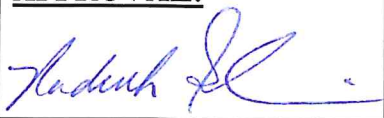




Independent Living

<u>Department Name</u> Quality Management		
<u>CHAPTER:</u>	<u>SUBJECT:</u> Independent Living	<u>POLICY NUMBER:</u> QM-007
<u>APPROVAL:</u> 	<u>EFFECTIVE DATE:</u> 2/26/2021	<u>REPLACES (policy # and date):</u> CFOP 175-80 November 15, 1999, CFOP 175-81 November 15, 1999 QM-007, June 18, 2015

- I. **PURPOSE:** This policy and procedure covers requirements relative to the independent living program for which all youth in out of home care who have reached 13 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age are eligible and transition planning for youth who are 16 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age in out of home care.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** This policy updates QM-007 Independent Living Policy.
- III. **CONTACT:** Quality Management Department.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Children’s Network of Southwest Florida Staff, Case Management Organizations and Independent Living Provider.
- V. **POLICY:** It is the policy of Children’s Network of Southwest Florida that all youth in out of home care who have reached 13 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age receive the necessary life skills and preparation to transition from out of home care to living independently.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** The rationale of this policy is to ensure all youth in out of home care who have reached 13 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age receive the necessary services needed to transition from out of home care to living independently.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** F.S. 409.1415, F.S. 409.145, F.S. 39.013, F.S. 39.6012, F.S. 39.6035, , F.S. 39.701, CFOP 170-17 Chapter 1 and CFOP 170-17 Chapter 2
- VIII. **PROCEDURES:**
 - A. General Requirements.

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1. Independent Living Services. Independent living is an expansion of the permanency planning process and not a separate, discrete program. Independent living services provide a continuum of tangible and intangible skills and knowledge that a youth should have in order to be successful upon departure from out of home care. Its emphasis is on assessing and providing job skills, self-support, daily living skills and tracking and assessing the youth's needs. All youth, regardless of their case plan goal, must be prepared to live independently.

2. Skills and Knowledge Base. The following are examples of the types of skills and knowledge a youth will need to prepare for self-sufficiency:
 - a. Nutrition;
 - b. Money management/budgeting;
 - c. Apartment locating/living;
 - d. Basic housekeeping skills;
 - e. Family planning;
 - f. Decision making/goal planning;
 - g. Employment/career planning; (Job maintenance and job seeking skills)
 - h. Interviewing skills;
 - i. Transportation
 - j. Educational development; and
 - k. Sexually Transmitted Disease / HIV awareness
 - l. Interpersonal skills
 - m. Knowledge of Community Resources
 - n. Legal skills
 - o. Leisure activities
 - p. Personal Appearance
 - q. Religion
 - r. Self-care
 - s. Emergency and safety skills
 - t. Academic Support
 - u. Post-Secondary Educational Support
 - v. Career Preparation
 - w. Employment Program or Vocational Training
 - x. Budget and Financial Management
 - y. Housing Education and Home Management Training
 - z. Health education and Risk Prevention
 - aa. Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education
 - bb. Mentoring

3. Eligibility. All youth in out of home care who have reached 13 years of age but are not yet 18 years of age are to be assessed for and receive independent living services. Eligibility for participation in the

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independent living program is only determined by age for youth in out of home care..

- a. Youth with disabilities are eligible for this program and may not be deemed ineligible from this program on the basis of their disability, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II.
- b. Though a youth with a disability may need additional supports from other organizations or agencies such as Agency for Persons with Disability (APD), Mental Health or Vocational Rehabilitation, he/she is still eligible for any and all services from the independent living program. Transitional planning should begin between APD or other programs and the Case Manager on or before the youth's 16th birthday for all dual clients in order to establish a plan for each one of these youth's transition from out of home care.
- c. Reasonable accommodations must be provided to ensure that each youth has access to the services provided by the program.

