Virginia Department of Social Services
Foster Care Program
Guidelines for Resuming Independent Living Services
for Youth Ages 18-21

During the 2008 session, the General Assembly amended §63.2-905.1 of the Code of Virginia to allow youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who have decided to discontinue receiving independent living services to resume receiving independent living services within 60 days of the discontinuation of services. This document provides guidance for independent living service delivery to those youth.

Section 1 Eligibility Requirements

A former foster care youth is eligible to resume independent living services if the youth meets the following:

- returns for independent living services within 60 days of discontinuing services;
- is between the ages of 18 and 21 but has not yet reached his 21st birthday;
- was in the custody/care of a local department of social services (LDSS) in Virginia at the time of his 18 birthday;
- is a resident of Virginia;
- completes an initial application requesting services;
- enters an agreement specifying the responsibilities of the youth, the LDSS, and other providers as appropriate; and
- is not on active military duty.

Section 2 Application Process

The former foster youth interested in resuming independent living services shall apply directly to the LDSS that held custody of the youth. An “Application to Resume Independent Living Services”, which will serve as the temporary written agreement, must be completed and signed by the youth and a representative of the LDSS. The completion of the initial application will be verification that the youth requested a resumption of services within the legally allowed time frame. (If the youth completes the application with the licensed child placing agency (LCPA) in which he had been placed, it is the LCPA’s responsibility to contact the LDSS that had custody of the youth and submit the youth’s application to the LDSS). The application must address at least the following:

- All identifying information about the youth including name, address, all contact information, and date of birth;
- Why the youth is requesting to resume independent living services;
- The independent living services the youth is requesting; and
• The date by which a follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the youth to complete the written agreement.

Acceptance of the initial application requesting services is based on the willingness of the youth to enter into an agreement that documents service needs and expectations of the youth, LDSS or LCPA, and other parties providing services to the youth. The representative of the LDSS or LCPA must ensure the youth has provided all necessary information on the initial application. The representative should not sign the application requesting services until it has been reviewed with the youth.

The request for services will be denied if the youth does not meet eligibility requirements as outlined in Section 1, the youth refuses to complete all application items or the youth refuses to meet with the team to complete the agreement. It is the responsibility of the assigned worker to review the application, confirm the date, time and location of the team meeting with the youth and provide any assistance necessary to facilitate completion of the application and attendance at the team meeting. The youth’s application must be reviewed and a team meeting scheduled within 10 business days upon receipt of the initial application.

Section 3 Assessment

The request to resume independent living services is based on the youth’s willingness to meet with a team of individuals to complete the “Resuming Independent Living Services Agreement” and his willingness to cooperate with recommended services. The agreement describes the responsibilities of the youth, LDSS, LCPA if applicable, and any other parties that may be involved with the youth. The agreement will be developed by a team of individuals which will include but not be limited to the following:

• The youth;
• An individual identified by the youth as a permanent connection in his life. This should be an individual with a positive relationship with the youth willing to offer long term, on-going support and who will assist the youth in successfully transitioning to self-sufficiency (e.g., relative, family friend, former teacher and former foster parent);
• Previous social worker (If the previous social worker is not available or no longer employed by the agency and cannot be consulted, the agency should attempt to include the previous worker’s supervisor or other social worker that has some knowledge of the youth. If no one remains in the agency that has knowledge of the youth, a new social worker must be assigned and that worker is responsible for reviewing the information in the case file including OASIS);
• Independent Living Coordinator;
• Foster Care Supervisor;
• Representatives from the LCPA where the youth had been placed; and
- At least one appropriate community stakeholder, (e.g., Community Services Board (CSB), Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) Coordinator and Adult Services worker).

The community stakeholder should be a person(s) capable of providing ongoing services to the youth after age 21 (e.g., for youth requiring psychiatric services, a representative of the CSB would be an appropriate community representative for the youth’s team). The team should address the following issues with the youth in the scheduled meeting to review the application for independent living services:

- The youth’s social support system (including peers, adults, family members, etc) and how those individuals identified by the youth provide assistance, a sense of connection/family, and accessibility of those individuals to the youth;

- The short and long terms goals identified by the youth and team;

- The youth’s willingness to actively participate in an educational program (i.e. high school diploma, GED, vocational training program, college);

- The youth’s willingness to cooperate with a life skills assessment if one was not completed within the last 6 months;

- The youth’s willingness to participate in a substance abuse evaluation or mental health evaluation if recommended by the team; and

- Any other factors that affect the youth’s ability to establish self-sufficiency (i.e.; lack of family support, social skill needs, criminal charges pending, substance abuse or mental health issues).

