

ADOLESCENT SERVICES PRACTICE GUIDE

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ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Administration

Introduction

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is obligated and committed to providing youth in care the necessary services and supports to increase their competencies, self-reliance and self-sufficiency as they transition into independence. DCF provides a variety of services to eligible youth through the Adolescent Services Program. This program includes educational, vocational and employment services as well as an array of living settings that will allow youth to gradually assume more independence within a supportive atmosphere as they age and mature. Additionally, DCF offers supports and services that will give youth age-appropriate, normative experiences as well as assistance with developing a natural long-term support system.

Equally important is achieving either legal or relational permanency for all adolescents in care. The permanency goal will be figural in all interactions between our youth and staff as well as contracted providers.

Purpose

DCF recognizes the unique needs of youth in out-of-home care and the difficulties they face as they prepare to enter independence. In response to decades of listening to the needs of adolescents in care, DCF has developed a continuum and array of services that will help to ensure that youth in care have access to every opportunity that will allow them to succeed and become happy, healthy and productive members of their communities

Adolescent Case Transfer Conference

An Adolescent Case Transfer Conference will be held for every DCF youth who is age 14 and older and who is in out-of-home placement or committed to DCF as an abused, neglected or uncared for child.

An Adolescent Case Transfer Conference is not required for cases already assigned to an Adolescent Specialist, youth who are receiving Voluntary Services, youth who have an adoption pending or youth who will be returning home within six months.

The Adolescent Case Transfer Conference shall be held to determine if the case should be transferred to an Adolescent Specialist.

Adolescent Case Transfer Process

A Children in Placement (CIP) data report shall be printed quarterly by the Adolescent Program Supervisor identifying Regional youth who are 14 years and older and meet the above criteria.

Based on the report, youth who are not already on an Adolescent Specialist's caseload will be identified as being in need of a conference in the month of his or her 14th birthday or within that quarter.

The Adolescent Program Supervisor will work within the youths' Regional and Area Office existing structures to provide a forum in which these case transfer conferences will be heard. Additionally, the APM will notify the Program Supervisors of identified cases to be reviewed. The Adolescent Program Supervisor or designee shall chair the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference.

Participants

The following individuals shall participate in the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference:

- current on-going services Social Worker;
- current on-going services Social Work Supervisor;
- adolescent Social Work Supervisor;
- adolescent Program Supervisor;
- RRG staff, when indicated; and
- Regional Education Consultant.

Conference Topics

Topics to be discussed at the Adolescent Case Transfer Conference shall include but are not limited to:

- permanency goal;
- current placement;
- trauma history;
- the child's comprehensive needs in the context of their race, ethnicity and language, and the relationship to current case goals, objectives, identified services and interventions, and progress towards achievement of these;
- a comprehensive analysis of the youth's educational status;
- special considerations that need to be addressed prior to transfer;
- the time frame for transfer to an Adolescent Specialist and any case-related activities to be completed prior to transfer; and
- compelling reasons, if any, that the case should remain with the current Social Worker.

Adolescent Specialist

The Adolescent Specialist shall be responsible for providing services to youth in care who are 14 years of age and older. DCF recognizes that the adolescent population is a distinctive group that has a unique set of needs that must be supported in order to achieve goals that will provide a foundation for a successful transition to adulthood. To that end, Adolescent Specialists will be trained in the impact of trauma in early childhood on the adolescent and on adolescent brain development.

DCF realizes that providing social work services to adolescents in care requires a unique skill set that includes a personal commitment to working with and supporting vulnerable and challenging youth. Advanced training is required for all Adolescent Specialists (Adolescent Training Series) as well as periodic in-service adolescent-specific trainings.

Job Description

The Adolescent Specialist is a Social Worker who has successfully completed or is willing to complete the DCF's Academy for Workforce Development Adolescent Training Series and shall be responsible for providing services to youth age 14 and older who are committed abused, neglected, or uncared for to DCF.

