
- Maximize opportunities for learning through the use Basic Life Skills Activities;
- Provide access to Basic Life Skills Activities provided by community resources; and
- Promote the ability to appropriately care for themselves and function in the community.
- Assist Children ages 18 up to 22 years of age who have a source of income to obtain a savings or checking account with a Financial Institution (in accordance with Texas Finance Code §201.101)
- Provide access to age-appropriate Normalcy activities which are suitable for the Child's level of maturity and age including activities not listed in the Child's Service Plan. Contractors must train Caregivers and use a "Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard" to decide whether a Child may participate in an unsupervised activity. Activities can include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Participating in academic and non-academic extracurricular activities within the Child's school;
 - ii. Allowing the Child to visit with friends or attend regular social events;
 - iii. Support a Child's employment efforts; and

- iv. Participating in other activities agreed upon by the Caregiver and the Child, without the need to seek initial approval from the Department.

Assessment, Service Planning and Coordination (Contract Section 12)

- Coordinate with the Department or a Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Contract provider for completion of the Casey Life Skills Assessment by a Child's Caregiver.
- Ensure that the Service Plan incorporates and is consistent with components of the CPS Transition Plan for Children 22 years of age to include results of the Casey Life Skills Assessment when applicable.
- Provide guidance and support to Children 18 to 22 years of age to enable them to assume primary responsibility for implementing Service Plan strategies designed to meet their needs and achieve their goals.
- Provide guidance and support to Children 18 to 22 years of age to enable them to assume primary responsibility for implementing Service Plan strategies designed to meet their needs and achieve their goals.

Educational and Vocational Activities (Contract Section 16)

The Contractor shall inform, provide and facilitate access to post-secondary education, vocational or technical training programs, employment opportunities, support services and activities, including job readiness, and skills training, community volunteer and internship program opportunities that are required by the Child's Plan of Service and the CPS Transition plan at 4614 years of age and include youth with disabilities, ensuring information is developmentally appropriate for all children, or as approved by the Child's Caseworker, so each Child:

- a. Has access to appropriate community vocational and technical training programs and volunteer opportunities, workforce services provided by the local Texas Workforce Solutions offices (if available in the area), Transition Centers (where available), and if applicable, vocational rehabilitation services for individual with disabilities provided by the local Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (if available in the area) and post-secondary education programs; and
 - b. Receives the assistance needed to maximize the benefit of these activities
- The Contractor must inform, guide and assist the Child in accessing and completing documents and applications when required for employment, the College Tuition and Fee Waiver Exemption and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program
 - Driver License and/or State Identification Card. The Contractor shall assist Children at age 16 or before by:
 - Ensuring that the following are made available to Children to facilitate applying for a driver's license and/or a state identification card:
 - a. Documentation required by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) for a state identification card;
 - b. A DFPS Foster Youth Driver License Fee Waiver Letter;
 - c. A Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Texas Residency Affidavit (Form DL-5), which is completed and signed by the Child and a Representative; and

- d. For Children under age 18, a Representative to accompany the Child to the DPS driver license office to provide acceptable proof of residency; and
- Inform Children who have applied for a driver license of the need to notify DPS of a new address change within 30 days of a change in placement.

CPS Transition Plan (Contract Section 30)

The Contractor shall coordinate with CPS for Children 14 years of age and older regarding:

- i. The use of the CPS Transition Plan, Form 2500, as appropriate, at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/site_map/forms.asp
- ii. Maintaining a copy of the Child's Voluntary Extended Foster Care Agreement Form 2540 and Trial Independence: Ability to Return for Extended Foster Care Form 2532 in the Child's record (Ages 18 up to age 21 or 22);
- iii. The provision of information available at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp

related to:

- a. Aftercare services, benefits and provider contacts;
- b. Educational Supports, Services and Benefits;
- c. Extended Care and Return for Extended Foster Care information;
- d. Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) services;
- e. Texas Foster Care Handbook for Youth;
- f. Former Foster Care Child (FFCC) Health Care Program and STAR Health;
- g. Information related to the Child's Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, if applicable; and
- h. Other region-specific services available.
- iv. The provision of information about Transition Service Centers is available under the "contacts link" at: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/default.asp>; and
- v. The Contractor shall support and facilitate computer access required for job search activities, career research, Texas Youth Connection and approved social media.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) (Contract Section 35)

