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**Sent:** Tuesday, November 24, 2009 12:09 PM  
**To:** licensinglistserv@virginiainteractive.org  
**Subject:** Independent Living Services for Foster Care Youth in Virginia  
**Importance:** High

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This purpose of this notice is to inform you of the posting of one new Broadcast on the department's public website.

Broadcast 5905- Independent Living Services for Foster Care Youth in Virginia

Please visit <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/crf.cgi> and look under "Notice to Providers" to access Broadcast 5905.

Thank you.

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BROADCAST 5905

DATE: Oct. 29, 2009

TO: Local Department of Social Services Directors, Foster Care and Adoption Supervisors and Staff, Independent Living Coordinators, Licensed Child Placing Agencies, Children's Residential Facilities, and CSA Coordinators

FROM: Paul D. McWhinney, Director, Division of Family Services  
Therese Wolf, Foster Care Program Manager

TIME: 9:15 a.m.

SUBJECT: Independent Living Services for Foster Care Youth in Virginia

CONTACTS: Letha Moore-Jones at (804) 726-7576 or [letha.moore-jones@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:letha.moore-jones@dss.virginia.gov)

The purpose of this Broadcast is to announce new developments in the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) contract with United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) for Project LIFE, (Living Independently, Focusing on Empowerment).

**Independent Living Regional Consultants**

UMFS has hired Regional Independent Living (IL) Consultants to support the work of local departments of social services (LDSS) in serving older youth in foster care. Project Life staff contact information is below:

- Jackie Cowan, Project Director at (804) 239-1030 or [jcowan@umfs.org](mailto:jcowan@umfs.org)
- Makon Fletcher, Project Coordinator at (804) 239-1044 or [mfletcher@umfs.org](mailto:mfletcher@umfs.org)
- Andrew Martin, Central Region IL Consultant at (804) 239-1033 [amartin@umfs.org](mailto:amartin@umfs.org)
- Leah Hatcher, Piedmont Region IL Consultant at (540) 589-6223 or [lhatcher@umfs.org](mailto:lhatcher@umfs.org)
- Norma Wood, Western Region IL Consultant at (540) 798-9908 or [nwood@umfs.org](mailto:nwood@umfs.org)
- Heather Wines, Northern Region IL Consultant (540)-905-5299 or [hwines@umfs.org](mailto:hwines@umfs.org)
- Melissa Peele, Eastern Region IL Consultant (757) 409-0242 or [mpeele@umfs.org](mailto:mpeele@umfs.org)

**Project Life: Description and Focus**

Project LIFE is a partnership between VDSS and UMFS. The goals are to enhance permanent connections for older youth in foster care and to coordinate and enhance the provision of independent living services to foster care youth who are about to transition out of foster care. Project LIFE is built on the Virginia Practice Model, which emphasizes children's rights to permanency, and on federal requirements for the provision of opportunities to develop adult living skills.

Through Project LIFE, the regional IL Consultants will ensure that older youth and local departments of social services staff are receiving the support, training and technical assistance needed for an integrated approach to youth permanency and preparation for adulthood. Areas of focus for Project LIFE include:

- Continued development of the Virginia Youth Advisory Council (VYAC);
- Provision of technical assistance to the regional ILP coordinators' committees; and
- Initiation of a new regionally based "Educate, Advocate, and Elevate" (EAE) effort.

The **VYAC** is a statewide advocacy organization of 50 young people ages 15 to 21 who are currently in or transitioning out of foster care. VYAC members focus on identifying the needs of youth through multiple venues, making these needs known to policy makers and providers. The EAE Initiative is a new collaborative effort between the DSS, LDSS, youth, and other public and private stakeholders. The intent of the EAE Initiative is to provide "hands-on" assistance to each of the five (5) regions of the state via regional ILP Consultants to develop an organized, structured and consistent program of services and training to older youth. In addition, Project LIFE will work with the five regional IL committees to help each committee meet the goals and objectives of this initiative and the regional committee's identified needs.

In order to ensure that Project LIFE staff can provide the most effective assistance to localities, they will be completing a needs assessment on VYAC and the IL committees, assessing the status and needs of the council and each committee. A brief survey as part of this assessment will be available to the local directors and IL coordinators and contacts soon.

For additional information about Project LIFE, visit the project website at [www.vaprojectlife.org](http://www.vaprojectlife.org)