

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES
TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES-Revised NOVEMBER, 2012
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SERVICES**

Transitional Living Services provides a systemic and integrated approach in transition planning, the provision of transitional services, and access to and information about benefits that affect both older youth in foster care and those who have aged out. Transitional Living Services are multipurpose and available to youth ages 14 up to age 23.

Experiential Life Skills Training for Youth Age 14 and older

Foster parents and other providers are required to include training in independent living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, use of public transportation, money management, and basic household tasks for youth age 14 and older. The youth's experiential learning while in care and receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's service and transition plan.

TRANSITION PLANNING/PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR OLDER YOUTH

TRANSITION PLAN: The transition plan identifies services for each youth to accomplish goals to assist them in transitioning from foster care. The plan is used statewide and is **incorporated into the youth's plan of service** to ensure consistency of services. Procedures for identifying caring adults for youth and involving them in transition planning help to ensure personal and community connections are incorporated into the transition planning process.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT (COS): A Circle of Support is a youth driven process based on Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). COS's are offered to youth beginning at 16 years of age (although they can be offered as early as 14). This is a coordinated and facilitated meeting with participants that a youth identifies as "caring adults" who make up their support system. COS participants can include a youth's birth family members, substitute care providers, teachers, church members, a mentor and so on. Participants come together to develop and review the youth's transition plan, identifying strengths, hopes and dreams, goals and needs in the areas of education, employment, health/mental health needs, housing, and PAL life skills training components. Each caring adult participant identifies a personal way they can help support the youth's transition plan and to help attain short- and long-term goals toward self-sufficiency. All participants sign the transition plan to seal their agreements. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6270.asp#CPS_6274_1

INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMS

PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIVING (PAL) SERVICES/BENEFITS: The DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program assists older youth in foster care prepare for their departure and transition from DFPS care and support. Supportive services and benefits are provided by PAL Staff or PAL Contract Providers to eligible young adults up to age 21 to become self-sufficient and productive. PAL is funded by the *federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*, State general revenue funds and/or community match (20%). PAL services include:

- Life skills assessment (Casey Life Skills Assessment) to assess strength and needs in life skills attainment www.caseylifeskills.org (assessments are conducted before Life skills training):
- Life skills training (age 16 to 18) in the following core areas:
 - Health and Safety;
 - Housing and Transportation;
 - Job Readiness;
 - Financial Management;
 - Life Decisions/Responsibility;
 - Personal/Social Relationships
- Educational/vocational services
- Supportive services (based on need and funding availability) may include:
 - graduation items,
 - counseling,
 - tutoring,
 - driver's education fees, or
 - mentoring.
- A transitional living allowance of up to \$1,000 - distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who participated in PAL training, to help with initial start-up costs in adult living.
- Aftercare room and board assistance (ages 18-21) is based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult).
- Case management to help young adults with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10200.asp#CPS_10200

***Contact Regional Preparation for Adult Living Staff for more information about all Transitional Living Services at:
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp

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Extended Foster Care Program: With the implementation of the federal **Fostering Connections Act** (*Title IV-E of the Social Security Act*) on **10-1-2010**, a young adult who ages out of foster care at age 18 will continue to be eligible for Extended Foster Care provided there is an available placement, the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets at least one of the following conditions:

18 or up to 22 year olds, and:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is

18 to 21 years old and;

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

[HTTP://WWW.DFPS.STATE.TX.US/HANDBOOKS/CPS/FILES/CPS_pg_x10400.asp#CPS_10400](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/FILES/CPS_pg_x10400.asp#CPS_10400)

SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL) PROGRAM (ANTICIPATED START DATE-JANUARY 2013): The federal Fostering Connections legislation in 2008 established a supervised independent living (SIL) program which will be a component of the Extended Foster Care program. The SIL program will allow young adults to live independently under a minimally supervised living arrangement provided by a DFPS contracted provider. A young adult in SIL is not supervised 24-hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities, such as managing their own finances, buying groceries/personal items, and working with a landlord. Living arrangements may include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings. Young adults are assisted in transitioning to independent living, achieving identified education and employment goals, accessing community resources, engaging in needed life skills trainings, and establishing important relationships. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/FILES/CPS_pg_x10440.asp#CPS_10480

Return for Extended Foster Care: Young adults who aged out of DFPS conservatorship may return to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program until the age of 21 if the required stipulations are met:

- Is offered an available placement;
- Understand that court jurisdiction will be extended, if the court permits;
- Sign or re-sign a Voluntary Extended Foster Care agreement; and
- Agree to one of the Extended Foster Care activities within 30 days of being placed in Extended Foster Care.

