



Nathan Deal, Governor

Clyde L. Reese, III, Esq., Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Services • Family & Children Services • Ron Scroggy, Director
Two Peachtree Street, NW • Suite 19-490 • Atlanta, GA 30303 • 404-651-8409 • 404-657-5105

Social Services County Letter No. 2012-08

TO: County Departments of Family and Children
DFCS Regional Directors
State Office Staff

FROM: Ron Scroggy, Division Director
Division of Family and Children Services

RE: Extended Youth Support Services: Youth remaining in care past 18

Date: October 19, 2012

Purpose

The purpose of this county letter is to clarify the agency's position on the availability of Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) to young adults who turn age 18 while still in foster care.

Discussion

The Division of Family and Children (DFCS) is committed to developing and implementing practices that will serve all youth and young adults in our care and those who wish to avail themselves to our support and oversight after they reach age 18 or older.

It is important that we reflect on the most critical predictor of successful outcomes for this population which is a committed and caring relationship with an adult. For many youth, particularly those who are approaching the age of eighteen, this relationship has not yet been secured or solidified, leaving them vulnerable to the challenges they will encounter on their own "in the real world". Imagine the anxiety that this must create. Often times this anxiety is masked by what we have called "acting-out behavior". However, we know that this behavior is really a call for help. As their caregiver, we must help.

We must make every effort to engage *all of our youth* in discussion about their fears and anxieties, assuring them that we will go above and beyond, *regardless of their behavior*, to ensure the provision of their safety and care before and beyond eighteen (18) years old. With this in mind, note the following three expectations:

1. Every youth who wishes to sign back into care upon turning eighteen will be allowed to do so, regardless of behavior.
2. Any youth who initially chose not to sign back in, but requests to do so within six months of exiting care, will be allowed to do so, regardless of behavior.
3. We will engage every youth in care in discussions about the value of remaining in care, encourage them to sign back in upon turning eighteen and ensure they

Aging Services | Child Support Services | Family & Children Services | Residential Child Care

An Equal Opportunity Employer

understand their option to sign back in within six months of exiting care.

This is not to suggest that youth are not accountable for their behavior. They are. However, their behavior will not dictate whether we provide for their safety and basic needs. Our charge is to engage these youth in developing the type of behavior that will better serve them in the future. As we assist youth in developing a work and/or education plan, keep in mind that their manifested anxiety may slow, stall or even reverse their progress at times. This is normal and to be expected. Our job is to never accept good enough for these youth.

Case managers must work collaboratively with their regional Independent Living Coordinator (ILC) to engage youth who continue to display negative/risky behaviors. If, based upon documented contacts, the youth continues to fail to adhere to their Written Transition Living Plan (WTLP) and the county wishes to sever the supportive relationship with the youth, a Transitional Roundtable (TRT) must be conducted. At a minimum, participation in the TRT must include the youth, placement resource, ILC and the other significant adults in the youth's life to discuss the issues and develop a plan for discharge if the youth continues to fail to cooperate. If the youth requests to remain in care and the county disagrees, a waiver must be granted by the IL Director prior to releasing the youth from Extended Youth Support Services.

Thank you for all of the great work you do on behalf of youth and families.