Note: Youth who are 14 years of age or older and who are Voluntary Services clients may be considered for Adolescent Services if reviewed and approved by a Program Supervisor.

Job Function

The Adolescent Specialist's functions shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- develop, in conjunction with the youth, permanent, supportive adult and social support systems, and lifelong legal and relational connections;
- educate youth while in middle school and secondary school about post-secondary education, job training options and volunteer opportunities;
- support youth in the development of their identity including racial, cultural, gender and sexual orientation;
- assist youth with obtaining essential documents, *e.g.*, picture ID, Social Security card, birth certificate;
- work with youth to address any behavioral health needs including the impact of adverse childhood experiences, and ensure that youth are referred to effective treatments and interventions;
- work with youth and school personnel to collect a comprehensive educational record and monitor the academic programming in order to create a post-secondary education plan;
- give youth transitioning out of DCF care an opportunity to learn about career options and develop the habits, attitudes and skills needed to find and retain employment;
- ensure that youth are educated in financial planning;

- provide and monitor any services that meet the goals of the case plan;
- provide support to youth who are celebrating milestones, such as graduations and rituals;
- provide the resources and opportunities to youth to maintain their sibling connections and reconnect with their families of origin;
- ensure youth are provided with a certified life skills program; and
- transition to adult services such as DDS and DMHAS when appropriate.

Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisor

DCF shall identify staff as Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisors who shall be responsible for providing supervision to Adolescent Specialists. Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisors will ensure that the Adolescent Specialists are qualified and experienced Social Workers in accordance with policy, procedures and best practice, and that they receive appropriate training and support.

DCF realizes that providing social work services to adolescents in care requires a unique skill set including a personal commitment to working with and supporting vulnerable and challenging youth. In order to support adolescent social work staff (Adolescent Specialists), DCF recognizes the need to have specially-trained supervisory staff to guide and support them.

Job Functions

The Adolescent Services Social Work Supervisor shall:

- supervise the case activities of all assigned staff;
- review and assign new cases within the expected time frames;
- ensure compliance with established time frames for completion of tasks and requirements of policy;
- provide ongoing supervision and support to Adolescent Specialists, including options for permanency planning and guidance on permanency teaming;
- review adolescent casework principles and techniques and DCF policy and procedures;
- promote the use of a trauma-informed approach to case practice and continue to advance trauma-related workforce knowledge;
- assist the Adolescent Specialists with establishing casework priorities and clarifying goals and objectives;
- provide training in adolescent development;
- sanction and share casework decisions;
- assess and facilitate pertinent training and experiences that are identified as needs of the Adolescent Specialists;
- support the Youth Advisory Boards;
- consistently review the behavioral health status of all youth and assure effective treatments and interventions to address any serious emotional disorders or trauma history that negatively impact functioning; and
- consistently review the educational progress of all youth and approve of the proposed post-secondary education, employment training or volunteer service program plans prior to submitting the plans to the Post-Secondary Education Consultants for approval.

Youth Advisory Boards

DCF shall establish a Youth Advisory Board in each Region, comprised of youth in out-of-home care. The Youth Advisory Boards will address DCF policies and procedures involving youth issues and the unique problems of youth transitioning from out-of-home care. DCF shall also establish a Statewide Youth Advisory Board comprised of youth representing each Region who are in out-of-home care. This Board will meet with the Commissioner on a quarterly basis or as requested.

Each Region shall assign a staff member to serve as the Regional Office Youth Advisory Board Coordinator. This staff shall work with their Regional Boards and be responsible for recruiting and training Board candidates, developing content and a schedule for meetings, developing a yearly activity budget and providing necessary staffing for Board activities and expenditures.

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board will focus on presenting commonly- or frequently-identified needs of youth in out-of-home care to the DCF administration and advocating for systemic change. Additionally, this Board will make itself or its members available for statewide initiatives and requests made by the DCF administration.

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board shall have a designated staff assigned to serve as the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Coordinator. This staff shall be responsible for recruitment and training of statewide Board candidates; developing content and scheduling for quarterly meetings; developing, approving and monitoring Regional and Statewide Board budgets for activities and expenditures; staffing meetings and providing funding for transportation as needed; providing Boards with access to DCF technology as available; and providing the Boards with the opportunity to review and comment on policies that relate to committed DCF children and youth.

Services Post-Majority - Administrative Requirements

Youth who are committed abused, neglected, or uncared for as of his or her 18th birthday, shall have the current "family" case closed in the computer system and re-opened as a "Services Post-Majority" (SPM) case in order to continue receiving services and to allow a youth who leaves care at age 18 the ability to apply for re-entry services prior to age 21. DCF shall ensure that the youth's SPM case contains the current Individual Case Plan, placement, payments, medical, educational, legal, NYTD, pregnancy/parenting and any other necessary information from the previous case record.

The Adolescent Specialist shall update the computer system with the current educational, vocational or employment training program information, including dates of attendance. The education screen shall be updated when the youth achieves educational, vocational or employment benchmarks and as otherwise needed. At all times, the record shall reflect where the youth is in his or her educational process.

All youth in SPM cases shall have a placement in the computer system. At all times, the record shall reflect where the youth is currently residing. The Adolescent Specialist shall ensure that the current address for the youth is consistent in the computer system: Case, Person and Private Individual.

The Adolescent Specialist shall assist potentially eligible youth to apply for Social Security benefits prior to discharge from DCF care.

Referrals to adult services shall be made on an as needed basis as part of the discharge process.

Adolescent Services Credit Reports

The Department of Children and Families shall provide a free consumer credit report to each youth in out-of-home placement who is 14 years of age or older, at least once each year until the youth is transitioned from DCF care.

DCF recognizes the importance of ensuring that youth transitioning out of the foster care system exit with a clean credit report as well as with financial knowledge and skills about issues such as credit.

Credit Report Practice and Procedure Guide

Using procedures developed by the DCF Fiscal Services Division (FSD) and the three major consumer credit reporting agencies, FSD is responsible for securing consumer credit reports for every youth age 14 or over in out-of-home placement on a yearly basis. Youth 18 and over will need to sign a consent for FSD staff to secure consumer credit reports, or the assigned Adolescent Specialist can teach the youth how to obtain the report him- or herself by using the free web service "annualcreditreport.com." The credit reports shall be sent to the youth's Adolescent Specialist, who shall explain the information and, in conjunction with FSD staff, assist the youth with resolving any inaccuracies. The youth's attorney shall also be provided with a copy by the Adolescent Specialist and shall be asked to assist with the interpretation and resolution of issue. Resolution of problems may require the Adolescent Specialist to communicate with creditors. The credit reporting agencies may require copies of the youth's birth certificate and the court order of commitment before expunging information. The Adolescent Specialist shall make all reasonable efforts to obtain the birth certificate and court order for the FSD staff. Any credit fraud or identify theft discovered shall be reported to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. FSD staff will batch all reports that need to be resolved and send them to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney on a monthly basis.

Adolescent Specialist Responsibilities

The Adolescent Specialist will provide the credit report to the youth and help the youth interpret it. The Adolescent Specialist will explain any problems and advise the youth about what will be done to resolve them. The conversation with the youth shall be documented in the computer system. The Adolescent Specialist shall send a copy of the credit report to the youth's attorney using DCF-777, which requests that the attorney also review the report with the youth and assist with any problem.

Credit Fraud and Identify Theft

In any case in which a youth's identify or credit has been illegally used, the FSD staff will notify the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, using the DCF-778, "Credit Report Letter to State's Attorney," in consultation with the DCF Office of Legal Affairs as needed. On monthly basis, the FSD staff will batch all records where a youth's identity or credit has been illegally used and send them to the Office of The Chief State's Attorney. The Adolescent Specialist shall promptly provide any additional information requested by the Chief State's Attorney for investigation and prosecution.

