Independent Living

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Policy : 700.0200

Effective Date: August 31, 1998 Version: 1

The Department of Children, Youth and Families, in compliance with federal law [42 U.S.C. 677§ (2)(d) (1-7)], is responsible to assist youth in out-of-home placement, ages 16 and above, to become self-sufficient as they prepare for adulthood. Youth are strongly encouraged to assume increasing levels of responsibility and join in partnerships with the Department in their preparation towards self-sufficiency. Independent living preparation is viewed as a mutual responsibility of the youth and his/her service team, which includes Department staff, family and/or primary caregivers and other individuals involved in the care and treatment of the youth. Youth are afforded assessment, instruction and preparation for eventual independence in a manner which respects their individual and cultural differences.

No youth should leave the Department's care to independence until reasonable efforts have been made to prepare the youth for the transition toward a self-sufficient and productive adult life. Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 14-1-6 also requires the Department to provide the Family Court with a discharge plan outlining transition services afforded to youth in placement or an explanation as to the reason why services were not offered prior to discharge or emancipation.

The Department has designed four tools to assess independent living skills and assist youth with the transition to adulthood. For all youth age 16 and above who are in out of home placement, the Family Services Caseworker must complete with the youth a Transitional Living Plan that is developed at the time of the Administrative Review and updated with the Case Plan. Youth who are in contracted placements will also have an Independent Living Assessment completed within six months of their sixteenth birthday by staff at the contracted placement. The Department also offers youth in out of home placement, age 16 or older, the opportunity to participate in a Life Skills Instruction curriculum. In addition, youth, age 16 or older, must have a Discharge Plan developed by the Family Services Caseworker with input from the youth at least six months prior to the anticipated date of discharge from the Department's care.

Related Procedure

Independent Living Skills Assessment Tools

@ Independent Living Skills Assessment Tools

Procedure from Policy 700.0200: Independent Living

A. **Transitional Living Plan Developed by FSU Staff**

1. All youth, age 16 or older, who are active with Family Services and in out- of-home placement, must have a Transitional Living Plan created in RICHIST at the time that the DCYF Case Plan is initiated. The Case Plan cannot be approved without including the Transitional Living Plan
2. The Transitional Living Plan is developed by the Family Services Caseworker with the youth's input at the DCYF Administrative Review Unit (ARU) meeting.
3. The Case Plan for youth between the ages of 14 and 16 may include a Transitional Living Plan as appropriate.
4. The Transitional Living Plan is updated and revised as appropriate in accordance with the Case Plan. A copy of the Transitional Living Plan is included in the hard copy case record.

B. **Independent Living Assessment Provided through Contracted Services**

1. Each youth, age 16 or older, in a contracted out-of-home placement has his/her independent living skills formally assessed using a standardized assessment instrument determined by the Department. The assessment is completed through contracted services by individuals who have been trained in its implementation.
2. The assessment is completed within six months following the youth's sixteenth birthday.
3. The assessment provides the basis for the instruction and preparation of the youth.
4. The contractor provides a copy of the completed assessment to the Caseworker for inclusion in the youth's case record. The contractor also provides a copy to the youth.
5. The assessment is reviewed at the ARU meeting.
6. The assessment is repeated by the contractor following the completion of the Life Skills Instruction (refer to C below). The contractor provides a copy of the reassessment to the Caseworker for inclusion in the youth's case record and for review at ARU meetings. The contractor also provides a copy to the youth.

C. **Life Skill Instruction Provided through Contracted Services**

1. The Department offers youth in out-of-home placement, through contracted services, at age 16 or older, instruction utilizing a standard curriculum determined by the Department.
2. Documentation of the youth's progress and completion of the curriculum is provided by the contractor to the Caseworker for inclusion in the youth's case record.

D. **Discharge Plan Developed by DCYF Staff**

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1. ~~A Discharge Plan is developed by the Family Services Caseworker, with input from the youth, for each youth, age 16 or older, in out-of-home placement six months prior to the anticipated discharge date from DCYF care. The Discharge Plan is located in RICHIST as a part of the Case Plan.~~
2. ~~The Discharge Plan addresses minimal standards in areas essential to the youth's successful transition out of the Department's care including housing, financial support, health care, education/vocation planning, procurement of necessary documents, and personal community support systems.~~
3. ~~A youth will only be discharged from the Department's care following documented efforts to meet the provisions specified in his/her Discharge Plan. A copy of the Discharge Plan is included in the case record.~~
4. ~~The Family Court may request a copy of the Discharge Plan prior to a decision to terminate the Department's legal involvement with a youth.~~