

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL</b>	
	<b>Chapter 11: Independent Living</b>	<b>Effective Date: July 1, 2010</b>
	<b>Section 6: Independent Living/Transition Plan</b>	<b>Version: 5</b>

**POLICY [REVISED]**

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will assure that an [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) is developed for all youth in out-of-home placement at age 15 years and six (6) months. The plan shall be:

1. Youth focused and developed with the assistance of the Family Case Manager (FCM) and members of the youth's Child and Family Team (CFT);
2. As detailed as the youth elects;
3. Outline the Independent Living (IL) services the youth will receive;
4. Focused on short term and long term achievable and measurable goals;
5. Updated every six (6) months until the youth's case is closed and/or the youth elects to no longer receive voluntary IL services; and
6. Given to the youth at each update. See [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) and Related Information for more information.

**Note:** A Transitional Services Plan must be completed 90 days before the youth turns 18. See Transitional Services Plan section of the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) document. If the youth enters care after 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday, a Transitional Services Plan will be developed within 60 days of the foster care placement.

If the youth refuses to participate in the CFT Meeting process, the FCM must document that a Case Plan Conference was held with the youth.

DCS will assure that all youth in placement, are referred for Chafee Independent Living (IL) services:

1. Youth placed in county foster homes, unlicensed relative placements, or non-licensed court approved placements will be referred at age 16.
2. Youth placed in Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) foster homes, group homes, residential facilities, or at home on a Trial Home Visit (THV) will be referred:
  - a. At age 17 years and six (6) months if their case will be dismissed at age 18, OR
  - b. Six (6) months prior to case dismissal if the youth remains in care past age 18.
3. Youth placed in a Transitional Living Placement (TLP) will be referred at wardship dismissal.

DCS will assure that all Child in Needs of Services (CHINS) and probation youth aged 17 and older have a determination regarding the ability to be placed in a TLP. See separate policy, [11.13 Transitional Living Placement](#).

## Code References

1. [42 USC 677: Chafee Foster Care Independence Program](#)
2. [IC 31-25-2-21: Transitional Services Plan](#)
3. [42 USC 675\(5\)\(H\): Transition Plan for Children Aging Out of Foster Care](#)
4. [IC 21-12-6: Twenty-first Century Scholars Program; Tuition Grants](#)

## **PROCEDURE**

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Convene CFT Meetings which include the youth beginning at age 15 years and six (6) months to develop the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#);
2. Hold follow up meetings every six (6) months until case closure to review and update the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#). See below for list of required items to be discussed at each CFT Meeting;
3. Hold a Case Plan Conference with the youth if he or she refuses to participate in the CFT Meeting process; and
4. Assure that eligible youth in foster care as a “ward of another state” are receiving Chafee IL services as requested by the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) sending state and an Independent Living/Transition Plan is prepared following the schedule outlined below.

## **CFT Meeting Schedule**

1. At age 15 years and six (6) months, the FCM will:
  - a. Review the composition of the current CFT with the youth to determine the appropriateness of that team continuing as the youth’s CFT,
  - b. If it is determined that the existing CFT should not serve this role, a new CFT will be developed with input from the youth regarding the team’s membership. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#),
  - c. Assist the youth in applying for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars Program if they are not already enrolled. See separate policy, [11.15 Post-Secondary Education](#),
  - d. Make a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation Services for all youth with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and
  - e. Engage the CFT to develop the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#). This initial plan shall:
    - 1) Address the youth’s current level of independent living skills mastery,
    - 2) Identify independent living skills to work on,
    - 3) Set goals in identified areas of need, and
    - 4) Determine methods to achieve these goals.
2. At age 16, the FCM will:
  - a. Convene a CFT Meeting to review initial [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) and update the goals as needed,
  - b. Make a referral for Chafee IL services for youth placed in DCS licensed foster home, unlicensed relative placements, or non-licensed court approved placements, and

**Note:** If the youth has been referred and accepted into the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities, a referral for Chafee Independent Living Services should not be made.

