

# **ADOLESCENT SERVICES PRACTICE GUIDE**



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# **CHAPTER 42 – ADOLESCENT SERVICES**

## **Chapter 42-1 – Administration**

### ***Introduction***

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is obligated and committed to providing youth in care the necessary services and supports to increase their competencies, self-reliance and self-sufficiency as they transition into independence. DCF provides a variety of services to eligible youth through the Adolescent Services Program. This program includes educational, vocational and employment services as well as an array of living settings that will allow youth to gradually assume more independence within a supportive atmosphere as they age and mature. Additionally, DCF offers supports and services that will give youth age-appropriate, normative experiences as well as assistance with developing a natural long-term support system.

Equally important is achieving either legal or relational permanency for all adolescents in care. The permanency goal will be figural in all interactions between our youth and staff as well as contracted providers.

### ***Purpose***

DCF recognizes the unique needs of youth in out-of-home care and the difficulties they face as they prepare to enter independence. In response to decades of listening to the needs of adolescents in care, DCF has developed a continuum and array of services that will help to ensure that youth in care have access to every opportunity that will allow them to succeed and become happy, healthy and productive members of their communities.

## **POLICY 42-1 - Administration**

### ***Adolescent Case Transfer Conference***

An Adolescent Case Transfer Conference will be held for every DCF youth who is age 14 and older and who is in out-of-home placement or committed to DCF as an abused, neglected or uncared for child.

An Adolescent Case Transfer Conference is not required for cases already assigned to an Adolescent Specialist, youth who are receiving Voluntary Services, youth who have an adoption pending or youth who will be returning home within six months.

The Adolescent Case Transfer Conference shall be held to determine if the case should be transferred to an Adolescent Specialist.

### **Adolescent Case Transfer Process**

A LINK Children in Placement (CIP) data report shall be printed quarterly by the Adolescent Program Manager (APM) identifying Regional youth who are 14 years and older and meet the above criteria.

Based on the report, youth who are not already on an Adolescent Specialist's caseload will be identified as being in need of a conference in the month of his or her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday or within that quarter.

The Adolescent Program Manager will work within the youths' Regional and Area Office existing structures to provide a forum in which these case transfer conferences will be heard. Additionally, the APM will notify the Program Managers of identified cases to be reviewed. The Adolescent Program Manager or designee shall chair the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference.

### **Participants**

The following individuals shall participate in the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference:

- current on-going services Social Worker;
- current on-going services Social Work Supervisor;
- adolescent Social Work Supervisor;
- adolescent Program Manager;
- RRG staff, when indicated; and
- Regional Education Consultant.

## **Conference Topics**

Topics to be discussed at the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference shall include but are not limited to:

- permanency goal;
- current placement;
- trauma history;
- the child's comprehensive needs and the relationship to current case goals, objectives, identified services and interventions, and progress towards achievement of these;
- a comprehensive analysis of the youth's educational status;
- special considerations that need to be addressed prior to transfer;
- the time frame for transfer to an Adolescent Specialist and any case-related activities to be completed prior to transfer; and
- compelling reasons, if any, that the case should remain with the current Social Worker.

## **ACR Review of Decision Not to Transfer**

If for any reason it is decided that the case should not be transferred to an Adolescent Specialist, this determination shall be considered in the ACR review of the adolescent planning and documented in the electronic record by the Social Worker or Social Work Supervisor.

The review shall include, but not be limited to, a discussion of:

- adolescent planning;
- initial reasons for the decision not to transfer;
- any changes in the case plan or permanency goals in the past six months;
- compelling reasons, if any, that the case should remain with the current Social Worker; and
- more preferred permanency options.

## **Documentation**

The on-going services Social Worker shall document in LINK:

- a narrative of the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference content and decision; and
- a rationale in the ACRI for not transferring the case to an Adolescent Specialist caseload.

## ***Adolescent Specialist***

The Adolescent Specialist shall be responsible for providing services to youth in care who are 14 years of age and older. DCF recognizes that the adolescent population is a distinctive group that has a unique set of needs that must be supported in order to achieve goals that will provide a foundation for a successful transition to adulthood. To that end, Adolescent Specialists will be trained in the impact of trauma in early childhood on the adolescent and on adolescent brain development.

DCF realizes that providing social work services to adolescents in care requires a unique skill set that includes a personal commitment to working with and supporting vulnerable and challenging youth. Advanced training is required for all Adolescent Specialists (Adolescent Certification Training) as well as periodic in-service adolescent-specific trainings.

### **Job Description**

The Adolescent Specialist is a Social Worker who has successfully completed or is willing to complete the DCF's Training Academy's Adolescent Certification Program and shall be responsible for providing services to youth age 14 and older who are committed abused, neglected, uncared for or and dually committed to DCF.

**Note:** Youth who are 14 years of age or older and who are committed as Family with Service Needs, delinquency or Voluntary Services clients may be considered for Adolescent Services if reviewed and approved by a Program Manager.

### **Job Function**

The Adolescent Specialist's functions shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- educate youth while in middle school and secondary school about post-secondary education, job training options and volunteer opportunities;
- assist youth with obtaining essential documents, *e.g.*, picture ID, Social Security card, birth certificate;
- work with youth to address any behavioral health needs including the impact of adverse childhood experiences, and ensure that youth are referred to effective treatments and interventions;
- work with youth and school personnel to collect a comprehensive educational record and monitor the academic programming in order to create a post-secondary education plan;
- give youth transitioning out of DCF care an opportunity to learn about career options and develop the habits, attitudes and skills needed to find and retain employment;
- ensure that youth are educated in financial planning;
- provide and monitor any services that meet the goals of the case plan;
- provide support to youth who are celebrating milestones, such as graduations and rituals;
- provide the resources and opportunities to youth to maintain their sibling connections and reconnect with their families of origin;
- develop, in conjunction with the youth, permanent, supportive adult and social support systems;
- ensure youth are provided with a certified life skills program; and
- transition to adult services such as DDS and DMHAS when appropriate.

## ***Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisor***

DCF shall identify staff as Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisors who shall be responsible for providing supervision to Adolescent Specialists. Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisors will ensure that the Adolescent Specialists are qualified and experienced Social Workers in accordance with policy, procedures and best practice, and that they receive appropriate training and support.

DCF realizes that providing social work services to adolescents in care requires a unique skill set including a personal commitment to working with and supporting vulnerable and challenging youth. In order to support adolescent social work staff (Adolescent Specialists), DCF recognizes the need to have specially-trained supervisory staff to guide and support them.

### **Job Functions**

The Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisor shall:

- supervise the case activities of all assigned staff;
- review and assign new cases within the expected time frames;
- ensure compliance with established time frames for completion of tasks and requirements of policy;
- provide ongoing supervision and support, including reviews of case-related activity and planning, to Adolescent Specialists;
- review adolescent casework principles and techniques and DCF policy and procedures;
- promote the use of a trauma-informed approach to case practice and continue to advance trauma-related workforce knowledge;
- assist the Adolescent Specialists with establishing casework priorities and clarifying goals and objectives;
- provide training in adolescent development;
- sanction and share casework decisions;
- assess and facilitate pertinent training and experiences that are identified as needs of the Adolescent Specialists;
- attend statewide adolescent services meetings;
- consistently review the behavioral health status of all youth and assure effective treatments and interventions to address any serious emotional disorders or trauma history that negatively impact functioning; and
- consistently review the educational progress of all youth and approve of the proposed post-secondary education, employment training or volunteer service program plans prior to submitting the plans to the Post-Secondary Education Consultants for approval.

## ***Youth Advisory Boards***

DCF shall establish a Youth Advisory Board in each Region, comprised of youth in out-of-home care. The Youth Advisory Boards will address DCF policies and procedures involving youth issues and the unique problems of youth transitioning from out-of-home care. DCF shall also establish a Statewide Youth Advisory Board comprised of youth representing each Region who are in out-of-home care. This Board will meet with the Commissioner on a quarterly basis or as requested.

Each Region shall assign a staff member to serve as the Regional Office Youth Advisory Board Coordinator. This staff shall work with their Regional Boards and be responsible for recruiting and training Board candidates, developing content and a schedule for meetings, developing a yearly activity budget and providing necessary staffing for Board activities and expenditures.

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board will focus on presenting commonly- or frequently-identified needs of youth in out-of-home care to the DCF administration and advocating for systemic change. Additionally, this Board will make itself or its members available for statewide initiatives and requests made by the DCF administration.

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board shall have a Central Office staff assigned to serve as the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Coordinator. This staff shall be responsible for recruitment and training of statewide Board candidates; developing content and scheduling for quarterly meetings; developing, approving and monitoring Regional and Statewide Board budgets for activities and expenditures; staffing meetings and providing funding for transportation as needed; providing Boards with access to DCF technology as available; and providing the Boards with the opportunity to review and comment on policies that relate to committed DCF children and youth.

## ***Services Post-Majority - Administrative Requirements***

Youth who are committed abused, neglected, uncared for or dually committed as of his or her 18th birthday, shall have the current "family" case closed in LINK and re-opened as a "Services Post-Majority" (SPM) case in order to continue receiving services and to allow a youth who leaves care at age 18 the ability to apply for re-entry services prior to age 21. DCF shall ensure that the youth's SPM case contains the current Individual Case Plan, placement, payments, medical, educational, legal, NYTD, pregnancy/parenting and any other necessary information from the previous case record.

## ***Adolescent Services Credit Reports***

The Department of Children and Families shall provide a free consumer credit report to each youth in out-of-home placement who is 14 years of age or older, at least once each year until the youth is transitioned from DCF care.

DCF recognizes the importance of ensuring that youth transitioning out of the foster care system exit with a clean credit report as well as with financial knowledge and skills about issues such as credit.

### **Accessing Credit Reports**

The DCF Fiscal Services Division (FSD) shall act as a liaison to the three major credit reporting agencies (TransUnion, Experian and Equifax). An FSD representative shall secure the necessary credit reports and pass them on to the youth's assigned Adolescent Specialist or Juvenile Justice Social Worker, noting any anomalous credit activity.

### **Explanation to Youth**

The Adolescent Specialist shall explain the credit report to the youth and provide assistance with addressing any inaccuracies. The Adolescent Specialist shall work with the assigned Fiscal Services Division credit agency liaison to correct the youth's credit report.

The Adolescent Specialist shall also provide the youth's attorney with a copy of the credit report and, using the [DCF-777, "Credit Report Letter to Child's Attorney,"](#) request that the attorney also assist the youth with interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies in the report.

All conversations and activity related to a youth's credit report shall be documented in LINK.

### **Credit Report Practice and Procedure Guide**

Using procedures developed by the DCF Fiscal Services Division (FSD) and the three major consumer credit reporting agencies, FSD is responsible for securing consumer credit reports for every youth age 14 or over in out-of-home placement on a yearly basis. Youth 18 and over will need to sign a consent for FSD staff to secure consumer credit reports, or the assigned Adolescent Specialist can teach the youth how to obtain the report him- or herself by using the free web service "annualcreditreport.com." The credit reports shall be sent to the youth's Adolescent Specialist, who shall explain the information and, in conjunction with FSD staff, assist the youth with resolving any inaccuracies. The youth's attorney shall also be provided with a copy by the Adolescent Specialist and shall be asked to assist with the interpretation and resolution of issue. Any credit fraud or identify theft discovered shall be reported to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. FSD staff will batch all reports that need to be resolved and send them to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney on a monthly basis.