B. Referral and Assessment.

1. For children residing in licensed foster care, the Case Manager must complete and submit a referral for independent living services, regardless of the child's permanency goal, to the contracted provider.. This referral is completed when a youth already in foster care turns 13 years of age or when a youth 13 years of age or older enters foster care.
2. Within 30 days of the referral, the youth, with assistance from the Independent Living Case Manager, will complete an assessment to identify specific skills the youth already has and skills the youth must learn to increase his/her ability to live independently. Based on the results of this assessment, an Life Skills Service Plan will be developed, which outlines trainings and services needed to teach the necessary skills and determines target dates for obtaining those skills. A copy of the youth's Independent Living Assessment and Life Skills Services Plan should be filed with the court. Updates as to the progress of the youth in acquiring the necessary life skills should be addressed at all subsequent Judicial Review hearings.
3. For youth age 16 who are currently placed in unlicensed out of home care or youth over the age of 16 but not yet 18 who enter unlicensed out of home care, the primary Case Manager is responsible for completing an assessment to identify specific skills the youth already has and skills the

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youth must learn to increase his/her ability to live independently. Based on the results of this assessment, an Life Skills Service Plan will be developed, which outlines trainings and services needed to teach the necessary skills and determines target dates for obtaining those skills. A copy of the youth's Independent Living Assessment and Life Skills Services Plan should be filed with the court. Updates as to the progress of the youth in acquiring the necessary life skills should be addressed at all subsequent Judicial Review hearings.

4. Periodic re-assessments are necessary to monitor progress and take note of changes and achievements. Staff must assist the youth in re-assessing his/her skill level and update the service plan accordingly.
5. The primary Case Manager is responsible for assessing the youth's progress in achieving independent living skills at a minimum of once every 30 days during the face-to-face discussion with the youth and caregiver.

C. Service Provision.

1. Independent living services must meet the youth's needs as identified in the Independent Living Assessment. The services are designed to:
 - a. Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence and encourage teamwork;
 - b. Enable youth to obtain a high school diploma or vocational education certificate, or to prepare for the GED exam, providing remediation as needed;
 - c. Assist youth with guidance in obtaining further education such as college, vocational training and/or career planning;
 - d. Assist youth in obtaining job training and placement through programs such as job training, summer employment or apprenticeship programs; and
 - e. Provide training in social skills, daily living skills, budgeting and locating and maintaining housing.
2. The services will also include:
 - a. Assisting youth to set early achievement and career goals for postsecondary educational and work experience by being active participants in choosing a post-high school goal based upon the youth's abilities and interests.

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- b. Identifying core courses necessary to qualify for that goal, any elective courses which would provide additional help in reaching the chosen goal and the grade point requirement necessary to achieve the goal.
- c. Obtaining a copy of his/her credit report from all three major credit reporting agencies at 14, 15, 16 and 17 years old. . The youth will be provided assistance in interpreting the credit report and, if applicable, resolving any inconsistencies outlined in the credit report.

3. The services may include:

- a. Counseling or therapy to assist the youth in adjusting to previous separation and loss, living in out-of-home care and anticipating transitioning from out of home care;
- b. Special initiatives to assist teen parents in out of home care and their children in making the transition from being in the department's care;
- c. Establishing and maintaining ongoing support network with mentors and peer support groups;
- d. Outreach programs to attract eligible individuals; and
- e. Development of resources for household start-up needs.

F. Case Plan.

- 1. When appropriate, if a youth is 13 years of age or older, the case plan needs to include a written description of the programs and services that will help prepare them for the transition from foster care to independent living.
- 2. Beginning at age 14, if developmentally appropriate, any case plan development must be in consultation with the youth.

