

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(13) Independent Living Program	Effective Date:	December 2014
	Policy Title:	Introduction to the Independent Living Program		
	Policy Number:	13.0	Previous Policy #:	N/A

CODES/REFERENCES

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169))

DISCUSSION

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall utilize adoption assistance funding to facilitate the adoption of children with special needs who might otherwise not be adopted. The federal law requires efforts be made to place the child without adoption assistance, except when doing so is not in the child’s best interest.

Georgia’s Independent Living Program (ILP) provides eligible youth currently or formerly in foster care with services to successfully prepare and transition to adulthood. ILP services are designed to provide youth with the life skills and education necessary to become self-sufficient, live independently, and maintain stable employment. Services include life skills training, financial assistance, and educational and social support.

Adolescence is a time of preparation for the future. Many adolescents leaving foster care have significant difficulty making a successful transition to adulthood. Congressional findings indicate “children aging out of foster care show high rates of homelessness, non-marital childbearing, poverty, and delinquent or criminal behavior. They are also frequently the target of crime and physical assaults. The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program (ILP) was created to support youth that are vulnerable to these conditions.

The Independent Living Program goals are based on the federal legislation Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169) also known as the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and are as follows:

1. To identify children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and to help these children make the transition to self-sufficiency by providing services such as assistance in obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, training in budgeting and financial management skills, substance abuse prevention, and preventive health activities (including smoking avoidance, nutrition education, and pregnancy prevention);
2. To help children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment;
3. To help children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age prepare for and enter post-secondary training and education institutions;
4. To provide personal and emotional support to children aging out of foster care, through

- mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults;
5. To provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition from adolescence to adulthood; and
 6. To make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary training and education, to youth who have aged out of foster care.

Through family and community partnerships, the ILP program seeks the following outcomes for youth:

1. **Educational Attainment:** Achievement of a High School Diploma, GED, completion of a secondary education program and opportunities for post –secondary education;
2. **Employment:** Financial self-sufficiency through employment and community service opportunities that allow the youth to develop job-readiness skills;
3. **Housing:** Allowing youth to avoid homelessness;
4. **Health Care:** Assuring the youth can meet their own physical and mental health needs by ensuring access to health insurance;
5. **Adult Connections:** Ensuring the youth has permanent social connections with responsible and supportive adults; and
6. **Avoidance of High Risk Behaviors:** Empowering youth to be productive and responsible members of the community.

Georgia’s ILP provides services and opportunities for eligible youth in or out of foster care to maximize their potential and achieve a successful transition into adulthood. Independent Living Services include the following:

1. ILP Orientation
2. Life Skills and Supportive Services which contain information or supports related to:
 - a. Academic Support;
 - b. College Tours and Preparatory Workshops;
 - c. Life Coaches;
 - d. Financial Resources and Assistance;
 - e. Post-Secondary Education Assistance;
 - f. Career Preparation;
 - g. Information on Maintaining Healthy Relationships;
 - h. Self/Individual Supports;
 - i. Health Education and Risk Prevention;
 - j. Budgeting and Financial Management;
 - k. Housing Education and Household Management; and
 - l. Legal Matters.
3. Secondary Education Program Services including assistance with:
 - a. Tutoring;
 - b. College Applications;
 - c. Graduation Fees;
 - d. Drivers Education; and
 - e. ACT/SAT testing.
4. Post Foster Care Resources

- a. Transitional Living Supportive Services: This support is for youth, whether currently or previously in foster care, and is funded by the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) to assist with rental assistance, startup costs such as utility or rental deposits, life coaching, short term counseling and support group related expenses.
 - b. Emergency Financial Assistance: This financial resource is also supported by the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and is designed to prevent homelessness. Youth applying for emergency assistance will be offered time limited support services along with life coaching to assist them in maintaining self-sufficiency. Emergency Financial Assistance must be a qualified expense such as food, clothing, rent, medical costs or transportation.
 - c. Education and Training Vouchers: The Independent Living Program funds Post-Secondary Financial Support services through the Federal Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program as well as State Independent Living Program college funding. Services that may be funded through these programs include application fees, registration fees, tuition, room and board, course books and supplies, tutoring, testing, and stipends for hygiene and personal maintenance.
5. Graduated Independence: Allows youth in foster care (ages 14-17) or participating in the Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) program (ages 18-21) to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities to facilitate normalcy for youth receiving foster care services.