### **Youth Covered**

State and federal law state that the credit report requirement applies to "foster children" age 14 and over. However, federal law defines "foster child" very broadly and includes almost any child who is in out-of-home placement. Therefore, this policy applies to all youth placed by DCF in out-of home care including Voluntary Services Program and juvenile justice clients.

If a youth is not committed to DCF (abused, neglected or uncared for), the FSD shall request a release form signed by the child's guardian in order for the child's credit to be checked.

### **Reviewing Credit Reports**

When a credit report is received from an agency, the assigned FSD staff shall review it for anomalous credit activity. The credit report will then be sent to the youth's Adolescent Specialist with a note stating whether there are any issues that may require resolution.

## **Adolescent Specialist Responsibilities**

The Adolescent Specialist will provide the credit report to the youth and help the youth interpret it. The Adolescent Specialist will explain any problems and advise the youth about what will be done to resolve them. The conversation with the youth shall be documented in LINK. The Adolescent Specialist shall send a copy of the credit report to the youth's attorney using DCF-777, which requests that the attorney also review the report with the youth and assist with any problem.

## **Resolving Credit Report Issues**

The assigned FSD staff will act as the liaison to the credit reporting agencies. The Adolescent Specialist will work with the FSD staff, and in consultation with DCF legal staff as necessary, to resolve all issues on the credit report(s) including the expungement of fraudulent information.

Resolution of problems may require the Adolescent Specialist to communicate with creditors. The credit reporting agencies may require copies of the youth's birth certificate and the court order of commitment before expunging information. The Adolescent Specialist shall make all reasonable efforts to obtain the birth certificate and court order for the FSD staff.

## **Credit Fraud and Identify Theft**

In any case in which a youth's identity or credit has been illegally used, the FSD staff will notify the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, using the DCF-778, "Credit Report Letter to State's Attorney," in consultation with the DCF Office of Legal Affairs as needed. On monthly basis, the FSD staff will batch all records where a youth's identity or credit has been illegally used and send them to the Office of The Chief State's Attorney. The Adolescent Specialist shall promptly provide any additional information requested by the Chief State's Attorney for investigation and prosecution.

## **What is a Credit Report?**

A credit report is a record of a person's credit activities. It lists any credit card accounts or loans the person has, the balances, and how regularly payments are made, as well as identifying information. Nationwide Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs) are private companies that sell the information in credit reports to creditors, insurers, employers and other businesses that use it to evaluate a person's applications for credit, insurance, employment or renting a home. There are three nationwide CRAs (TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian).

## **What Information is in a Credit Report?**

A credit report contains identifying information, lists of accounts, credit inquiries, items of public record, and positive and negative entries.

- Identifying Information – The person's name (including nicknames and abbreviations), addresses (current and past), Social Security number, date of birth and employment information used to identify an individual.
- Credit Accounts – The type of accounts (credit card accounts, mortgages or home equity loans, and installment accounts, like car loans), the date the accounts were opened, any credit limits, loan amounts, account balances and payment history. This includes the contact information for the holder of the account.

- Credit Inquiries – When a person applies for credit or a loan, the lender may ask for a copy of the borrower’s credit report. The credit inquiries section of a credit report will list lenders who have accessed a person’s credit report within the last two years.
- Public Records and Collections – Information including bankruptcies, foreclosures, lawsuits, wage garnishments, liens and judgments from state and county courts, and overdue debts from collection agencies.
- Positive Accounts and Negative Items – Positive information includes the payment of loans and other debts. Negative items include late payments and debt that was charged-off or was sent to a collection agency. Account numbers and addresses for creditors also are listed.

### **Should Youth in Foster Care Have a Credit Report?**

No. Because minors do not usually have the legal capacity to sign a contract or apply for credit on their own, most youth do not have credit reports. Therefore, if a credit report does exist for a person younger than 18, whether in foster care or not, it may be due to error, fraud or identity theft. The credit reporting agencies will not knowingly disclose credit report information for a minor except to a parent, guardian or custodian of the minor. Therefore, in most cases, a child protection agency requesting a credit report for a youth in foster care will simply be confirming that no such report exists. However, when a credit report does exist for a youth, it indicates that there is likely a need to correct information and take action to protect the identity and future credit worthiness of the youth.

### **What is Child Identity Theft?**

Youth identity theft happens when someone uses a minor’s personal information to commit fraud. A thief may steal and use a youth’s information to get a job, government benefits, medical care, utilities, car loans or a mortgage. Avoiding, discovering and undoing the damage resulting from the theft of a youth’s identity can be a challenge. Adults can monitor their own credit reports every few months to see if someone has misused their information and order a fraud alert or credit freeze on their credit files to stymie further misuse. A thief who steals a youth’s information may use it for many years before the crime is discovered. Youth in foster care are particularly vulnerable to identity theft because their personal information is often shared widely among various caregivers, service providers and schools. The misuse of the youth’s identity may not be discovered until the youth exits the foster care system and applies for a cell phone, job, student loan or apartment. When a youth in foster care is a victim of identity theft, there may be a credit report associated with the youth, but it may contain errors in the identifying information, like the date of birth and address. This is because the thief may use the youth’s Social Security number, but his or her own date of birth and address. The child protection agency may have knowledge of different birthdates, Social Security numbers and names used for the youth in foster care and providing this information to the CRAs will help them determine if a credit report does exist for the youth.

### **Must a Child Protection Agency Contact All Three Credit Reporting Agencies?**

Yes. Federal law states that youth who have attained 14 years of age must receive, without cost, a copy of *any* consumer report. Therefore, to be in compliance with this requirement, the agency must have a copy of the credit report, if one exists, from each of the three main CRAs: TransUnion, Equifax and Experian.

## **POLICY 42-2 - Secondary School**

### ***Secondary School Senior Year Expenses***

#### **Policy and Purpose**

DCF shall provide financial assistance to a committed youth for his or her secondary school senior year expenses up to a maximum of \$500.00. DCF is committed to providing youth in care with the same normative experiences as their peer group. Youth in their senior year of secondary school who want to participate in such normative events are eligible to receive up to \$500.00 towards many of these expenses.

#### **Eligibility**

To be eligible, the youth shall be committed to DCF as abused, neglected or uncared for child, or dually committed, and enrolled as a senior in:

- a secondary school;
- a State of Connecticut Department of Education (SDE) private school; or
- an alternative education program (*e.g.*, adult education, GED program, Job Corps).

#### **Allowable Expenses for Senior Year**

DCF shall provide up to a maximum of \$500.00 for expenses including the following:

- yearbook;
- yearbook portraits;
- prom expenses (tuxedo or dress, tickets, pictures, flowers or transportation);
- senior class dues;
- class ring;
- class trip(s); and
- graduation cap and gown.

Any other school-sponsored activity not included above may be covered on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Procedure for Issuing Funds**

A youth requesting secondary school senior expense funds must submit a request in writing to his or her Adolescent Specialist, with supporting documentation of the item(s) and the cost(s).

Acceptable documentation includes:

- school notices that identify the item(s) and the cost(s); and
- receipts for order(s) that identify the item(s) and cost(s).

The Adolescent Specialist and Social Work Supervisor shall review the request. All payments shall be subject to approval by the Social Work Supervisor and the Program Manager. If the request is within DCF policy guidelines, the Adolescent Specialist shall enter the payment into LINK.

The Adolescent Specialist will apply for a vendor number for the youth if one is not available.

### **Documentation**

The Adolescent Specialist shall document the following in LINK:

- requests for secondary school senior expenses; and
- provision of financial assistance, item(s), and cost(s).

A copy of any request for financial assistance for secondary school senior expenses shall be filed in the Uniform Case Record.

### **Denial of Funds**

If funds are denied, the youth shall be notified of the right to an administrative hearing pursuant to [§17a-90-1 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies](#), by use of the [DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits."](#)

## ***Driver's Permit and License***

### **Policy and Purpose**

DCF recognizes that obtaining a driver's license is a normative event for an adolescent and a necessity for youth as they transition to independence. DCF shall provide financial assistance to eligible youth in care in order for them to obtain a driver's license. Youth under 18 must successfully complete a certified driver's education program in order to obtain a driver's license. DCF shall pay 100% of the cost of one driver's education program for eligible youth.

### **Driver's Permit and License Procedure**

Requests for permission for youth committed to DCF, who are 16 or 17 years of age, to drive a car and to secure a driver's permit or a driver's license, must be carefully evaluated by the Adolescent Specialist, in consultation with the youth and the caregiver, to determine if the youth has achieved a sufficient level of responsibility.

At age 16, a youth may take the written exam to obtain a driver's permit. The youth may take the driving test to obtain his or her license six months after obtaining the permit.

### **Required Insurance and Responsibility**

The owner of any car that the youth plans to drive must be willing to carry the required insurance and to assume responsibility for the actions of the youth while he or she is driving the car.

### **Signature Required**

The Area Office Director, the Program Director or a designee is authorized to sign the Department of Motor Vehicles Form 2D, "Parents' or Guardians' Certification," for youth who are 16 or 17 years of age, to secure a driver's permit or license.

## ***Secondary Education (High School) and General Equivalency Diploma (GED)***

### **Policy and Purpose**

Youth who are committed abused, neglected, uncared for, or for whom the Commissioner is the statutory parent, shall be in full-time attendance in a secondary school (high school) program, adult secondary school credit diploma program or general equivalency diploma (GED) program. Adult secondary school or GED programs must be approved by the Commissioner in lieu of secondary school on a case-by-case basis. Youth shall be required to complete the adult secondary school or GED program by age 21.

DCF recognizes that youth may need alternative routes to completing secondary education. In an effort to ensure all youth complete secondary education, DCF will monitor and review the youth's educational progress by obtaining the educational records from the school.

### **Applying for Exceptions**

All youth should be encouraged to remain in and graduate from secondary school. In the event it is in the best interest of the youth to pursue an alternative means to completing secondary education, the DCF Social Worker shall seek prior approval from the Commissioner. The DCF Social Worker shall prepare a memorandum for the Commissioner to review which must include the prior approvals of the Area Office Director and the Regional Administrator. The following documents shall be included:

- all school transcripts and testing scores up until the time the students left secondary school;
- GED pre-test and practice test scores;
- the anticipated post-secondary education or employment plan; and
- the anticipated time frame for completion (no longer than six months).

**Note:** Youth who have been approved to attend a GED program will be required to accept additional support services to include tutoring in order to complete the program within six months. These youth shall be encouraged to also enroll in a post-secondary education program or employment training.