What is a Credit Report?

A credit report is a record of a person's credit activities. It lists any credit card accounts or loans the person has, the balances, and how regularly payments are made, as well as identifying information. Nationwide Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs) are private companies that sell the information in credit reports to creditors, insurers, employers and other businesses that use it to evaluate a person's applications for credit, insurance, employment or renting a home. There are three nationwide CRAs (TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian).

What Information is in a Credit Report?

A credit report contains identifying information, lists of accounts, credit inquiries, items of public record, and positive and negative entries.

Identifying Information – The person's name (including nicknames and abbreviations), addresses (current and past), Social Security number, date of birth and employment information used to identify an individual.

Credit Accounts – The type of accounts (credit card accounts, mortgages or home equity loans, and installment accounts, like car loans), the date the accounts were opened, any credit limits, loan amounts, account balances and payment history. This includes the contact information for the holder of the account.

Credit Inquiries – When a person applies for credit or a loan, the lender may ask for a copy of the borrower's credit report. The credit inquiries section of a credit report will list lenders who have accessed a person's credit report within the last two years.

Public Records and Collections – Information including bankruptcies, foreclosures, lawsuits, wage garnishments, liens and judgments from state and county courts, and overdue debts from collection agencies.

Positive Accounts and Negative Items – Positive information includes the payment of loans and other debts. Negative items include late payments and debt that was charged-off or was sent to a collection agency. Account numbers and addresses for creditors also are listed.

Should Youth in Foster Care Have a Credit Report?

No. Because minors do not usually have the legal capacity to sign a contract or apply for credit on their own, most youth do not have credit reports. Therefore, if a credit report does exist for a person younger than 18, whether in foster care or not, it may be due to error, fraud or identity theft. The credit reporting agencies will not knowingly disclose credit report information for a minor except to a parent, guardian or custodian of the minor. Therefore, in most cases, a child protection agency requesting a credit report for a youth in foster care will simply be confirming that no such report exists. However, when a credit report does exist for a youth, it indicates that there is likely a need to correct information and take action to protect the identity and future credit worthiness of the youth.

What is Child Identity Theft?

Youth identity theft happens when someone uses a minor's personal information to commit fraud. A thief may steal and use a youth's information to get a job, government benefits, medical care, utilities, car loans or a mortgage. Avoiding, discovering and undoing the damage resulting from the theft of a youth's identity can be a challenge. Adults can monitor their own credit reports every few months to see if someone has misused their information and order a fraud alert or credit freeze on their credit files to stymie further misuse. A thief who steals a youth's information may use it for many years before the crime is discovered. Youth in foster care are particularly vulnerable to identity theft because their personal information is often shared widely among various caregivers, service providers and schools. The misuse of the youth's identity may not be discovered until the youth exits the foster care system and applies for a cell phone, job, student loan or apartment. When a youth in foster care is a victim of identity theft, there may be a credit report associated with the youth, but it may contain errors in the identifying information, like the date of birth and address. This is because the thief may use the youth's Social Security number, but his or her own date of birth and address. The child protection agency may have knowledge of different birthdates, Social Security numbers and names used for the youth in foster care and providing this information to the CRAs will help them determine if a credit report does exist for the youth.

Must a Child Protection Agency Contact All Three Credit Reporting Agencies?

Yes. Federal law states that youth who have attained 14 years of age must receive, without cost, a copy of *any* consumer report. Therefore, to be in compliance with this requirement, the agency must have a copy of the credit report, if one exists, from each of the three main CRAs: TransUnion, Equifax and Experian.

Secondary School

Secondary School Senior Year Expenses

Policy and Purpose

DCF shall provide financial assistance to a committed youth for his or her secondary school senior year expenses up to a maximum of \$500.00. DCF is committed to providing youth in care with the same normative experiences as their peer group.