The Contractor shall assist Children and support the necessary activities, including on-going computer access required for Children selected during a certain reporting period (October 1 to March 31 or April 1 to September 30) to take the NYTD survey at age 17, 19 or to:

- Maintain contact with regional PAL Staff to determine if a Child has been selected to take the survey. PAL Staff contact information can be found on the Texas Youth Connection website at: www.texasyouthconnection.org;
- Maintain an email address to receive NYTD updates;
- Enter NYTD contact updates to the Texas Youth Connection Website www.texasyouthconnection.org; and

- Complete the NYTD Survey within the required timeframe as specified on the Texas Youth Connection website at www.texasyouthconnection.org

General Expectations

Youth ages 14 up to 18

Youth need practice and guidance managing activities and learning skills needed to transition to adulthood. This includes:

- Visiting college and university campuses to explore educational opportunities.
- Exploring employment opportunities to include visiting local workforce centers, job shadowing, part-time jobs, and volunteering for community projects.
- Managing a budget
- Opening and reconciling a bank account
- Planning and preparing meals
- Grocery shopping and meal planning
- Finding and using local community resources
- Completing chores regularly
- Participating in PAL related activities, depending on age
- Participating in after school activities, sports, etc.
- Attending driver education classes

Youth's Service Plans / Transition Plans 14 up to 18

CPS expects the following from youth:

- Assume progressively greater responsibility for implementing Service Plan and Transition Plan strategies designed to meet their needs and achieve their goals

CPS expects the following from the caregiver:

- Introduce transition planning to the youth and talk about what is involved at the different stages
- Help the youth begin to identify future goals and opportunities and to fill out the Transition Plan document
- Provide guidance, support, assistance, and opportunities for the youth to explore and engage in activities that meet their needs and help achieve their goals. This includes providing transportation and assistance filling out applications for employment and education (loans, scholarships and grants for financial aid) services.

Medical Consent

After a foster youth turns 16 years old, he can make a request to the court to become his own medical consentor under Texas Family code§266.010. If the judge grants this request, the youth (16 and 17 years of age) is responsible for all medical decisions within 7 days of the court designation. As the caregiver, you are still expected to provide the youth assistance and support in making appointments, transportation to and from appointments, etc. However, the youth is the only person who can legally consent to medical treatment or medication. Likewise, a young adult in care who is 18 years old or older is his own medical consentor.

Extended Foster Care

CPS expects the following from young adults:

- Assume primary responsibility for managing their activities and schedule
- Maintain their eligibility for Extended Foster Care, as defined earlier
- Assume primary responsibility for implementing service plan strategies/goals and show progress in addressing their transition plan
- Independently exercise the basic life skills previously learned

CPS expects the following from the caregiver:

- Allow young adult to make mistakes in a supportive environment
- Help them learn from these experiences and explore better options for the future
- Develop and maintain connections with supportive and caring adults

Staying in Foster Care Is Voluntary after age 18

Once a youth turns 18 years old, he is a legal adult in the state of Texas. While he may sign Form 2540 the Voluntary Extended Foster Care Agreement to remain in the care of DFPS, he is still an adult and is able to make his own decisions. This includes leaving care at any time, without the knowledge or approval of DFPS or the provider.

Questions

Questions can be directed to:

CPS Program:

Shannon Ramsey, Transitional Living Program Specialist Lead:

512-438-2350; Shannon.Ramsey@dfps.state.tx.us

Gaye Vopat, PAL Program Specialist:

512-438-5442, Gaye.Vopat@dfps.state.tx.us

Tymothy Belseth, ETV/Youth Specialist

512-438-3769, Tymothy.belseth@dfps.state.tx.us

Larry Burgess, Program Specialist Lead for Extended Foster Care:

512-438-5320, Lawrence.Burgess@dfps.state.tx.us

Residential Contracts:

Corinthian Williams, Residential Contracts:

512-438-3311, Corinthian.Williams@dfps.state.tx.us

Licensing:

Erika Almanza, Minimum Standards Program Specialist

210-337-3083 Erika.almanz@dfps.state.tx.us