### **Before Withdrawing Students from Secondary School**

DCF supports the belief that, in most cases, youth in care should remain in a secondary education program and work toward acquiring a regular secondary school diploma. DCF recognizes, however, that there are situations in which it may be in the youth's best interests to pursue alternative educational opportunities. If a youth under the care of DCF is being considered for withdrawal from secondary school, the following protocol must be followed:

## **Protocol for Withdrawing a Youth from Secondary School**

### **A. Secondary School Students over Age 18 Who are Regular Education Students:**

If a student is 18 years of age, is a regular education student without a secondary school diploma or a GED, and is considering withdrawing from secondary school, that student may withdraw from secondary school and still be considered for ongoing DCF services as long as he or she enrolls in an adult secondary school diploma program or a GED program. Prior to such withdrawal, however, the following must occur:

1. A case conference must be held at the Area Office and include the youth, the DCF Social Worker, the DCF Social Work Supervisor, other pertinent parties and the USD #2 Regional Education Consultant;
2. The youth should be advised of the readmission provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-186(d)(2): "For the school year commencing July 1, 2011, and each school year thereafter, if a child seventeen years of age or older voluntarily terminates enrollment in a school district and subsequently seeks readmission, the local or regional Board of Education for the school district may deny school accommodations to such child for up to ninety school days from the date of such termination, unless such child seeks readmission to such school district not later than ten school days after such termination in which case such board shall provide school accommodations to such child not later than three school days after such child seeks readmission."

### **B. Secondary School Students under Age 18 Who are in Regular Education:**

If a student is under age 18, is a regular education student without a secondary school diploma or a GED, and is interested in withdrawing from secondary school, the following must occur:

1. A case conference must be held at the Area Office that includes the youth, the DCF Social Worker, the DCF Social Work Supervisor, other pertinent parties and the USD #2 Regional education consultant.
2. If the consensus of the participants in the case conference is that the withdrawal of the student from secondary school is appropriate in order to meet the youth's needs and there is a documented alternative educational plan in place, such a withdrawal must be authorized by the DCF Area Director or designee.

### **C. Secondary School Student over Age 18 Who has been Identified as a Student in Need of Special Education:**

If a student is 18 years of age or older, has been determined to be in need of special education, and is interested in withdrawing from secondary school, the following protocol must be followed:

1. A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting must be requested by the DCF Social Worker to be held by the youth's nexus school district. The purpose of the PPT meeting is to inform the youth of the educational options available to him or her and to inform him or her of the impact of his or her decision to withdraw from secondary school on the nature and scope of special education services. If the student has retained his or her surrogate parent in an advisory capacity, the surrogate parent must participate in this

PPT meeting. The student should be advised of Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-186 (see text in Section A.2. above) and of Circular Memo C-25, 1998-1999 Series.

2. If, after the PPT, the student is still interested in withdrawing from secondary school, he or she may withdraw and still be considered for ongoing DCF services as long as he or she enrolls in an adult secondary school diploma program or a GED program.

D. Secondary School Student under Age 18 Who has been Identified as in Need of Special Education:

If a student is under age 18 and has been identified as in need of special education, the student should not be permitted to withdraw from secondary school. If, despite DCF's best efforts to convince the student to remain in secondary school, he or she continues to seek withdrawal, the following protocol must be followed:

1. A case conference must be held including the youth, the DCF Social Worker, the DCF Social Work Supervisor, other pertinent parties and the USD #2 Regional Educational Consultant.
2. If the consensus of the participants in the case conference is that it is in the youth's interest to consider withdrawal from public education, a PPT meeting must be convened as indicated in Section C.1. above.
3. If the decision of the PPT is that withdrawal from secondary school is in the best interests of the youth, and there is a documented alternative educational plan in place, the withdrawal of the student must be approved by the DCF Area Director or designee.

# **POLICY 42-3 - Adolescent and Young Adult Programs**

## ***Life Skills Education and Training***

### **Policy**

DCF will provide all youth with the tools necessary to achieve self-sufficiency by providing instruction in basic life skills, daily living and social relationships, self-care, work and study skills, career planning, financial skills and communication skills.

**Life skills** are a set of experiences learned by teaching or by direct experience. These skills are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life from adolescence through adulthood.

DCF offers youth various opportunities for life skills education and training to build a skill set that is designed to move with the youth along a continuum. There are life skills programs that are specifically designed for youth in DCF care, while other programs serving adolescents have life skills training built into the curriculum. Programs that incorporate life skills include but are not limited to:

- Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP);
- Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER);
- Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program (SWETP);
- therapeutic foster homes;
- Preparing Adolescents for Self Sufficiency (PASS) group homes;
- maternity group homes;
- STAR group homes;
- residential treatment centers; and
- DCF facilities.

### **Housing Options**

Youth who have not completed a secondary school program are not eligible for an apartment under the CHAP independent living program. The youth may be eligible for either an individual boarding arrangement or housing through one of the SWEPT, TLAP or PASS group homes.

### **Community Life Skills Model**

A community-based services model focuses on the development and enhancement of the participant's knowledge of essential life skills to promote preparation for adulthood and self-sufficiency.

Through program design and content, the model's goal is to support and maintain a youth's connection with the community as the youth matures.

A contract shall be developed with the youth and program staff to include:

- the roles and responsibilities of youth and program staff;
- the stipend amount and method of payment;
- a statement regarding the youth's participation and compliance with all aspects of the program (e.g., life skills classes, field visits, speakers, field trips);
- a statement regarding the time period the youth will be involved in the program; and
- a statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements.

**Note:** The program staff shall provide copies of the contract to the youth, the DCF Adolescent Specialist and the foster parent or other caregiver.

Graduation exercises shall be held. Participants will be presented with completion certificates. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on the growth and accomplishments they experienced during the program.

The graduation shall be planned and carried out by the program participants and may include inviting guests, a formal dinner, receipt of stipend, etc.

To be admitted to the Community Based Life Skills Program, the youth must be:

- DCF-involved;
- at least 14 years of age and have not reached his or her 21st birthday;
- residing in out-of-home placement within the community (except those youth residing in SWETP or PASS programs or therapeutic foster homes); and
- be committed to DCF as a neglected, abused or uncared for child (including dually committed youth).

**Note:** DCF referrals to the program shall be forwarded by the Adolescent Specialist to the Life Skills Area Office Liaison.

### **Life Skills Assessments**

Adolescent Specialists trained in the approved life skills assessment and curriculum may administer assessments and develop learning plans with youth and their caregivers. For interested staff, training is available through the DCF Academy for Workforce Development as part of the approved Life Skills Assessment curriculum.

### **Life Skills Curriculum**

The life skills programs shall utilize the DCF-approved Life Skills Curriculum as an educational model for program participants. At a minimum, the curriculum will cover the following domains:

- life-long family connections;
- person-centered planning based on hopes, dreams and aspirations;
- career planning;
- communication;
- daily living;

- home life;
- housing, community and money management;
- health;
- self-care;
- reproductive health care counseling consistent with national guidelines;
- social relationships; and
- work and education.

Components also include intangible or “soft” skills such as:

- decision-making regarding drugs, alcohol and sexuality;
- understanding one's own trauma and its effects;
- dealing with separation and loss;
- interpersonal and communication skills;
- healthy relationships;
- goal setting;
- self-advocacy; and
- problem solving.

Using the core curriculum as a model, the program shall utilize additional educational and training materials as appropriate.

### **Primary Caregiver Involvement**

The programs shall provide information to the youth's primary caregiver concerning the life skills program and offer advice and counsel on how the caregiver can model, teach and reinforce life skills being covered by the program in the home environment.

### **Reporting Requirement**

All contracted service providers shall submit written reports to the Central Office program lead, DCF Fiscal Services Division contact person and the Adolescent Specialist regarding the youth's attendance and progress in the program.

### ***Congregate Care***

DCF understands that youth are best served in family settings. There are times, however, when a youth needs short-term treatment within a congregate care setting.

DCF shall provide short-term treatment in congregate care settings when appropriate. The treatment shall be strengths-based and developmentally appropriate. The treatment shall also be gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

### **Guiding Principles**

DCF is committed to maintaining youth in their communities through strengthening families, providing services in the communities where youth live and reducing the number of youth in

congregate care settings. In an effort to promote the healthy development of youth aged 13 years and older, DCF will provide individualized treatment in the least restrictive setting. When youth receive these services in a congregate care setting, the primary goal is to return the youth safely and permanently to the community.

**Reference:** [Congregate Care Rightsizing Report](#).

### **Family Involvement**

DCF recognizes the importance that involved families and communities have in the healthy development of adolescents. DCF considers family involvement and engagement to be the primary goal of treatment. The treatment provider is required to include the youth's family, fictive kin, caregivers and other supportive adults as full participants in the admission, treatment and discharge process, regardless of transition plan. This can include phone calls and on-grounds or community visits with sanctioned family members or supportive adults.

**Reference:** [DCF Kinship Care Report](#), [We All Need Somebody Report](#).

### **Length of Stay**

DCF is committed to ensuring that youth receive quality treatment delivered in a brief treatment model when possible. Adolescents in congregate care will receive short-term treatment designed to springboard them into the community. This treatment will be no longer than six months and must have targeted and specific outcome measures incorporated into every treatment plan. Discharge planning will begin immediately upon admission and be incorporated into the youth's treatment goals.

**Reference:** Effectiveness of Group Care Literature Summary.

### **Normative Experiences**

DCF recognizes the importance of normative experiences in the healthy development of adolescents. Adolescents in congregate care shall participate in normative social, school and athletic events within the community. This includes but is not limited to participation on an athletic team, social functions such as dances or movies with friends, time to go to the library or mall, participation in school committees that meet after school and summer camps.

### **Healthy Teenagers**

DCF is committed to the health of our youth. Congregate care settings will abide by the existing DCF nutritional standards and engage youth in healthy physical activity on a consistent basis.

**References:** [DCF Health Equity Report](#), [Nutritional Guidelines](#), [DCF Nursing Guidelines for Care of Obese or Overweight Child](#).

### **Developmentally-Appropriate Treatment**

DCF recognizes the importance that adolescent development plays in the functioning and behavior of teenagers. Treatment of youth in congregate care will be informed by adolescent neuroscience with an emphasis placed on the social and emotional development of teens. This treatment will also be gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

**Reference:** [The Adolescent Brain, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011.](#)

## **Identity Development**

DCF recognizes the importance of racial, ethnic and sexual identity to healthy adolescent development. Youth in congregate care settings are encouraged to appropriately and safely develop their racial, ethnic and sexual identities.

**References:** [True Colors](#), [LGBTQI Youth in Foster Care Have Rights](#), [Developing a Multiculturally Competent Service System](#).

## **Independent Living**

DCF is committed to strengthening the capacity for youth to be prepared for a self-sufficient and productive adult life. Youth in congregate care settings will participate in appropriate independent living activities and curriculum.

## **Rights of Adolescents in Congregate Care**

Adolescents living in congregate care have rights that must be respected and honored. Treatments providers will have policy and practices that are consistent with these rights.