Eligibility

To be eligible, the youth shall be committed to DCF as abused, neglected or uncared for child, and enrolled as a senior in:

- a secondary school;
- a State of Connecticut Department of Education (SDE) private school; or
- an alternative education program (*e.g.*, adult education, GED program, Job Corps).

Allowable Expenses for Senior Year

DCF shall provide up to a maximum of \$500.00 for expenses including the following:

- yearbook;
- yearbook portraits;
- prom expenses (tuxedo or dress, tickets, pictures, flowers or transportation);
- senior class dues;
- class ring;
- class trip(s); and
- graduation cap and gown.

Any other school-sponsored activity not included above may be covered on a case-by-case basis.

Procedure for Issuing Funds

A youth requesting secondary school senior expense funds must submit a request in writing to his or her Adolescent Specialist, with supporting documentation of the item(s) and the cost(s).

Acceptable documentation includes:

- school notices that identify the item(s) and the cost(s); and
- receipts for order(s) that identify the item(s) and cost(s).

The Adolescent Specialist and Social Work Supervisor shall review the request. All payments shall be subject to approval by the Social Work Supervisor and the Program Supervisor. If the request is within DCF policy guidelines, the Adolescent Specialist shall enter the payment into the computer system.

The Adolescent Specialist will apply for a vendor number for the youth if one is not available. The youth's caregiver and their Adolescent Specialist will coordinate to ensure the funds are appropriately spent.

Documentation

The Adolescent Specialist shall document the following in the computer system:

- requests for secondary school senior expenses; and
- provision of financial assistance, item(s), and cost(s).

A copy of any request for financial assistance for secondary school senior expenses shall be filed in the Uniform Case Record.

Denial of Funds

If funds are denied, the youth shall be notified of the right to an administrative hearing, by use of the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits."

Adolescent and Young Adult Programs

Life Skills Education and Training

Policy

DCF will provide all youth with the tools necessary to achieve self-sufficiency by providing instruction in basic life skills, daily living and social relationships, self-care, work and study skills, career planning, financial skills and communication skills.

Life skills are a set of experiences learned by teaching or by direct experience. These skills are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life from adolescence through adulthood.

DCF offers youth various opportunities for life skills education and training to build a skill set that is designed to move with the youth along a continuum. There are life skills programs that are specifically designed for youth in DCF care, while other programs serving adolescents have life skills training built into the curriculum. Programs that incorporate life skills include but are not limited to:

- Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP);
- Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER);
- Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program (SWETP);
- therapeutic foster homes;
- STAR group homes;
- residential treatment centers; and
- DCF facilities.

Housing Options

Youth who have not completed a secondary school program are not eligible for an apartment under the CHAP independent living program. The youth may be eligible for either an individual boarding arrangement or housing through one of the SWEPT and TLAP.

Community Life Skills Credentialed Service Model

Community Based Life Skills Model: are a set of skills learned by teaching or by direct experience. These skills are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life from adolescence through adulthood. A community based services model focuses on the development and enhancement of the participant's knowledge of essential life skills to promote preparation for adulthood and self-sufficiency. Through program design and content, the model goal is to support and maintain a youth's connection with the community as the youth mature.

This service, through the use of the DCF approved Learning Inventory of Skills Training (LIST) assessment tool and experiential learning approaches, provides youth with a set of skills necessary to assist in their transition from DCF care to self-sufficiency. This service includes an individual life skills assessment, followed by individualized and small group experiential learning opportunities.

This service is intended as a component of a comprehensive case plan. As such, the individual providing this service is expected to collaborate with other service providers toward the implementation of the child or youth's individual case plan.

In order to emphasize consistency and relationship building, it is expected that the same staff person will provide this service continually throughout the course of the service while both the staff person and the youth remain with the program.