- c. Assist the youth in developing a Lifebook. See Practice Guidance for more information about Lifebooks.

3. At age 16 years and six (6) months, the FCM will convene a CFT Meeting to:
  - a. Review accomplished goals outlined in the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#),
  - b. Set new goals, using the most recent results from the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA), and
  - c. Continue addressing Independent Living strengths, needs, goals, and methods to achieve goals.
4. At age 17, the FCM will:
  - a. Convene a CFT Meeting to focus on goals to be achieved before the youth leaves foster care, including post-secondary options, employment, and housing,
  - b. Make a determination regarding the ability to place the youth in a TLP. See separate policy [11.13 Transitional Living Placement](#),
  - c. Provide the youth with information regarding post-secondary financial aid, including Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), federal aid such as Pell grants, the Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) grant, and the state student assistance commission. See separate policies, [11.10 Education and Training Voucher Program](#) and [11.15 Post-Secondary Education](#), and

**Note:** This information can be provided earlier if the youth is applying to colleges before age 17 or is pursuing a General Education Development (GED).

- d. Ensure that the youth and caregiver have signed the [Acknowledgement of Receipt of Information about Various Educational Programs \(ACRCPT070901FRM\)](#). Give the child and caregiver a copy and place the original in the child's case file.
5. At age 17 years and six (6) months, the FCM will:
  - a. Convene a CFT Meeting to focus on preparing the youth for transitioning out of foster care,
  - b. Continue to assist the youth in identifying his or her interests, possible career options, post-secondary education possibilities, and employment possibilities, and
  - c. Make a referral for Chafee IL services for a youth who will have his or her DCS case dismissed at age 18 if they are placed in an LCPA foster home, group home, residential facility, or at home on a THV, and

**Note:** IL services should be focused on housing and employment.

- d. If DCS case will close at age 18, send an email to Medicaid Enrollment Unit (MEU) informing them that the youth will need to be enrolled in Medicaid Foster Care Independence Program.
6. 90 days before age 18, the FCM will convene a CFT Meeting to complete the Transitional Services Plan portion of the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#);

**Note:** If a youth enters care after 90 days before the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, a Transitional Services Plan will be developed within 60 days of placement.

7. At age 18, or prior to DCS case closure the FCM will:
  - a. Convene a CFT Meeting to focus on assisting the youth finalize his or her plans to transition out of foster care,
  - b. Assist the youth and CFT in identifying steps to transition out of foster care, including but not limited to the following:

- 1) Post-foster care housing arrangements,
  - 2) Employment or methods of paying bills,
  - 3) Post-secondary education or training (if applicable),
  - 4) Physical and mental health care, and
  - 5) Sources of support (i.e., supportive relationships and community support).
- c. Make a referral for Chafee Voluntary IL Services for all youth turning 18 in foster care, to begin services after the youth's DCS case is dismissed,
  - d. Encourage the youth to continue using their [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) as they enter Voluntary IL Services, and
  - e. Contact MEU to ensure that youth was enrolled in Medicaid Foster Care Independence Program.
8. After age 18, the FCM will:
- a. Continue to arrange CFT Meetings every six (6) months as long as the youth remains a ward, and
  - b. Assist the CFT in reviewing and adjusting the goals and objectives outlined in the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#).
9. Youth participating in the Older Youth Foster Care program who do not already have an active [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) will develop this plan with assistance from the FCM Supervisor or designee monitoring the case. The plan will be the requirements as indicated in Practice Guidance.

**Note:** If a youth enters care after the age of 15 years and six (6) months, development of the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) must take place starting immediately, starting with step one (1) above, and moving as quickly as possible to the age appropriate step.

**Note:** The CFT should determine the frequency of the team meetings; however, meetings must be held at least every six (6) months.