**Reference:** [Speak UP! Your Legal Rights in Shelters, STAR Homes, Group Homes or Residential Treatment Centers](#).

## ***Transitional Living Programs (PASS, Maternity Homes and SWETP)***

### **Policy**

DCF shall provide a range of transitional living programs for older youth in care who need to practice their independent living skills within a supportive instructional environment. Transitional living programs offer youth an opportunity to learn and practice independent living skills, attend school in the community and hold jobs while residing in a 24-hour supportive, structured, supervised setting.

To be eligible, youth must be in DCF out-of-home care, 14 years of age or older and prepared for involvement in a less-restrictive setting but not yet ready for living independently in the community.

Ineligible youth are youth who are married; on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States; actively psychotic, violent or assaultive; or actively abusing substances to the extent that it would interfere with the group process and intervention.

Community group living situations will prepare youth for adulthood; develop safe, secure and permanent family relationships; and create linkages for youth within existing community networks. A group living setting shall be established to support continuing life skills education by teaching skills within the context of normal daily activities. In addition, this setting provides youth with the necessary support, structure and supervision to help with the transition to a less-restrictive setting, while providing the necessary support to develop self-sufficiency.

This program provides specialized services to youth who may not be prepared for independence, as well as family and community support to promote successful, independent living skills.

**Note:** A DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post-Majority (SPM)," must be signed by all youth prior to their 18th birthdays indicating their desire to continue to receive services.

### **Vocational Assessment and Services**

The community group living program shall establish a capacity for attaining complete vocational assessments and providing career counseling, vocational guidance, soft skills training, and actual work experiences for its participants, either by direct service provision or by linkage with existing community resources.

Programs are encouraged to partner with their local Work To Learn programs and local Department of Labor programs for additional vocational or employment opportunities that might be available for youth in care.

This training model should focus on youth who have little or no employment experience.

Summer youth employment is available to all eligible DCF youth and should be offered to youth residing in the community group living programs to begin a youth's employment resume.

The program's Educational and Vocational Specialist (EVS) is responsible for coordinating the resident's educational and vocational experiences. The EVS will be responsible for interfacing with the school system, participating in PPTs and other educational meetings and developing individualized educational and vocational plans for each youth. The EVS will work in conjunction with other staff at the program to maximize educational and vocational outcomes for each youth.

### **Educational Assessment and Services**

The program shall secure appropriate educational assessments of participants who lack current educational achievement scores.

Based on the youth's individual educational profile, tutoring and remediation services shall be provided or the youth shall be connected to such services in the community.

### **Community and Permanent Connections**

The program will encourage the youth's integration into the community including collaboration with community-based pre-employment and employment training programs, permanent connections with family and fictive kin and involvement with supportive adults, mentoring programs, volunteer programs and access to local and regional programs (e.g., the public library, local recreational programs, summer activities).

### **Life Skills Assessment**

Each program shall utilize a DCF-approved life skills assessment to analyze the young person's needs and competencies in terms of the basic life skills areas and domains listed below. Using the life skills assessment, the program shall develop realistic plans and goals with the youth that are measurable and objective and will lead to increased knowledge and competency and,

ultimately, to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Interdependence and interconnectedness will also be a focus. Programs will provide the DCF Adolescent Specialist with information regarding life skills assessment results for inclusion in the youth's case plan.

The basic life skills covered are:

- cultural competency awareness;
- safe, healthy relationships with family and other caring adults;
- trauma awareness;
- money management;
- consumer awareness;
- food management;
- hygiene and personal appearance;
- health and health management;
- housekeeping;
- housing;
- transportation;
- educational planning;
- job seeking skills and employment maintenance skills;
- emergency and safety skills;
- knowledge of community resources including how to access services, especially behavioral health services;
- interpersonal skills; and
- skills related to handling personal legal matters.

### **Individual Competencies**

Using the aforementioned life skills assessment, the program shall develop realistic plans and goals with the youth that will lead to increased knowledge and competency and, ultimately, to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Interdependence and interconnectedness will also be a focus. Programs will provide the DCF Adolescent Specialist with information regarding life skills assessment results for inclusion in the youth's case plan as well as periodic progress made in overall life skills acquisition.

### **Goals of Community Housing**

The program shall:

- develop a transition plan with the youth with the goal of community housing and self-sufficiency; and

- work cooperatively with the DCF Adolescent Specialist to formulate a transition plan for the youth which may include post-secondary education and training, gainful full time employment or a volunteer experience.

### **Service Agreement**

A DCF-2166A, Adolescent Services Service Agreement,” signed by the youth and program staff, shall be developed with each youth, and it may include but not be limited to:

- clarification of roles for the youth, program and DCF;
- assignment of responsibilities and time frames for the youth, the program and DCF;
- establishment of expectations for the youth, the program and DCF;
- goals, which must be attainable; and
- a statement regarding action to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the agreement or the program requirements.

### **Reporting Requirements**

The program's Transitional Living Case Manager is expected to submit monthly reports and a quarterly progress plan to the Adolescent Specialist regarding the youth.

## ***Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)***

DCF may offer the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) and provide financial assistance to youth who were committed uncared for, abused or neglected or dually committed as of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays who demonstrate an interest and ability to pursue post-secondary education or vocational training. DCF offers youth in care several living options coupled with support services to assist with their gradual move towards successful adult living. Housing options include but are not limited to individual and shared apartments, boarding arrangements and on-campus dormitories. Program funding is based on available DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with DCF policy.

### **Purpose**

DCF recognizes the importance of allowing youth in care the opportunity to practice living independently while still receiving supportive services to assist with their transition to adulthood. DCF offers youth in care several living options coupled with support services to assist with their gradual move towards successful adult living.

### **Eligibility and Program Requirements**

To be eligible for admission to the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP), youth shall:

- be DCF committed abused, neglected or uncared for or dually committed as of the youth's 18th birthday;
- have obtained a secondary school diploma or a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- have exhibited adequate social, behavioral and life skills as assessed by the Adolescent Specialist and documented in the case record;

- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post-Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday indicating his or her desire to continue receiving services;
- have successfully completed a DCF-approved life skills program;
- have a post-secondary education plan approved by the Post-Secondary Education Consultants;
- be enrolled and in good standing (in accordance with the standards of the institution) in an educational or vocational program; and
- have a referral packet reviewed and approved by the DCF Central Office CHAP Coordinator.

**Note:** Successful completion of the life skills program, alone, does not entitle a youth to CHAP admission.

### **Productive Hours**

Youth shall account for, at a minimum, 40 productive hours per week. A "productive hour" is defined as time devoted to classes, study time, extra-curricular activities, part-time work, internship, volunteering, training, apprenticeship, treatment activities or any combination of those activities.

Ten of the 40 hours **must** be dedicated to a part-time job, internship, training or apprenticeship or, the youth who cannot identify one of these four options, a volunteer experience for a minimum of ten hours per week.

During summer breaks, youth must work, participate in a summer youth employment program, take classes or intern in their chosen profession and save half of their earnings. Yearly documentation of a youth's savings plan and ability to provide for him- or herself after leaving DCF care must be documented in the LINK narrative each September.

### **Continuing Eligibility**

Youth in a post-secondary vocational training program may be eligible to continue receiving support from DCF through the end of the school year of his or her 21st birthday as long as he or she meets the aforementioned eligibility criteria.

Youth in a post-secondary college degree program may be eligible for extended support from DCF through the end of the school year during the year in which the youth turns 23 years of age as long as he or she has stayed in compliance with the continuation requirements.

Youth who are married or on active duty within any of the armed forces of the United States shall not be eligible for continuing CHAP services.

A DCF-2251 "CHAP Contract" shall be written by the Adolescent Specialist, with the youth and signed twice a year in conjunction with the ACR process. It shall be reviewed at the 90-day meeting and quarterly thereafter by the youth and the Adolescent Specialist and the Community Case Manager (if applicable), and shall include but not be limited to the following:

- agreed-upon place of residence;
- role and responsibilities of the youth, DCF, Community Case Manager and caregiver;
- plan for full-time educational or vocational program;

- financial arrangements (e.g., budget, savings);
- statement regarding a proposed timeline to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management;
- statement regarding the youth's successful completion of a DCF-approved life skills program or other recommended programming;
- statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements; and
- statement regarding DCF-approved roommates.

A youth may be discharged from the program if he or she has:

- achieved self-sufficiency to the extent that there is no longer a need for financial support or services from DCF;
- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program;
- passed from care or had commitment revoked by the court; or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the contract.

Youth who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing DCF benefits shall be given written notice through the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits," as soon as the youth is deemed to be out of compliance by the Adolescent Specialist. The youth's Adolescent Specialist shall also mail with the DCF-800 or give directly to the youth the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits." If the youth wishes to have a hearing, he or she must complete the reverse side of the DCF-800 and mail it to the Administrative Hearings Unit within 60 days of the date the notice was mailed. DCF shall hold a pre-hearing conference with the youth to review the DCF-2092, "Adolescent Transition Plan," and to discuss the details of the transition.

## **CHAP Funding**

### *Apartment Deposit*

DCF may provide a one-time apartment deposit for eligible CHAP youth. The apartment deposit may include the first and last month's rent but may not exceed the Area Office rental amount defined in this policy. If a youth successfully completes his or her post-secondary educational or vocational program, the youth may keep the deposit.

### *Start-Up Furniture*

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a maximum of \$1,500.00, which must be used for the purchase of furniture. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- kitchen – table and chairs;
- bedroom – bed frame, twin or full-size mattress and box spring and dresser; and
- living room – sofa and coffee table.

If a youth has obtained any or all of the above items through other means, he or she may negotiate with the Adolescent Specialist for the purchase of additional housing items.

#### *Housewares Start-Up Assistance*

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household supplies. Youth living in on-campus housing may access these funds for room start-up items if needed.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- pots, pans, utensils and dishes;
- towels and sheets; and
- cleaning supplies.

#### *Start-Up Food Supplies*

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a one-time payment voucher or a direct payment to a vendor not to exceed \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items.

#### **Monthly Subsidies**

The Adolescent Specialist and CHAP Case Manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

If the youth receives Social Security benefits or any other entitlements, these monies shall be subtracted from the funding limits provided in DCF policy and will be considered a part of the overall budget for the youth.

Once the subsidy is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth to spend on budgeted items. The youth shall save all cancelled checks and receipts for these expenditures, and the Adolescent Specialist and Community Case Manager shall monitor these items to assess the youth's compliance with his or her budget.

A provider number must be established at least 21 days prior to placement for youth entering CHAP. The CHAP subsidy must be processed in LINK by the fifth day of the month in order to cover expenses for the following month.