G. Transition Plan.

- 1. In accordance with CFOP 170-17, Chapter 2, transition planning must occur in preparation of youth who are placed in out of home care turning 16 years old to ensure they have economic stability, health and well-being and permanency connections.
- 2. A transition plan titled My Pathway to Success Plan is developed in collaboration with the Case Manager, caregiver, youth and any other individual identified by the youth. The My Pathway to Success Plan shall be initiated at age 16, or immediately if the youth is already 16th when

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entering foster care. The plan should be finalized by age 16.5 and submitted to Children's Legal Services, along with the Records and Resource Exchange form, for filing with the court prior to youths special JR hearing which occurs within 90 days of their 17th birthday. The plan should be updated as needed or at any critical junctures. . When the youth is 17 ¾ years old, the My Pathway to Success Plan is updated with the youth and the youth's identified supports and must be filed with the court upon completion.

3. The My Pathway to Success Plan must address specific options in the youth obtaining services including housing, health insurance, education, and workforce support and employment services. The plan must also consider establishing and maintaining naturally occurring mentoring relationships and other personal support services.

H. Judicial Review.

1. Within 90 days after a youth's 17th birthday, a special Judicial Review hearing shall occur. The Judicial Review Social Study Report needs to include verification that the youth:
 - a. Has been provided with a current Medicaid card or information concerning the Medicaid program, including information necessary to choose a managed care plan;
 - b. Has been provided with a certified copy of his/her birth certificate;
 - c. Has been issued a Florida identification card, if the youth does not have a valid driver's license;
 - d. Has been provided a social security card and information relating to Social Security Insurance benefits, if eligible. If the youth has received these benefits while in foster care and they are being held in a master trust, a full accounting of those funds needs to be provided and the youth must be informed about how to access those funds;
 - e. Has been provided with all relevant information related to the extended foster care and postsecondary educational services and support;
 - f. Has an open bank account, or has identification necessary to open an account, and has been provided with essential banking skills;
 - g. Has been provided with information on public assistance and how to apply;

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- h. Has a clear understanding of where he/she will be living on his/her 18th birthday, how living expenses will be paid and what educational program or school he/she will be enrolled in.
 - i. Has a letter providing the dates that the youth has been under the jurisdiction of the court;
 - j. Has been provided his/her educational records;
 - k. Has been provided all health and mental health records;
 - l. Has been provided the process for accessing his/her case file;
 - m. Has been provided a statement encouraging the youth to attend all Judicial Review hearings occurring after his/her 18th birthday.
2. An updated Case Plan shall be provided to the court at the special Judicial Review hearing which includes specific information related to the independent living skills that the youth has acquired since his/her 13th birthday or since the date he/she has entered care, whichever came later.

IX. EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A: Independent Living Referral

The following documents can be found at The Center for Child Welfare:
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/>

- CF-FSP 5425, Feb 2018 My Pathway to Success Plan
- CF-FSP5426, Jul 2018 Records and Resources Exchanged



INDEPENDENT LIVING REFERRAL

Case Manager: _____ CMO/Unit: _____
Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____
Courtesy Case Manager: _____ Agency _____
Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____
City/State _____ Zip Code _____
SS#: _____ DOB/Age: _____ Sex: _____ Race: _____

CURRENT PLACEMENT:

Type: _____ Name (Caregiver/Agency): _____
Date Placed at Current Placement? _____
Date Entered FC: _____ Date Expected to Leave FC: _____

EDUCATION INFORMATION:

Current School: _____ Grade: _____
Anticipated Graduation Date: _____

MENTAL HEALTH:

Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for a major mental illness? YES NO
If Yes, What? _____ When? _____

Are you now or have you ever attended counseling or therapy? YES NO
If Yes, for What? _____ Where? _____

ATTACHMENTS: [] Birth Certificate, [] Social Security Card, [] Adjudication Order

OTHER COMMENTS (Please identify if the youth has any special needs):

Case manager: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE FAX REFERRAL & CONSENT to Children's Home Society at
(239) 277-0662

DATE REFERRAL RECEIVED: (CHS USE ONLY): _____