The Supervisor will:

1. Provide input into [Independent Living/Transitional Plan](#) development as needed;
2. Ensure the [Independent Living/Transitional Plan](#) development process is completed in a timely fashion; and
3. Review and approve the [Independent Living/Transitional Plan](#) and each revision prior to its distribution.

Once a referral has been made, the Chafee IL service provider will:

1. Attend and participate in any CFT meetings surrounding the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#); and
2. Update the [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) every six (6) months if the youth elects to receive Voluntary IL services after DCS case closure.

The IL Specialist will provide technical assistance in transition planning as it pertains to Chafee Voluntary IL Services as necessary.

## PRACTICE GUIDANCE

### **Lifebooks**

At age 16, at the CFT Meeting, each youth should begin developing an Independent Living Lifebook. The Lifebook should provide information to assist youth as they become independent and should include space to store important documents as well as other personal items the youth may want to keep. The youth's FCM, therapist, resource parent(s), or IL Specialist may assist the youth, if necessary, in locating items for and completing the Lifebook. There is no pre-set format for a Lifebook. The Lifebook should be individualized and tailored to fit the youth's needs.

The Lifebook may contain, but is not limited to:

1. Photographs of the youth;
2. Photographs of persons and places that were significant in the youth's life prior to and while being placed in foster care;
3. Items related to school and extracurricular activities, (e.g., report cards, certificates, art work, awards, etc.);
4. Important documents the youth may need as he or she exits the foster care system (e.g., birth certificate, Social Security card, medical record, etc.); and
5. Short summaries of significant events that have occurred in the child's life.

**Note:** Lifebooks are property of the child and should remain with the child through any placement changes.

Sample templates for the Lifebook can be found online at: [www.fyi3.org](http://www.fyi3.org)

### **Permanency Plan of Reunification or Adoption**

In certain cases, a youth's permanency plan at age 15 years and six (6) months will be reunification or adoption with an alternative plan (or Plan B) of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). In these cases, a youth's [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) may be less focused on the skills the youth needs to develop in order to live independently, and rather more focused on the skills the youth will need to live successfully at home with his or her parent(s) or adoptive family. However, as the youth gets closer to 18 years of age, the team should ensure that the youth is prepared for potentially living on their own.

## FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#)
2. [Chafee IL Voluntary Services Application and Service Agreement \(SF 52692/ CW 2114\)](#)
3. [Tool 11.A: Budget Worksheet](#)
4. [Acknowledgement of Receipt of Information about Various Educational Programs \(ACRCPT070901FRM\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

## RELATED INFORMATION

### **Independent Living/Transition Plan**

The [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) is a comprehensive, written plan that is personalized for each youth and is to be used at each meeting with the youth and at the Child and Family Team to guide the transition planning process with the youth. The [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) developed with the youth's participation. The [Independent Living/Transition Plan](#) must include information relating the following:

1. Education and training;
2. Employment services and work force supports;
3. Housing, which may include a Transitional Living Placement when appropriate;
4. Health care, including prevention and treatment services and referral information;
5. Health insurance;
6. Local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, including development of lifelong adult relationships and informal continuing supports;
7. Identification and development of daily living and problem-solving skills;
8. Any additional independent living services that are approved by the department and are appropriately tailored to the needs of the youth; and
9. Availability of local, state, and federal resources, including financial assistance, relating to any parts of the plan described above.

### **Host Home**

A host home living arrangement is one where a youth rents a room in a family or single adult's home, shares basic facilities, and agrees to basic rules while being largely responsible for his or her own life. Host homes are a great solution in rural areas where apartment buildings are scarce and house rental may be cost prohibitive.

A host home can be a former resource parent, teacher, coach, relative (other than legal or bio-parent), or church member with whom the youth has a positive relationship. In this environment, the youth would be able to come and go as he or she choose and be expected to manage his or her time, money, school, work, and appointments without oversight from the host home. The youth is expected to follow the rules of the home as with any other renting situation.

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