The following chart details the basic cost of living standard with a maximum subsidy of \$1,883:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Rent   | SFY 2013<br>\$709 - \$1,327<br>Rent will be based on the current HUD Fair Market rental rates for a one bedroom apartment that includes heat     |
| Stipend  | \$556<br>Stipend amounts are based on current cost of living per state and federal guidelines  |
| Food   | \$200  |
| Personal Care Items  | \$34   |
| Utilities (includes water, gas, and electricity, but not heat) | \$114  |
| Heat   | If not included in the rent, a subsidy for heat may be added but the total for rent and heat cannot exceed the maximum Area Office rental amount |
| Telephone  | \$50   |
| Transportation   | \$70   |
| Clothing   | \$88   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$1,265 - \$1,883</b>   |

The following chart shows the maximum rental payment available by Area Office:

| DCF Region | Area Offices | HUD 2013 |
|------------|--------------|----------|
| 1          | Bridgeport   | 967      |
|            | Norwalk      | 1,327    |
| 2          | Milford      | 1,047    |
|            | New Haven    | 1,047    |
| 3          | Middletown   | 883      |
|            | Norwich      | 829      |
|            | Willimantic  | 709      |
| 4          | Hartford     | 883      |
|            | Manchester   | 883      |
| 5          | Danbury      | 1,023    |
|            | Torrington   | 830      |
|            | Waterbury    | 772      |
| 6          | Meriden      | 1,055    |
|            | New Britain  | 883      |

**Note:** The subsidy may be below the \$1,883 limit.

### **Post-Secondary Education (PSE) and Vocational Youth**

When calculating a youth's monthly subsidy, the PSE annual funding limit must be taken into consideration. After tuition, books and fees are calculated and subtracted from the limit, the remaining amount may be used for rent and stipend as long as it is within the funding amounts identified. CHAP categories and line item limits contained within this policy may not be exceeded.

If a youth is participating in a paid internship, fellowship or any learning opportunity that involves a subsidy, this funding must be subtracted from the funding limits provided in this policy and will be considered as part of the overall budget for the youth.

Additional funding for housing and living are available for youth during school breaks if the youth has reached his or her PSE limit. Any funding for school breaks must follow the funding structure below.

If a PSE youth returns to stay with his or her biological parent(s) during school breaks, the youth is eligible for a CHAP stipend only.

### **Out-of-State PSE Youth**

If a youth is attending an approved PSE program out of state and is living off campus, the HUD Fair Market Rental Rates for that state and area where youth is living must be used when calculating monthly rental subsidies. DCF CHAP boarding rates must be utilized if a youth is boarding out of state. CHAP stipends are used for youth in out-of-state and boarding arrangements.

### **CHAP Categories**

#### *CHAP Post-Secondary Education Program (PSE) with Case Management*

Full-time college or vocational students, residing in their own apartment and receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider shall receive five hours of case management per week, of which three hours will be face-to-face contact and two hours will be collateral contacts.

#### *CHAP PSE Case Management Rate - Hourly*

The hourly case management rate can be used when additional case management hours, pre-service activities or travel are necessary. The DCF-2163, "Request for Additional Case Management Services (CHAP/CHEER)," must be submitted by the Area Office and sent to the Central Office CHAP Program Coordinator for approval.

#### *CHAP PSE without Case Management*

This service is for full-time students who have completed the case management and independent living skills program.

#### *CHAP PSE Stipend*

A youth who is in a full-time college or vocational program and who is residing on campus may receive a monthly stipend if, when the stipend is added to the cost of tuition, room and board, the total does not exceed the yearly PSE funding limits.

If a youth is attending a college or vocational program where housing or any of the stipend categories are being provided, the youth is eligible only for the categories not covered or for amounts that do not exceed the CHAP stipend amounts. This also applies to summer internships and bridge programs.

#### *CHAP PSE Boarding*

A youth who is attending a college or vocational program full-time and who is residing in the community with an approved caregiver or at an approved location is entitled to the following monthly subsidies:

| Categories     | 2013 Maximum Amounts |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Housing (rent) | 320                  |

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Utilities           | 114 |
| Heat                | 90  |
| Telephone           | 50  |
| Food                | 200 |
| Clothing            | 70  |
| Personal care items | 34  |

If the youth will be residing in the approved home of a relative, friend or former foster parent, the responsible adult(s) in the home must sign the youth's CHAP contract agreeing to such an arrangement. Roles, rules and responsibilities for all involved must be identified and agreed upon in the CHAP contract and be updated quarterly.

**Note:** Any funding going directly to an identified adult in the household for rent is considered taxable and reportable income.

### **Non-CHAP Adolescent Service Type**

For youth who are in secondary school, an adult education program or in a general equivalency diploma (GED) program, and in an approved living arrangement, the placement shall be entered in LINK under the service type "Non CHAP Adolescent," #791. This service type is ONLY authorized for Child Welfare Accounting (CWA) use. The Adolescent Specialist must make requests for this service type to the Central Office CHAP Program Lead. Upon approval from Central Office, CWA will enter the placement into LINK and will notify the Adolescent Specialist.

### **Payments for Minor Children**

Payments received by a youth for minor children in his or her custody shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income or the youth's DCF annual "cost of attendance" funding limit.

### **Earned Income**

Earned income is the net income from wages, salary or profits from employment.

Employment is a requirement under CHAP once the youth has demonstrated academic stability (e.g., following a successful freshman year). A youth must be employed for a minimum of ten hours per week and for no more than 20 hours per week. Youth must be willing to commit to a savings plan, as described below.

Fifty percent of a youth's earned income may be used for discretionary spending, as determined by the youth. The remaining 50% of earned income shall be deposited into an interest-bearing savings account and saved for the youth's transition period from DCF.

Savings and planning for a youth's transition from care must be documented in the CHAP contract at least every six months.

Employment during the summer is required, unless the youth is in summer school on a full-time basis. Employment sites should be geared toward providing youth with experiences related to their career goals whenever possible. Available unpaid internships related to the youth's course of study are also encouraged and, when appropriate, may be used as a substitute for paid summer employment. Youth must keep in mind what they will need to support themselves after leaving care when making decisions on unpaid internships vs. paid employment.

Youth taking summer classes or who are involved in a year-round vocational program are also encouraged to work. Work requirements will be based on the youth's individual program, number of hours dedicated to instruction, internships and other program requirements and will be adjusted accordingly.

Preparation for transitioning from care must be taken into consideration when waiving the employment requirement for youth. Youth will be required to submit their yearly savings account statement to their Adolescent Specialist to ensure that they do not leave DCF care inadequately funded. Social work staff will also be required to document in LINK each September the efforts made to assist and monitor youth with their planning for transition from care.

### **Community Case Management**

While involved in CHAP, a youth may receive two years of case management services up to his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Services may include:

- developing a DCF CHAP contract with the youth and DCF Adolescent Specialist;
- identification, development and support of permanent family and supportive relationships and network of community providers;
- assistance in developing a monthly budget;
- determining the monthly subsidy in collaboration with the youth;
- monitoring expenditures, at least monthly;
- providing crisis intervention;
- providing supportive intervention and on-going contact;
- providing community referral services;
- conducting a DCF-approved life skills assessment;
- developing individualized independent living plans and goals;
- conducting a strengths and needs assessment with the youth;
- monitoring and assessing the youth's educational status;
- assessing and understanding the youth's trauma history, triggers and successful coping mechanisms;
- assisting youth with management of behavioral health issues, including medication, by addressing how to access care, how to navigate the involved systems, and how to pay for services;
- monitoring the youth's employment status and adherence to the savings plan described above;

- submitting monthly, written case management progress reports that specify the desired outcomes, goals and objectives and the dates, times and number of case management hours; and
- submitting a quarterly life skills acquisition report that includes transition progress.

### **CHAP Contract**

A DCF-2251 "CHAP Contract" shall be written and signed twice a year in conjunction with the ACR process. It shall be reviewed at the 90-day meeting and reviewed quarterly by the youth and the Adolescent Specialist and the Community Case Manager (if applicable), and shall include but not be limited to the following:

- agreed-upon place of residence;
- role and responsibilities of the youth, DCF, Community Case Manager and caregiver;
- plan for full-time educational or vocational program;
- financial arrangements (*e.g.*, budget, savings);
- statement regarding a proposed time line to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management;
- statement regarding the youth's successful completion of a DCF-approved life skills program or other recommended programming;
- statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements; and
- statement regarding DCF-approved roommates.

### **Discharge from Participation**

A youth may be discharged from the program if he or she has:

- achieved self-sufficiency to the extent that there is no longer a need for financial support or services from DCF;
- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program;
- passed from care or has had commitment revoked by the court; or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the contract.

### **Discontinuation of Services and Transitioning from Care**

Youth who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing DCF benefits shall be given written notice through the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits." The DCF-800 shall be issued to the youth as soon as the youth is deemed to be out of compliance by the Adolescent Specialist. The Adolescent Specialist shall also mail with DCF-800 or give directly to the client the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits." If the youth wishes to have a hearing to contest the proposed action, he or she must complete the reverse side of the DCF-800 and mail it to the Administrative Hearings Unit at Central Office within 60 days from the date the notice was mailed.

Youth who wish to have their benefits continue pending the hearing decision must submit the hearing request to the Administrative Hearings Unit postmarked within ten days after the DCF-800 is mailed. The Adolescent Specialist will not take action on the benefit until after the ten-day period has expired, unless the client has signed the DCF-800A agreeing to the proposed action. Upon receipt of a request for a hearing within the ten-day period, the Administrative Hearings Unit will immediately notify the Area Office to continue benefits where appropriate. Under these circumstances, DCF shall continue to pay the existing expenses and subsidies until a final decision is issued by the Administrative Hearings Unit.

When a youth is discontinued from benefits or voluntarily chooses to leave DCF care, the Adolescent Specialist shall conduct a face-to-face Transition Plan meeting to discuss the transition. This should include, but is not limited to, scheduling an Administrative Case Review conference for the purpose of identifying community services and resources that will help the young adult with the transition and to help set up final medical and dental check-ups as required in DCF Policy 36-3, "Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan." DCF shall hold a conference with the youth and review the DCF-2092, "Adolescent Transition Plan," to discuss the details of the transition plan. The transition plan must be reviewed by the Adolescent Specialist and Program Manager to ensure the youth has been provided all legal documents and has maximized on all available services. The youth should be made aware of available community resources, employment and educational opportunities.

The DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form," shall be completed by the Adolescent Specialist and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the youth passes from care. Some youth may be eligible for continued medical insurance through the Department of Social Services (DSS). Youth must be informed by the Adolescent Specialist that they must contact DSS directly for such a determination and for information as to what will be needed for them to continue with DSS benefits.

## ***Adolescent Parent Program and Funding***

### **Introduction**

DCF shall provide funding for a youth in care who is the custodial parent of a minor child.

DCF recognizes the importance of providing specific and targeted services to youth who become pregnant or who are parents while in care. Services will begin immediately following a pregnancy disclosure and will include medical care (physical and behavioral health counseling). DCF will ensure that all children born to youth who are in and remain in care are provided with services and supports that will allow them to live in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

All services and opportunities that will assist the youth to become a healthy, responsible parent (*e.g.*, fatherhood training) shall be made available within DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with policy.

The Adolescent Specialist shall enter into LINK the expected due date of a pregnancy and the outcome. When a birth has been confirmed and paternity has been legally established, the child's information shall be entered and linked to the youth in care in the electronic record.

### **Financial Assistance - Under the Age of 18**

The Adolescent Specialist shall ensure that a committed youth under the age of 18 who is the custodial parent of a minor child is enrolled in Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) through the Department of Social Services (DSS). TFA provides:

- licensed day care so the youth may attend secondary school;
- medical coverage; and
- financial payments for the minor child.

TFA does not cover employment-related day care expenses for minor parents, and the program is discontinued upon the client's 18th birthday.

DCF will pay day care expenses incurred by the youth for work-related purposes. If written notification is received from DSS that day care funds through that agency are exhausted, DCF shall pay for the cost of a licensed day care provider.

### **Financial Assistance - Age 18 and Older**

Youth aged 18 or older who are CHAP, CHEER or SWETP participants and are the custodial parent of a child shall receive financial assistance from DCF. DCF payments shall include funds for:

- the youth's living needs;
- the minor child (at \$100.00 per month per child if not already included in the program rate); and
- licensed day care if needed.

Medical coverage for the minor child shall be provided by DSS.

### **Net Income**

Payments for minor children shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income.

### **Essential Parenting Equipment**

DCF shall provide DCF-committed adolescents who are CHAP, CHEER or SWETP participants, and are the custodial parents of a minor child, with essential parenting equipment that cannot be secured through Covenant to Care or other donor sources. Examples of items include, but are not limited to, crib and mattress, stroller, car seat and diaper bag. Additional major equipment items may be purchased for the adolescent parent if there is a demonstrated need (e.g., special medical equipment, playpen, backpack carrier.)

Adolescent parents shall be encouraged to utilize resources such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) or Covenant to Care to help defray other expenses.

The Adolescent Specialist will assist the youth with developing a list of necessary start-up items and the costs. The Adolescent Specialist shall obtain approval for the cost of baby start-up items from the Social Work Supervisor and Program Manager. Approved requests must be entered into and paid through LINK.

### **Documentation**

The Adolescent Specialist shall document in the LINK narrative the requests for, and provision of, financial assistance and equipment.

A copy of the youth's CHAP or CHEER contract shall be kept in the Uniform Case Record.

# **POLICY 42-5**

## **Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER)**

### **Introduction**

The Department of Children and Families may offer a Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resource (CHEER) that provides financial assistance to youth who were committed uncared for, abused, neglected or dually committed as of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays and who demonstrate strong motivation and the ability to pursue a post-secondary employment training and career development program. Such programs may include non-certified vocational or technical training and apprenticeship programs or job readiness development and job placement.

DCF recognizes the need to provide youth in care with opportunities that will lead to gainful employment and assist with self-sufficiency as an alternative to a college education or formal vocational program. For youth who were committed as of their eighteenth birthday and deemed eligible may be offered the opportunity to participate in an employment training or career development program while practicing living in the community. Youth will gradually assume the cost of their care during this time-limited period. Participating youth will also have the opportunity to transfer into a post-secondary or vocational program if they have not yet reached their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. (Alternately, a youth may be eligible to participate in CHEER after participating in a post-secondary or vocational program if they have not yet reached the age of 21.)

CHEER services shall be available on a voluntary basis to a youth 18 or older, immediately following secondary school graduation or completion of GED, and for a time period not to exceed 18 months. A youth who has not yet reached his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and has already participated in one post-secondary educational or vocational program may be eligible for CHEER.

Youth participating in CHEER may elect to change programs one time and enroll in a post-secondary educational or vocational program if they have not reached their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. CHEER youth must make their decision and apply for a PSE program by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> month in order to be eligible for this additional opportunity. All requests for PSE plan programs will need to include a complete PSE packet that has been approved by the Area Office Adolescent Program Manager and submitted to the DCF post-secondary education staff for final review and approval. If approved, this program will be considered the youth's second program or "bite."

A youth who has participated in a PSE program may elect to participate in or be given CHEER as their second post-secondary opportunity.

### **Volunteer Experience**

A youth may also be approved to participate in a formally-recognized volunteer community service program for up to one year immediately following secondary school graduation. Only youth who have been accepted into a degree-awarding college program and deferred such acceptance, may participate in this volunteer experience. All volunteer programs must be

approved by Post-Secondary Education staff. Youth will be eligible for subsidies allowed under the CHEER policy but will be exempt from the reduction formula during this year as long as they are in compliance with the program. If the volunteer program provides any funding for living expenses, this funding will be subtracted from allowable line items.

If a youth successfully completes such volunteer experience he may continue with DCF and pursue a PSE program as long as he remains in compliance with the eligibility criteria outlined in Policy 42-4.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for admission for Community Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER), youth shall:

- be DCF committed (abused, neglected, uncared for, dually), at the time of the youth's 18th birthday;
- have obtained a secondary school diploma or graduate equivalency diploma (GED);
- have exhibited adequate social, behavioral and life skills, per Adolescent Specialist assessment and case record;
- have signed a DCF 779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post-Majority (SPM)", prior to the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday indicating his or her desire to continue receiving services;
- have successfully completed a DCF-approved life skills program;
- is highly motivated to pursue employment training or job readiness services that will lead to gainful employment;
- must demonstrate weekly activities consistent with job training or job acquisition for 40 hours per week;
- must have a Post-Secondary Employment Training Plan (CHEER Plan) approved by the CHEER liaison and Area Office Adolescent Program Manager; and
- have a referral packet reviewed and approved by the DCF Central Office CHEER Coordinator.

For continued eligibility, youth must be in good standing, per the standards of the employment program, as well as in compliance with DCF policies;

**Note:** Successful completion of the life skills program alone does not entitle youth to CHEER admission.

### **CHEER Contract**

A DCF-2252, "CHEER Contract" shall be written by the Adolescent Specialist and the youth and signed twice a year as part of the ACR process. The CHEER contract shall be reviewed quarterly by the youth, the Adolescent Specialist and the Community Case Manager (if applicable).

The CHEER contract shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- an agreed-upon place of residence;

- roles and responsibilities of the youth, DCF and the Community Case Manager;
- a plan for full-time employment training and employment;
- financial arrangements (e.g., budget, savings);
- a statement regarding a proposed timeline to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management;
- a statement regarding the youth's successful completion in a DCF-approved Life Skills Program or other recommended programming;
- a statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements; and
- a statement regarding DCF-approved roommates.

### **Productive Hours**

Youth shall account for a minimum of 40 productive hours per week. A "productive hour" is defined as time devoted to classes, study time, part-time work, internship, volunteering (if approved), training, apprenticeship, treatment activities, transportation time used for these activities, and any combination of these activities.

### **Continuing Eligibility**

Youth shall remain eligible for services as long as they are in good standing with the standards of the employment program and are in compliance with the requirements of the CHEER contract. The DCF CHEER contract will be reviewed quarterly for compliance.

Youth who are married or on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States shall not be eligible for continuing CHEER services.

### **Monthly Subsidy**

The Adolescent Specialist and CHAP Community Case Manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

Once the subsidy is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth to spend on budget items. The youth shall save all documentation for said expenditures and the Adolescent Specialist and Community Case Manager shall monitor these items to assess the youth's compliance with his or her budget.

Youth will be required to save and deposit into an interest bearing savings account 50% of income from employment during the first nine months. Youth will begin to assume a portion of the cost of his or her care at month ten\* utilizing earnings from employment. Monthly subsidies will be reduced by 25% each quarter beginning at the 4th quarter or at the beginning of month 10. Subsidies will be reduced by 25% each quarter thereafter.

\*If an employment training program is longer than 10 months, the reduction in subsidy begins in the quarter following program completion and when youth is working.

Example:

- From month 1 to month 9, youth will receive the full monthly subsidy and is saving 50% of his or her earnings from employment.
- From month 10 through month 12, youth will receive 75% of their monthly subsidy.
- From month 13 through month 15, youth will receive 50% of their monthly subsidy.
- From month 16 through month 18, youth will receive 25% of their monthly subsidy.

The CHEER subsidy must be processed in LINK by the fifth day of the month in order to cover expenses for the following month. The LINK payment request should show the fifth of the month as the Request Date and the last Friday of the month as the Scheduled Date. In order for a youth to enter CHEER, the Adolescent Specialist must establish a provider number for the youth at least 21 days prior to placement.

### **CHEER Funding**

#### *Apartment Deposit*

DCF may provide a one-time apartment deposit for eligible CHEER youth. The apartment deposit may include the first and last months' rent but may not exceed the Area office rental amount as set forth in DCF policy. If a youth successfully completes his or her post-secondary employment program, the youth may keep the deposit.

#### *Start-Up Furniture*

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a maximum of \$1,500.00, which must be used for the purchase of furniture.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- kitchen – table and chairs;
- bedroom – bed frame, twin or full-size mattress and box spring and dresser; and
- living room – sofa and coffee table.

If a youth has obtained any or all of the above items through donations, he or she may negotiate with the Adolescent Specialist for the purchase of additional housing items.

#### *Housewares Start-Up Assistance*

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household supplies.

If youth is in a program where housing is provided, youth may access these funds for room start-up costs as needed.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- pots, pans, utensils and dishes;
- towels and sheets; and
- cleaning supplies.

*Start-Up Food Supplies*

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items only.

*The following details the basic cost of living standard with a maximum subsidy of \$1,883:*

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Rent  | SFY 2013<br>\$709 - \$1,327 |
| Stipend   | \$556                       |
| Food  | \$200                       |
| Personal Care Items   | \$34                        |
| Utilities (includes water, gas, and electricity, but not heat, as it is included in rental allotment) | \$114                       |
| Heat (if not included in the rent, may be added but cannot exceed area office rental amount )         |                             |
| Telephone   | \$50                        |
| Transportation  | \$70                        |
| Clothing  | \$88                        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$1,265 - \$1,883</b>    |

*Rental Rates - for one bedroom apartment*

| DCF Region | Area Offices | HUD 2013 |
|------------|--------------|----------|
| 1          | Bridgeport   | 967      |
|            | Norwalk      | 1,327    |
| 2          | Milford      | 1,047    |
|            | New Haven    | 1,047    |
| 3          | Middletown   | 883      |
|            | Norwich      | 829      |
|            | Willimantic  | 709      |
| 4          | Hartford     | 883      |
|            | Manchester   | 883      |
| 5          | Danbury      | 1,023    |
|            | Torrington   | 830      |
|            | Waterbury    | 772      |
| 6          | Meriden      | 1,055    |
|            | New Britain  | 883      |

**Calculating the Monthly Subsidy**

The subsidy may be below the HUD rate limit. If heat is not included in the rent, the amount for heat and rent combined cannot exceed the limit for rent for that Area Office.

When calculating a youth's monthly subsidy, the post-secondary education (PSE) annual funding limit must be taken into consideration. After training costs, materials or other fees related to the approved program are calculated and subtracted from the yearly PSE limit, the remaining amount may be used for rent and stipend as long as it is within funding amounts identified. CHEER categories and line item limits may not be exceeded.

If a youth is participating in a paid internship, fellowship or any learning opportunity that pays a subsidy, this funding is to be subtracted from the funding limits provided in this policy and is considered as part of the overall budget for youth.

If a CHEER youth returns to stay with his or her biological parent(s) during program breaks, youth is eligible for CHEER stipend only.

### **CHEER Stipend Only**

Full-time CHEER youth who are participating in a program where housing and living expenses are being provided may receive the subsidy only. Any funding for living expenses provided by the program must be subtracted from allowable policy limits.

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Food                | \$100 |
| Personal Care Items | \$34  |
| Telephone           | \$50  |
| Transportation      | \$70  |
| Clothing            | \$88  |

### **CHEER Boarding**

Full-time CHEER youth residing in the community with an approved caregiver or at an approved location, *e.g.*, former foster home, relative, friend or boarding home.\*

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Food                | \$200 |
| Personal Care Items | \$34  |
| Utilities           | \$114 |
| Heat                | \$90  |
| Telephone           | \$50  |
| Transportation      | \$70  |
| Clothing            | \$88  |

\*If the youth will be residing in a relative's, friend's or former foster home, the responsible adult(s) in the home must sign off on youth's CHEER contract agreeing to such an arrangement. The roles, rules and responsibilities of all involved must be identified and agreed upon in the youth's CHEER contract and updated quarterly.

**Note:** Any funding going directly to the identified adult in the household for rent is considered taxable and reportable income.

### **Out-of-State CHEER Youth**

If a youth is attending an approved CHEER program out-of-state and living arrangements are not provided, the HUD Fair Market Rental Rates for that state and area where youth is living must be used when calculating monthly rental subsidies. DCF CHEER boarding rates shall be used if youth is boarding out-of-state. CHEER stipends are used for youth in out-of-state and boarding arrangements.

### **CHEER Categories**

#### *CHEER with Case Management*

Full-time CHEER youth residing in their own apartments and receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider. This service includes five hours of case management per week: three hours face-to-face and two hours for collateral contact.

#### *CHEER Case Management Rate - Hourly*

To be used for hourly case management, additional case management hours, pre-service activities and travel. The DCF-2163, "Request for Additional Case Management Services (CHAP/CHEER)," must be submitted by the Area Office and sent to the Central Office CHEER Program Coordinator for approval. Private CHAP providers are eligible to provide CHEER case management hours.

#### *CHEER without Case Management*

Full-time CHEER youth residing in their own apartments and NOT receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider.

### **Part-Time Attendance Criteria**

Youth may be approved for CHEER on a part-time basis with the approval of the Commissioner or designee if:

- the youth presents with or develops a physical health, behavioral health or substance abuse need;
- the youth has been identified as special education student or the youth has had a 504 Accommodation Plan and continues to need special accommodations; or
- the Commissioner has approved a special exception;

AND

- the youth otherwise meets the criteria set forth in this policy.

Youth approved for a part-time employment enrichment plan will be responsible for a minimum of 20 productive hours as defined in this policy.

### **Non CHAP Adolescent Service Type**

For youth who are in secondary school, adult education or in a general equivalency diploma (GED) program, and in an approved boarding living arrangement, the placement shall be entered in LINK under the service type "Non CHAP Adolescent" #791. This service type is ONLY authorized for Child Welfare Accounting (CWA) use. The Adolescent Specialist will make requests for this service type to the CO CHEER Program Coordinator. Upon approval from CO, CWA will enter the placement in LINK and will notify the Adolescent Specialist.

Funding for a "Non-CHAP Adolescent Service Type," #791 placement that is considered "boarding" is limited to the CHEER boarding funding limits stated above.

### **Payments for Minor Children**

Payments received by the youth for minor children in his or her custody shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income or the youth's PSE funding limit.

Youth who are the custodial parents of a minor child and who are participating in CHEER are eligible for the benefits outlined in DCF Policy 42-3, "Adolescent and Young Adult Programs."

### **Community Case Management**

While involved in CHEER, a youth may receive CHAP case management services until his or her 21st birthday, which include the following:

- development of a DCF CHEER contract with the Adolescent Specialist;
- identification, development and support of permanent family and fictive kin relationships and a network of community providers;
- assistance in developing a monthly budget;
- a monthly subsidy;
- monitoring of employment income and savings plan requirements;
- monitoring of expenditures;
- a DCF-approved Life Skills Assessment;
- a strength/needs assessment with the youth;
- monitoring and assessing of employment status;
- assistance with educational and career exploration;
- crisis intervention;
- trauma-informed training;
- supportive intervention and on-going contact;
- community referral services;
- monthly case management written progress reports that contain specific dates, times and number of case management hours; and
- a quarterly life skills acquisition report including transition planning progress.

### **Discharge from Participation**

A youth may be discharged from the program if he or she has:

- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program; or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the CHEER contract and DCF decides to discharge the youth from participation.

## **POLICY 42-6**

### **Working with Detained and Incarcerated Youth**

#### **Introduction**

The Department of Children and Families shall continue to support and plan for detained and incarcerated youth during the pretrial period and, if sentenced to the custody of the Department of Correction (DOC) for 12 months or less, continuing through the period of incarceration when the youth:

- is committed as abused, neglected, uncared for or delinquent or when the Commissioner is the youth's statutory parent;
- was in a DCF out-of-home placement immediately prior to detention or incarceration;
- is under the age of 21; and
- is otherwise eligible for continued DCF services.

#### **Rationale**

Youth who are committed to DCF and who are subsequently incarcerated may lack appropriate family supports and have no contact outside the correctional facility. The DCF Area Office or Juvenile Justice Social Worker may be the youth's only source of support and information.

#### **Bail Policy**

In cases in which a DCF youth is arrested and bail is set, DCF shall not post the bond.

#### **Incarcerated Youth who are not Committed or in DCF Out-of-Home Placement**

In cases in which an incarcerated youth or the youth's family is involved with DCF but the youth is not committed to DCF or is not in a DCF out-of-home placement, the Social Worker shall assist the family by providing reasonable and available services such as transportation to visit the youth and accompanying the family to court hearings.

#### ***Incarcerated Youth Who are Committed and were in a DCF Out-of-Home Placement***

When DCF learns that a youth is in DOC custody, DCF shall inform DOC of the youth's legal status. For those youth who are committed to DCF, or for whom DCF is the statutory parent, and who were in out-of-home placement, the Social Worker shall request to be notified by DOC if any other party seeks to affect the release of the youth.

DCF shall assess the incarcerated youth to determine if it is appropriate to seek his or her release. This assessment shall include a review of the history of the youth and his or her family, the current situation and the offense for which the youth is incarcerated. This information shall be used to determine whether:

- release appears to be in the youth's best interest;
- release will pose a threat to the youth or to others; and

- release will be a threat to the community.

If it is determined that the youth can be safely released, the Social Worker shall develop an appropriate discharge plan, including an alternative placement. This plan shall be presented to the criminal court through the State's Attorney and the youth's criminal defense attorney, and the Social Worker may advocate that it be accepted and agreed to as an alternative to incarceration.

If the youth is assessed as ready for release but does not have a court date within a reasonable period of time, the Social Worker shall consult with DCF legal staff and the youth's criminal defense attorney to determine how to bring the release plan to the attention of the court.

For those youth who have been assessed as not ready for release, continued efforts shall be made by the Social Worker to provide appropriate services during the period of incarceration. Services shall include, but not be limited to, arranging for family members to visit the youth, reasonable commissary deposits, and regular visits and other contact with the Social Worker.

### **Planning for Incarcerated Youth**

The DCF-DOC liaison shall arrange for, invite participants to, and attend an Initial Planning Conference (IPC) for a youth prior to the next criminal court hearing.

The IPC shall be held at the correctional facility whenever possible and include appropriate correctional staff.

Other invitees shall include the youth whenever possible, all appropriate DCF staff, service providers, family members and the youth's attorney and guardian ad litem, if applicable.

For those youth having significant mental health or addiction problems or who are cognitively limited, invitees may also include DCF Central Office staff, as well as staff from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) or the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

### **Services to DCF Youth upon Release**

In collaboration with the youth's primary DOC clinician and the DCF-DOC liaison, the Social Worker shall make timely referrals to appropriate community resources to promote a successful transition from DOC custody and continuity of care.

The Social Worker, along with the DCF-DOC liaison, shall develop a plan to fill the youth's medication prescriptions at the time of release.

## **POLICY 42-7 – Adolescent Transition Planning**

### **Introduction**

The DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form" shall be completed by the Adolescent Specialist and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the young adult passes from care. Youth will be responsible to continue their medical insurance coverage and eligibility by contacting DSS when they pass from care.

DCF shall develop an Adolescent Transition Plan (DCF-2092) for each youth in DCF care at age 16 for the purpose of permanency planning and preparation for transition from care. Transition planning shall be youth-driven and based on the youth's identified needs prior to and at the time of transition. The Transition Plan shall be reviewed at the first Administrative Case Review after the youth's 16th birthday.

DCF recognizes the importance of assisting youth in care with the development of a meaningful transition plan that will assist them when discharging from care and becoming self-sufficient.

### **Adolescent Transition Plan ACR**

The Adolescent Specialist shall develop the Adolescent Transition Plan (DCF-2092) in collaboration with the youth beginning at age 16<sup>th</sup> and reviewed at the next ACR. The Transition Plan shall be reviewed and revised at subsequent ACR's as long as the youth remains in DCF care.

Before the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and in addition to revising the Treatment Plan, the youth and his or her attorney shall be given the "Appointment of Health Care Representative" (DCF-3013) and the "Living Will" (DCF-3014) and informed of their rights to appoint someone who can make health care treatment decisions on their behalf. If youth is not legally represented, youth will be offered legal assistance to help understand and complete forms.

For youth 18 and older who are transitioning from DCF care the Transition Plan shall be updated and a transition plan shall be developed and reviewed at an ACR within the 90 prior to discharge.

The ACR shall be held at a place and time that meet the youth's needs.

**Note:** A Transition Plan shall be reviewed for each youth transitioning from DCF care after age 16, even if he or she is being terminated from DCF services due to non-compliance.

**Cross reference:** Policy 36-3, Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan.

### ***Adolescent Transition Plan Conference Invitees***

The conference invitees shall include:

- the Adolescent Specialist;
- the Social Work Supervisor;

- the youth;
- any significant individuals, as requested by the youth, especially family members and supportive adults;
- youth's attorney;
- youth's guardian *ad litem* (GAL);
- foster parent or caregiver;
- Regional Education Consultant or LEA representative; and
- Regional Resource Group, if applicable; and
- community service providers.

The Adolescent Specialist shall document the invitations in LINK.

### ***Adolescent Transition Plan Conference Topics***

Topics which shall be discussed at the Transition Planning portion of the ACR conference include, but are not limited to:

#### *Safety (Physical and Psychological):*

- any difficulties with the move toward more independence which the foster parents, biological parents, relatives or any professional who has been providing services to the youth foresee.

#### *Permanency:*

- the identification of any adults committed to providing a supportive long term relationship and a description of their commitment to the youth; and
- expectations about the youth's continuation with any services or program.

#### *Well-Being:*

- any concerns the youth has about being transitioned from the care of DCF;
- any benefits which the youth shall be entitled to such as Social Security and medical coverage;
- any benefits or services which will or may be discontinued, and the effects on the youth's plan; and
- re-entry services policy.

### **Transition Plan**

The Transition Plan shall be personalized in collaboration with the youth, and be as detailed as the youth chooses and will include specific options for:

- the anticipated date the youth will leave DCF care;
- names and contact information for at least three significant family members or other adults;
- the youth's anticipated living arrangements;

- an estimated budget;
- sources and amount of income;
- health insurance;
- education;
- local opportunities for mentoring;
- continuing support services, including application for benefits and how to access;
- workforce supports;
- employment services;
- immigration services, to the extent not previously addressed; and
- any other needs the youth may have.

**Note:** The Adolescent Specialist shall consult with the Fiscal Services Division in Central Office and shall document any trust account funds owed to the youth. If there are trust funds, the Adolescent Specialist shall assist the youth in obtaining proper financial management services and arrange for the funds to be disbursed at the time of the youth's transition.

### **Appointment of Health Care Representative for the Youth**

The Transition Plan shall also include information about the importance of designating another individual to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of the youth if the youth becomes unable to participate in such decisions and the youth does not have, or does not want, a relative who would otherwise be authorized under state law to make such decisions.

At the ACR at which the Transition Plan is reviewed, a youth over the age of 18 shall be given the option to execute either a DCF-3013, "Appointment of Health Care Representative" or a DCF-3014, "Living Will." The Adolescent Specialist shall provide these documents to the youth and his or her attorney prior to the ACR so that the youth may consult with the attorney and make an informed legal decision regarding whether to execute either document. Youth who do not have legal representation may request assistance with understanding and completing these forms.

**Note:** The DCF-3013 and DCF-3014 are legal documents. Read the instructions on each form carefully and do not make any changes to the documents without legal consultation.

### **Documents to Which the Youth is Entitled**

Upon transition from care, each youth who is over 18 years of age, and the legal guardian of a youth who is under 18 years of age, shall be given a copy of:

- educational records;
- medical records including medical history of family members (biological parents/siblings, other relatives), to the extent known and obtained from DCF records, as the law allows;
- original birth certificate and an extra copy;
- original social security card and an extra copy;
- passport; and
- immigration and citizenship papers.

**Note:** As with all case records, consult with the Area Office legal staff before turning over confidential records.

### **Youth Not Available**

If the youth's whereabouts are unknown, the Adolescent Specialist shall send a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits," to:

- the youth at his or her last known address;
- the youth's most recent caregiver;
- the youth's attorney and guardian *ad litem* (GAL); and
- any person, including a provider, who may have knowledge of the whereabouts of the youth.

#### *Appeal*

If the youth chooses to appeal DCF's discontinuance of benefits, he or she may request that a Fair Hearing be held pursuant to the instructions on the DCF-800.

### **Decision to Decline Services**

Any youth who is older than 18 years of age may decline services following an Adolescent Transition Plan Conference. DCF shall not accept a decision to decline services by committed youth who are younger than 18 years of age, unless a transition from DCF care has been sanctioned by a court order such as a revocation of commitment or emancipation.

DCF understands that normative adolescent development includes separating from parents, adults and authority figures in order to experience for themselves more independence. Despite DCF's best efforts to offer supports and services to older youth in care, many chose to leave. To ensure that a youth is making an informed decision and leaves with as much information and documentation as possible, DCF requires that prior to discharging from care, the youth participate in an Adolescent Transition Planning Conference.

#### *Youth Older than 18 years of Age*

Any youth who is older than 18 years of age may decline services following an Adolescent Transition Planning Conference by:

- receiving the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits;" and
- signing the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits."

Youth who are declining services after turning 18 years of age may also be eligible to re-enter the Adolescent Services Program and should be informed of this option and provided with the policy.

**Note:** Youth who have not completed secondary education may apply for Re-Entry Services but must comply with policies and guidelines set forth in this document.

Youth who decline services after turning 18 years of age may also be eligible for continued medical benefits and should be informed of these rights and their responsibilities.

The DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form" shall be completed by the Adolescent Specialist and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the young adult passes from care. Youth will be responsible to keep in contact with DSS when they pass from care if they remain eligible for medical coverage.

#### *Youth Refuses Further Services*

The youth shall be apprised of continuum of care opportunities as well as services available if he or she remains eligible. Issues to be discussed include medical coverage, behavioral health services educational opportunities, identification, development and support of lifelong connections and permanent family relationships.

If, after discussion of the above topics, the youth, who is over the age of 18 still wishes to leave care, he or she shall read and sign the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits," through which the youth acknowledges that he or she is leaving care.

#### *Uncooperative Youth under Age 18*

The Adolescent Specialist shall conscientiously pursue efforts to advise the committed youth who:

- is on runaway status;
- is experiencing placement disruptions;
- is presenting with signs and symptoms of adverse childhood experiences and/or child traumatic stress including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- is unengaged in services; or
- has sought alternative placement.

In addition, strong efforts must be employed to persuade the youth to remain in care. If, nonetheless, a CPS-committed youth continues to refuse services, the Adolescent Specialist shall file a Motion to Revoke Commitment with the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters.

## **POLICY 42-8 - Re-entry to Adolescent Services Program**

### **Introduction**

DCF recognizes that many DCF youth leave care without being fully prepared for self-sufficiency and to become productive members of society. In order to assist these youth, DCF allows eligible youth to return and re-enter care for educational or vocational or employment services which can lead to gainful employment. Youth who have left care without completing their secondary education are especially vulnerable and are at most risk of living in poverty, being homeless or requiring the assistance from other state and federal agencies.

### **Eligibility**

A youth may apply for re-entry to the Adolescent Services Program if the youth:

- was committed as abused, neglected or uncared, or dually committed, at the time of his or her 18th birthday;
- left DCF care after age 18, but before age 21, and did not participate in two post-secondary education or employment training programs;
- has had his or her case closed for at least 90 days in LINK, or has had services discontinued for at least 90 days (may be waived if the youth is pregnant or parenting);
- has proof of an educational plan, including transcripts, certificates, report cards, proof of enrollment or acceptance or start date letters;
- is not married; and
- is not on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States.

**Note:** For the purposes of this policy, "active duty" is defined as a full-time occupation as part of a military force.

If a youth has not attained a high school diploma and is pursuing a GED, approval from the Commissioner or Regional Administrator or designee shall be required for re-entry. A youth who has been approved to attend a GED program shall be required to accept additional support services that may include tutoring, in order for the youth to complete the GED program in six months. These youth shall be encouraged to simultaneously enroll in an employment training program or sequentially pursue a post-secondary education or training program.

If a youth seeking re-entry has been determined, as a result of a substance abuse assessment, to be in need of in-patient or extensive outpatient treatment, the youth shall be encouraged to complete treatment prior to re-entry.

**Note:** Youth who have already participated in two post-secondary educational or employment programs are not eligible for re-entry to Adolescent Services Program.

## **Program Goal**

If a youth applies for re-entry and is found eligible, he or she will be eligible to:

1. re-enter and follow an "Adolescent Services Service Agreement" (DCF-2166A), which will include the necessary steps to maintain eligibility; or
2. re-enter and enroll in an approved educational program;

## **Program Components**

Adolescents who are approved for re-entry may be eligible to participate in appropriate services as determined by DCF. These services include, but are not limited to:

- referrals to community services;
- referrals to obtain medical, behavioral health, substance abuse, cognitive, educational and vocational evaluations;
- referrals for trauma assessment or treatment;
- assistance with coordination of services;
- case management services;
- assistance with obtaining needed documents;
- assistance with obtaining medical benefits;
- financial assistance for secondary and post-secondary educational and vocational programming; and
- assistance with transitioning to community providers.

**Note:** The primary focus of re-entry shall be post-secondary or vocational education or employment training. Re-entry shall not be construed as a housing program.

## **Process for Requesting Re-entry Services**

For re-entry into the Adolescent Services Program, a youth must contact the DCF Careline to initiate the process.

### *DCF Careline Staff Duties:*

- document the referral and submit the information to the Regional Re-entry Liaison; and
- conduct an in-state criminal background check.

### *Regional Re-entry Liaison Duties:*

- review the request;

- review LINK closing summary for history and basic information;
  - review hearing outcomes;
  - contact the previous worker to assess viability of applicant and obtain a recommendation;
  - consult with the Post-Secondary Education staff on the secondary or post-secondary educational plan; and
- if applicable;
- contact and consult with the DMHAS or DDS liaison;
  - contact applicant to schedule interview;
  - assess or refer the youth for medical and behavioral health, substance abuse or educational evaluations or services;
  - send the youth the DCF-2095, "Application for Re-Entry to Adolescent Services Program," by certified mail or email;
  - document the re-entry request and outcome in LINK; and
  - obtain a Commissioner's waiver, if necessary for policy exceptions

*Youth Responsibilities:*

- be willing to sign a DCF-2131(T), "Release of Information;"
- be willing to cooperate with educational, vocational, behavioral health or substance abuse assessments as recommended;
- provide proof of acceptance or enrollment to an educational or vocational program;
- provide secondary and post-secondary education documentation (e.g., transcripts, report cards, diploma);
- provide proof of substance abuse screening, if applicable;
- provide a letter from behavioral health provider, if applicable;
- agree to an aptitude, interests or personality assessment from a credentialed provider if recommended by a Post-Secondary Education Consultant; and
- incorporate the assessment recommendations into his or her plan for post-secondary education.

*Regional Re-entry Liaison Responsibilities:*

- if case is accepted for re-entry, create a Voluntary Service Re-Entry intake in LINK and assign the case to the Area Office Worker;
- base Area Office assignment on the youth's input and location, availability of services, the educational or employment training plan, and the location where the youth would ultimately like to reside and where he or she feels most connected and supported; and
- if the case is transferred to a new Area Office, convene a transfer meeting to include the Area Office Social Work Supervisor and Social Worker.

The Regional Re-entry Liaison will track each youth by presenting quarterly data utilizing the Results Based Accountability model.

**Note:** If the case is not accepted for re-entry, the Liaison will document the reasons in LINK and the close the case.

*Social Worker Responsibilities:*

- review all the information and documentation;
- explain to the youth the expectations and the length of service and limitations;
- develop a "Adolescent Services Service Agreement" (DCF-2166A); and
- provide services.

**Substance Abuse**

If, as a result of a substance abuse assessment, it is determined that the youth requires in-patient treatment services or extensive outpatient services, which preclude attendance in a full-time educational program, the youth shall be encouraged to complete treatment prior to re-entry.

**Criminal History**

Youth may be determined to be ineligible for re-entry services if he or she has serious criminal charges pending or is currently on probation or incarcerated.

Youth requesting re-entry services who are coming directly from incarceration are required to agree to the following:

- sign a DCF-2166A that includes a statement that he or she will demonstrate an appropriate level of commitment and conduct that will allow him or her to benefit from any programs or services that may be offered; and
- provide parole or probation orders to the Re-entry Coordinator.