PAL staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care and refer to the regional re-entry staff.

Regional Re-entry Staff Contact List- <http://intranet/CPS/Regional/re-entry.asp>

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION:

Trial Independence Period (TI): (Effective 9/19/11): A young adult in DFPS conservatorship who turns 18 as well as a young adult enrolled in the Extended Foster Care Program may leave foster care for a "trial independence" period of 6 months (or up to 12 months with a court order). During the TI period, the young adult may be living independently and receiving other transitional living benefits such as **PAL, ETV, and Transitional Medicaid**. A Young adult that elects to return for Extended Foster Care during the TI period may do so without losing Title IV-E eligibility.

Extended Court Jurisdiction: Young adults that leave foster care at age 18 for a TI period will have court jurisdiction extended for 6 months. Additionally court jurisdiction may be extended for a 12 month TI period if ordered by the court. If a young adult is in Extended Foster Care, court jurisdiction will continue during this period but will not exceed the month of their 21st birthday. More information is available at:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/FILES/CPS_pg_5363.asp#CPS_5363

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM: ETV is a *federally-funded (Chafee)* and state-administered program. Based on the cost of attendance (as established by higher education), youth in foster care or other eligible young adults ages 16 up to the age of 23 may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance per year to help them reach their postsecondary educational goals if they meet the following criteria:

- Meet college enrollment and be enrolled at least 6 semester hours in an *accredited or pre-accredited*
 - public or non-profit program that provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or

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- a public or non-profit program that provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment; or
- a public or non-profit program, or a private institution that has been in existence for two years and offers training programs to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than one year).
- Students participating in the ETV Program on their 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23rd birthday as long as they are enrolled in ETV and making satisfactory academic progress toward completing their postsecondary education or training program as determined by the institution.

Students interested in continuing education courses or distance learning courses must contact ETV staff for prior approval to ensure accreditation and that courses lead to a degree or recognized certificate program.

Individuals eligible for ETV include:

- Youth in foster care who are at least 16 and likely to remain in care until 18; or
- Youth who aged out of foster care but have not yet turned 21; or
- Youth who were adopted from DFPS foster care after turning age 16 and are not yet 21; or
- Youth who enter Permanency Care Assistance after age 16; or
- Youth who are in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (formerly TJJC) and are in a Title IV-E placement when turning age 18.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10300.asp#CPS_10320

Note: Young adults in the Extended Foster Care Program, enrolled in higher education and eligible for ETV may have certain expenses paid by the ETV program (ex., books, computers, child care, and transportation). ETV will not cover residential housing, personal items and food since this is provided for in the Extended Foster Care program.

Apply for the ETV Program at: <http://www.discoverbcfs.net/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=988>

COLLEGE TUITION AND FEE WAIVER-Texas Law (Sec. 54.366 and 54.367-Texas Education Code (2009): The college tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions from payment of tuition and fees at Texas' **state supported institutions** of higher education to individuals formerly in Texas state foster care) and adopted youth. To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees youth or young adults must have been in DFPS conservatorship. Exemptions occur:

- the day before the student's 18th birthday;
- the day of the student's 14th birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights being terminated) on or after that day;
- the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- if a youth was adopted and the adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009;
- if permanent managing conservatorship of the youth was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009; or
- when a student is enrolled in a dual credit course or other course in which the student may earn joint high school and college credit. *Note: Youth enrolled in a dual credit course may access ETV funds to cover certain educational expenses related to college attendance.*

Youth or young adults may also be eligible to enroll in AA-level courses or vocational / certificate courses at their local state supported community colleges. Young adults must be enrolled as an undergraduate **no later than his or hers 25th birthday**.

Adopted youth subject to an adoption assistance agreement that provides monthly payments and Medicaid benefits are also eligible for the college tuition and fee waiver. For these students there is no age limit to enroll in college in order to take advantage of the tuition and fee waiver. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10300.asp#CPS_10311

TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE BETWEEN ACADEMIC TERMS (EFFECTIVE 9/1/2011): Texas' institutes of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices.

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BACTERIAL MENINGITIS VACCINE FOR STUDENTS ENTERING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (EFFECTIVE 1/2/2012): Students under age 30 entering a Texas institution of higher education must be vaccinated for bacterial meningitis. For DFPS foster youth, payments for doctor's visits and vaccination costs are covered by Texas Medicaid (STAR Health or Traditional); Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth (MTFCY); or the Former Foster Care Youth in Higher Education (FFCHE) program. Young adults are encouraged to check college admissions policies for more information about vaccination requirements.

HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

MEDICAID FOR TRANSITIONING FOSTER CARE YOUTH (MTFCY) / STAR HEALTH: Provides continuous medical coverage to young adults age 18 to 21 that have aged out of foster care and meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be between 18 and 21 years of age;
- Aged out of Texas foster care / DFPS custody at age 18;
- Have no other healthcare coverage (private insurance or other category of Medicaid);
- Meet the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) income and assets guidelines.

Young adults may call the Medicaid Help Desk for replacement MTFCY cards at 1-855-827-3748. To reenroll in MTFCY, the young adult must complete Form 1011 which may be requested by calling 2-1-1 or the form is available at the HHSC website: <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/healthcare/children.shtml>

STAR Health/Health Passport: For information about STAR Health, to re-enroll in MTFCY and if a young adult wants access to his or hers Health Passport visit www.fostercartx.com. Young adults may contact the regional Well-being specialists as a STAR Health resource contact. More information about STAR Health is available at: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Medical_Services/guide-star.asp

2-1-1 TEXAS: To report any changes to an address or other contact information, young adults must contact **2-1-1** and report calling about Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth (MTFCY). Young adults may also go to <https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com> to set up an account, update contact information, report changes in his or her case, receive an identification card, or find out about other benefit information. Additionally, **2-1-1** may be contacted for non-medical issues such as applying for food stamps and medical assistance for other members of the family. More information about **2-1-1** may be accessed at <https://www.211texas.org/211/>

FORMER FOSTER CARE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (FFCHE) PROGRAM: SINCE October 1, 2009, the Health and Human Services Commission has offered a state funded, healthcare benefits program to certain former foster care youth. The following criteria applies:

- Be age 21 year or 22;
- Be enrolled in a college or technical school;
- Have been in DFPS foster care at age 18;
- Have no other healthcare coverage; and
- Meet the DHS income and assets guidelines.

To request a FFCHE application, young adults may contact **2-1-1** and request Form H1868 and Form H1870 to be mailed to them or visit the HHSC website and download the forms at: <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/healthcare/children.shtml>

[HTTP://WWW.DFPS.STATE.TX.US/HANDBOOKS/CPS/FILES/CPS_pg_x10000.ASP#CPS_10150](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10150)

OTHER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT SERVICES

Driver License Fee Waiver (Effective May 2012): Senate Bill 218 (82nd Regular Legislative session), waived driver license fees for youth in DFPS temporary or permanent managing conservatorship and for young adults at least 18 years of age, but younger than age 21, who reside in a DFPS paid foster care placement.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10600.asp#CPS_10642

TEXAS YOUTH HOTLINE is a resource for young adults who are under 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of the foster care system. Youth may contact the statewide hotline at **1-800-210-2278** for telephone counseling, information, and referrals. The hotline can help young adults locate services available in their communities.

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TEXAS YOUTH CONNECTION is a website designed with input from youth and young adults and is a resource for youth in the Texas Foster Care system, alumni of foster care seeking general tips and information. This website offers information and resources in education, finances, records, diversity, health, contacts, job links, food, housing, books, stories, Transition Center information, hotlines and other hot stuff. This website is also the location of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Youth Survey. Check this resource out at: www.texasyouthconnection.org

Texas Youth Connection-FACEBOOK PAGE was launched to provide another source for youth and young adults to find resources, benefits, and other relevant topics such as NYTD updates, accessing current educational and career resources, learning about current trends and fun topics of interest. This page allows DFPS to stay connected with youth and young adults using a popular social media website. The page is located at www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection.

Regional and Statewide Youth Leadership Councils (YLC) are comprised of two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) per region. These councils address identified issues and formulate recommendations for improving services to children and youth in foster care. YLC's review state policies and programs and provide feedback. Regional YLC activity details are located at www.texasyouthconnection.com under "Events". Benefits of youth participation include:

- Opportunities for Community Services and Outreach projects to support foster youth;
- Advocacy training to ensure the voices of foster youth are heard and incorporated into policy and practice;
- Leadership building skills;
- Planning and facilitating events;
- Learn how to strategically share their story; and
- Developing supportive friendships/caring adults.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR YOUTH:

