



July 23, 2018

Child Welfare Services County Letter No. 2018-03

To: County Departments of Family and Children Services
DFCS District Directors
DFCS Regional Directors
State Office Staff

From: Virginia Pryor, Director
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Re: Child Welfare Policy Manual: **Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS)**

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services County Letter (CWSCL) is to announce the following policy changes to Chapter 13: Independent Living Program:

1. Discontinuing the waiver to allow youth to remain in foster care beyond their 21st birthday;
2. Requiring transition planning meetings every six months for youth age 18 to 21, in addition to the required meeting that now occurs within 90 days of the youth's exit from EYSS; and
3. Requiring official documentation indicating proof of the youth's period in foster care is provided to the youth upon discharge from foster care at age 18 or from Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS).

Discussion

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is responsible for the safety, permanency and wellbeing of children served. DFCS allows youth who reach their 18th birthday in foster care without achieving permanency to participate in the EYSS program to support their successful transition to adulthood. EYSS provides case management services to eligible youth 18-21 years of age to support the achievement of specific goals related to their Written Transitional Living Plan (WTLP). Youth over age 21 are not eligible for EYSS, which includes placement in a foster care setting. Therefore, effective immediately, DFCS has discontinued the request for a waiver from the Division Director for an extension of EYSS for up to six months beyond the youth's 21st birthday as outlined in policy [13.9 Independent Living Program: Extended Youth Support Services](#).

To ensure that youth are successful in their transition from EYSS, the county shall:

1. Conduct transition planning meetings every six months for youth age 18 to 21 and within 90 days of the youth's exit from EYSS in accordance with policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#).

NOTE: For youth who have developmental disabilities or are unable to make decisions, coordinate the transition planning meeting on their behalf with the youth's current placement provider, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), Division of Aging/Adult Protective Services (APS), and the DFCS Placement Resources Operations (PRO) Team.

2. Submit a request for resource support to the PROteam@dhs.ga.gov and/or AskILP@dhs.ga.gov if the county determines that youth who have developmental disabilities or are unable to make decisions on their own behalf have resource needs that may extend beyond their 21st birthday, detailing:
 - a. The youth history and transitional plan;
 - b. What resources are needed for the youth to support their transition.
3. In addition to required documentation outlined in policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#) provide youth with:
 - a. A 30-day written notice of discharge; and
 - b. Official documentation indicating proof of their period in foster care prior to discharge from foster care at age 18 or EYSS via the Foster Care Verification letter, signed by the County Director or designee.
4. Obtain contact information for the youth (address, phone number, email, social media information, etc.) including at least one emergency contact prior to discharge from foster care at age 18 or EYSS.
5. Advise youth who may need financial assistance to support their transition to successful adulthood that short-term emergency funds may be available post foster care for youth over age 21. Refer to policy [13.11 Independent Living Program: Post Foster Care Resources](#) for procedures on how youth can request emergency funds.

NOTE: Short-term emergency funds may be provided based on need and funding availability.
6. Document all transition planning and discharge activities in Georgia SHINES, including the services and supports that have been provided by DFCS, providers and other partner agencies. Upload copies of the 30-day written notice of discharge and the Foster Care Verification letter to External Documentation.

Implementation

These policy changes are effective upon release of this CWSCL and will be incorporated into the Child Welfare Policy Manual in the near future.

Regional and County Leadership shall provide opportunities for staff to review and discuss the updated policy to ensure implementation. Please refer to policy [1.3 Administration Access, Distribution and Review of Child Welfare Policies](#) for the applicable requirements and procedures for policy review.

Please direct questions regarding this policy release to the Field Program Specialist in your region. Regional staff shall submit questions to the Policy and Regulations Unit at PPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov.