



STATE OF GEORGIA
Division of Family and Children Services

Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby D. Cagle
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Child Placing Agency and Child Caring Institution Providers
Regional and County DFCS Staff

FROM: Dianne Yearby Kelly, Director
Foster Care Services

Carol Winstead, Director
Office of Inspector General, Residential Child Care

DATE: January 15, 2015

RE: New Directions in ILP

The Division of Family and Children Services recently released the updated Independent Living Program (ILP) policy of the Child Welfare Policy Manual. This memorandum outlines key changes and implications for DFCS and RBWO providers.

EYSS: Practice Changes

The new ILP policy includes a key policy change and philosophical shift regarding our provision of Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS). Emancipating youth¹ are no longer required to “sign back into care” upon turning 18 years old but rather their continued stay in foster care is automatic unless the youth provides notification of their intent to “opt out”² (see Chapter 13.9). Simply delaying youths’ eventual exit from care is not the objective, however, it is a starting point in making positive changes in our provision of independent living services. It affords youth and the child welfare system an extended opportunity to help youth prepare for independence. Many studies and reports point to the poor outcomes that youth face when they leave care upon emancipation. Issues like homelessness, untimely pregnancy, incarceration, and unemployment often plague these youth. Over the next five years, together with youth, we will build a new EYSS practice model³ with a focus on improving these outcomes for Georgia youth.

As a result of the EYSS practice shift, more emancipated youth will remain in care and for longer periods of time (up to age 21 years). Foster caregivers and group home providers are a critical component in supporting this shift. DFCS and Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) must meet with their foster caregivers to discuss this as well as to provide them supports as they serve these older youth. Child Caring Institutions (CCIs) should expect an increase in referrals for youth over 18 years old as well and adjust programming to serve youth up to age 21. CPAs and CCIs are also asked to assist DFCS with ensuring that emancipating youth under their care understand their EYSS options and eligibility to receive ILP services.

¹ Emancipating youth refers to youth in foster care who turn 18 years while in care.

² Notification is made via the *Notification to Opt Out of Extended Youth Support Services Program* form.

³ The project’s working title is Connected by 21 or CB21.

Residential Child Care Licensing

Currently, CPAs and CCIs provide placement for the majority of older youth in foster care and the vast majority of EYSS youth. Therefore, your support in the implementation of these new practices is critical.

Consideration has been given to the impact of the EYSS changes on Residential Child Care (RCC) licensure. It should be noted that the RCC license covers youth up to age 19 years⁴ but **does not** prohibit providers from caring for older youth. Thus, there are no RCC rules which conflict with CPAs or CCIs serving youth up to age 21 years. However, CPAs and CCIs must incorporate in their admission's policy that they serve youth up to age 21 years. All CPAs and CCIs are asked to incorporate this language into their admission's criteria⁵ by February 28, 2015.

Successfully serving older youth (18-21 years) will require that we all (DFCS, CPAs and CCIs) rethink the rules, responsibilities and freedoms typically applied with children and youth under age 18 years. The Graduated Independence Plan (GIP) which is covered in Chapter 13.7 provides a vehicle for normalizing youth's experiences in foster care. While the GIP has been in policy since 2012, it has not been widely used. The GIP is now **required** to be established with youth 18-21. It remains optional for younger adolescents but recommended as appropriate to support their normal adolescent development and experiences. There are **no** RCC rules which inherently conflict with GIPs; providers and DFCS staff are asked to begin routine and regular incorporation of the GIP into their practices with eligible youth.

Criminal Records Checks for Foster Youth Turning 18 Years

Youth turning 18 years must undergo a criminal records check as per federal law. The DFCS SSCM is responsible for ensuring that these checks are conducted and notifying RBWO providers that the check was completed.

Credit Tracking for Foster Youth 16 Years and Older

DFCS must ensure that each child in foster care who has reached 16 years of age receives a free copy of their consumer credit report from each of the three (3) nationwide credit report agencies each year they remain in foster care until age 18; and receives assistance (including when feasible, from any court appointed advocate for the child) in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies in the report (Chapter 13. 6). ILP has begun rolling out training regionally to staff to assist them with understanding credit reporting in general and their responsibilities in carrying out this policy. Additionally, ClearPoint has been contracted to provide staff and foster youth unlimited access to ClearPoint's Personalized Learning Program (PLP). The PLP is an online personalized financial education program that offers interactive financial courses designated for foster care youth, DFCS Case Managers and RBWO Providers. The PLP can be accessed at <http://www.clearpointu.org/ilp>.

New ILP Manager

Please join me in welcoming the new ILP Program Manager, Dr. Nia Cantey. Dr. Cantey has more than a decade of experience serving youth, families, and the aging communities. Her work has focused on serving and improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations. She has served in many roles including as a child advocate, program manager, program director, and associate professor. She brings a wealth of diverse expertise and knowledge in qualitative research, evidence-based curricula and services for youth and families.

Dr. Cantey's initial objectives including strengthening the ILP fiscal operations, spearheading CB21, selecting a statewide lifeskills workshop provider through a Request for Proposals and establishing a

⁴ Youth over age 19 years are not covered by RCC licensure and thus their records are not reviewed by RCC unless in conjunction with a complaint or incident concerning a youth who is covered by the RCC license.

⁵ The amended admissions criteria should address referrals of youth 18 to 21 years and serving placed youth who are ages 18 to 21 years.

partnership with the University of Georgia, to manage the Education and Voucher Training (ETV) program.

Q & A

The entire Social Services Policy Manual can be accessed at www.odis.dhr.state.ga.us. Additionally, the ILP chapter and its Manual Transmittal which summarizes the policy changes therein can be accessed by clicking the Policy Updates link at www.gascore.com .

The ILP policy and practice changes will be addressed in upcoming Leadership, Practice Matters and other meetings and webinars. If you have any questions or feedback on the policy in the meantime, please email me directly at dyearby@dhr.state.ga.us or the new state ILP Program Manager, Dr. Nia Cantey at nicantey@dhr.state.ga.us. RCC licensure questions should be directed to Carol Winstead at cswinste@dhr.state.ga.us.

cc: Bobby D. Cagle, DFCS Director
State Office Staff