Acceptance of independent living services is based on the willingness of the youth to participate with services and expectations as documented in the “Resuming Independent Living Services Agreement”. The youth will be denied the opportunity to resume independent living services if he refuses to comply with the recommendations as outlined in the agreement.

A copy of the agreement is given to the youth, another copy is given to the LCPA when applicable and the original copy shall be kept in the case record. The youth and the social worker should review the agreement at least every 3 months and if additional services are recommended, the team should re-convene.
Section 4 Eligible Services

The Code of Virginia (§ 63.2-905.1) defines independent living services as services and activities provided to a child in foster care 14 years of age or older and who has been committed or entrusted to a LDSS, child welfare agency, or LCPA. It also means services and activities provided to a person who was in foster care on his 18th birthday and has not yet reached the age of 21 years.

Youth returning to the LDSS or LCPA are eligible for independent living services which include but are not limited to the following:

- **Formalized Life Skills Assessment** -(e.g.: Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment). It is encouraged that all eligible youth complete an assessment to determine their strengths and areas needing improvement to prepare them for self-sufficiency. A new assessment is not needed if one has been completed within the last 6 months.

- **Developing Connections** – the LDSS or LCPA should discuss the youth’s preferences and need for connections with positive adults who are willing to provide support and stability to the youth on an on-going basis.

- **Housing** - the LDSS or LCPA should assist the youth in developing an independent living arrangement. (e.g.; a youth may obtain an apartment, live in a half-way house, live with relatives or return to a former foster home where the foster parents have agreed to let the youth live there as an independent living arrangement and not as a foster care placement. An Independent Living Agreement must be developed as agreed to by the youth, the relative, the former foster parent and LDSS or LCPA. The youth may also receive assistance with purchasing household goods, supplies, utility and rent deposits. No placement services are provided (i.e. foster care placement, group homes, residential facilities, etc.)

- **Education** - assistance in obtaining a high school diploma or GED, tutoring, or assistance in preparing for and entering college.

- **Counseling** - assistance in obtaining mental health counseling or substance abuse counseling.

- **Employment** - assistance with job seeking skills such as job search, completing an application, interviewing, resume writing, career planning or job retention.

- **Financial Assistance** – determine youth’s eligibility for an independent living stipend funded through CSA.

- **Money Management** - assistance with developing a budget, establishing a bank account, or balancing a checkbook.

- **Support** - personal or emotional support through mentors.

- **Access to essential documents** - assistance in obtaining a birth certificate or social security card.

- **Other Services and Assistance** - Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) are available for youth enrolled in higher education and post secondary vocational programs. ETV funds can help with expenses associated with going to college or post-secondary vocational training programs (i.e. tuition and fees, computers, books, transportation, room and board).
For services not funded by Chafee funds (e.g. Independent Living Stipend), the youth shall be referred to Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT). (See Section 5 “Funding”.)

Section 5  Funding

If a youth resumes independent living services, the team shall explore funding sources such as Chafee/Independent Living funds, CSA, CSB, Medicaid, and private insurance. If it is determined that CSA funds are needed, the assigned worker must take the case to the FAPT in accordance with local procedures.

Section 6  Contact with the Youth

There will be a minimum of one monthly contact (phone, in-person, email, etc.) by the assigned worker of the LDSS or LCPA and the youth. Every 90 days the contact must be face-to-face and occur in the residence of the youth. The needs of the youth should determine the frequency of the contacts beyond the minimum requirements.

A supervisory review must occur at least every 6 months and must include the youth and the members of the team. The composition of the team may change to include any additional permanent connections for the youth.

Section 7  Discontinuance of Independent Living Services

Independent living services shall be discontinued when:

- The youth reaches 21 years of age;
- The youth completes the services identified and has rectified the situation that brought him to apply for independent living services;
- The youth is non-compliant with the terms of the agreement; or
- The youth requests that independent living services be discontinued.

Section 8  Formal Request for a Decision Review

The youth may request that the LDSS director conduct a formal review of the decision if the application to resume independent living services is denied by the team or the youth does not agree with the decision to discontinue services.

Section 9  Reporting

Youth resuming independent living services shall have their case documented in OASIS under case type “IL Former Foster Care Youth-ages 18-21”. Services provided to the youth must be documented in the contact screen. In addition, documentation must include issues identified, visitation, and progress made toward achieving agreed upon goals.
Section 10  OASIS*

Specific procedural guidance regarding how to open, re-open, and document these cases in OASIS is outlined in the screens printed below.

These instructions are for a closed case. If case is still open start with reassigning the case type.

Closed case located under search.
Select Reopen button
Assign case to worker
Choose IL case type/IL Former Foster Care Youth (18-21)
Select all clients and show
On General Information screen update remove involvement end date so client will be active in case again.
Update address data information
Enter funding type
Utilize Contact screen