- **PAL PEAKS Camp**-Two, four-day experiential learning camps held annually for children and youth aimed at increasing self-esteem, improving communications, problem-solving, and having fun. The Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) offers the PEAKS Camp through a partnership with DFPS. <http://www.tnoys.org/>
- **PAL Statewide Teen Conference**-Annual three day conference held on a college campus offering workshops for youth that lead to self-sufficiency and independence.
- **PAL College Conference**-Texas A&M Commerce host an annual two day (weekend) conference for youth to learn about and prepare for higher education opportunities.
- **Aging-Out Seminars**: These seminars are provided to youth ages 15½ to 18 in two (2) separate tracks before they leave care. Seminars include topic areas identified by youth to reinforce their knowledge and skills about DFPS programs, benefits, resources and other Life Skills topics. These seminars build on information from PAL Life Skills Training classes.
- **Statewide Youth Leadership Councils (Youth Advisory Boards)-Regional Activities**-Some regions may host regional Teen Conferences (based on fund availability) and other activities to help youth/young adults prepare to transition to adulthood and to provide leadership opportunities.

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION:

Transition Centers provide a central clearinghouse of one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of current and former foster youth, homeless youth, or other at-risk youth. Services may include employment assistance, educational support, access and referrals to community partners and resources and various transitional living services such as PAL classes, food and housing assistance, and substance abuse / mental health counseling. Transition Centers also provide co-location opportunities for local partners such as local Workforce Solutions offices, and community colleges and universities to jointly serve the diverse needs of the youth in one location. There are currently 16 Transition Centers which are independently funded, operated and supported by partnerships between DFPS, their Providers, community partners and the Texas Workforce Commission. A list of these Centers with contact information is available under the "Resources" tab at: www.texasyouthconnection.org

Texas Workforce Commission/Local Workforce Boards Partnership: DFPS regional offices and 28 local Workforce Development Boards have jointly developed and entered into Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) addressing the unique challenges facing current and former foster youth transitioning to independent living, including improving employment outcomes for these youth. The purpose of the MOU relates to:

- Furthering the objectives of the DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program;
- Ensuring services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of current and former foster youth; and
- Making referrals, where feasible, for short term housing for foster youth who need housing.

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DFPS staff, caregivers, and PAL contractors refer youth ages 16 and older to local Workforce Solutions offices for job search and readiness assistance, career exploration, and job placement services. Each Board has designated a point of contact for staff and youth to access for assistance and services. Additionally all youth and young adults are encouraged to register in the state job search system- www.WorkInTexas.com

National Youth in Transition Data Base (NYTD): NYTD is a data collection system created to track independent living services and to learn how successful states are in preparing youth to move from state care into adulthood. Texas will survey youth in foster care when they turn age 17 and will conduct follow-up surveys of some of these same youth at age 19 and again at age 21. From October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013, a follow up survey will be conducted on some of the 19 year olds who were surveyed when they were age 17.

Youth Specialists (alumni of foster care) have been hired as full time DFPS employees in each region of Texas. Youth Specialists and their supervisors play a key role in the development and support of Youth Leadership Councils, ensure that the voices of foster youth are heard, and engage foster youth in advocating activities. Youth specialists also serve to help strengthen and support CPS casework by informing DFPS of initiatives and activities affecting policy and practice. A list of regional Youth Specialists is available at: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/contacts/youth_specialists.asp

Employment Preference to Former Foster Youth- Texas Government Code 672.002 (2009) requires state agencies to give an employment preference to former foster youth who were in the permanent managing conservatorship of DFPS on the day preceding the young adult's 18th birthday over other applicants for the same position who do not have a greater qualification. An individual is entitled to an employment preference only if the young adult is 25 years of age or younger (day before turning 26). PAL staff provide the employment preference letter to eligible young adults when they turn 18 or upon request.

Provision of Personal Documents to Youth/Young Adults (Ages 16 and 18):

Age 16-Youth in DFPS conservatorship on or before they turn age 16 must be provided with a:

- Certified copy of the youth's birth certificate;
- Social Security card or replacement Social Security card, as appropriate; and
- Personal identification certificate/card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Age 18-Young Adults discharged from foster care or are legally emancipated will receive:

- A certified copy of his or her birth certificate;
- A Social Security card or a replacement Social Security card;
- A personal state identification certificate/card issued by DPS;
- Immunization records;
- Information contained in the youth's health passport;
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate; and
- Medical Power of Attorney Information-Forms 2559 [A](#) and [B](#)
- *Almost 18 Letter* and Youth Transition Portfolio

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.jsp#CPS_10130