Life Skills Assessments

Community Providers trained and credentialed in the L.I.S.T. assessment and curriculum may administer assessments and develop learning plans with youth and their caregivers. Assigned DCF social workers should not be administering the L.I.S.T. but are responsible for ensuring the L.I.S.T. assessment is completed by credentialed/trained providers and an individualized curriculum is developed. Staff are also responsible for maintaining a copy of the L.I.S.T. assessment and documentation to support progress on domains and goals. Provider training and Train the Trainer Certification, is available through the DCF Academy for Workforce Development as part of the approved Life Skills Assessment curriculum.

Learning Inventory of Skills Training

The L.I.S.T. (Learning Inventory of Skills Training) is a life skill assessment and curriculum with recommended training resources. This is a modified/updated version of the assessment used by our sister agency, DMHAS. The L.I.S.T. assessment and curriculum will cover the following domains:

- Money Management;
- Food Management;
- Personal Appearance & Hygiene;
- Home Management;
- Housing;
- Transportation;
- Emergency & Safety Skills;
- Health and Wellness;
- Educational Planning;
- Job Seeking Skills;
- Job Maintenance Skills;
- Knowledge of Community Resources;
- Interpersonal Skills;
- Legal Skills;
- Coping Skills;
- Anger Management;
- Pregnancy Prevention;

- Relationships;
- Parenting and Childcare;
- Medication Management; and
- Permanency;

The L.I.S.T. Assessment tools and training resources are located on the DMAHS website <https://ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2913&q=534896>. Training should be individualized.

The L.I.S.T. may not be appropriate for everyone. Providers who are serving adolescents placed in Department of Developmental Services (DDS) licensed group homes are required by their license to use a different tool to assess and teach life skills. Those tools are appropriate to use in place of the L.I.S.T. DCF workers are required to receive a copy of those tools and include that information in adolescent case file.

Primary Caregiver Involvement

Providers shall partner with the youth's primary caregiver sharing areas of growth, developing opportunities to practice skills in a normative environment (the home/community) and support. By sharing the model, the caregiver can teach and reinforce life skills being covered on the L.I.S.T. curriculum in the home environment.

Reporting Requirement

All contracted and credentialed providers will complete the L.I.S.T. Summary Form <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DCF/LIST/LISTSummary-Form-6718.pdf?la=en> and shall send it via E-mail to DCF.LIST@ct.gov (not scanned) and sending a carbon copy to DCF Social Worker, and SWS of the assigned youth. In addition, providers will attach a scanned copy of the L.I.S.T. detailed assessment, and any written documentation that reflects the progress the youth is making.

Congregate Care

DCF understands that youth are best served in family settings. There are times, however, when a youth needs short-term treatment within a congregate care setting.

DCF shall provide short-term treatment in congregate care settings when appropriate. The treatment shall be strengths-based and developmentally appropriate. The treatment shall also be gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

Guiding Principles

DCF is committed to maintaining youth in their communities through strengthening families, providing services in the communities where youth live and reducing the number of youth in Congregate care settings. In an effort to promote the healthy development of youth aged 13 years and older, DCF will provide individualized treatment in the least restrictive setting. When youth receive these services in a congregate care setting, the primary goal is to return the youth safely and permanently to the community.

Reference: [Congregate Care Rightsizing Report](#) .

Family Involvement

DCF recognizes the importance that involved families and communities have in the healthy development of adolescents. DCF considers family involvement and engagement to be the primary goal of treatment. The treatment provider is required to include the youth's family, fictive kin, caregivers and other supportive adults as full participants in the admission, treatment and discharge process, regardless of transition plan. This can include phone calls and on-grounds or community visits with sanctioned family members or supportive adults.

Reference: [DCF Kinship Care Report](#), [We All Need Somebody Report](#).

Length of Stay

DCF is committed to ensuring that youth receive quality treatment delivered in a brief treatment model when possible. Adolescents in congregate care will receive short-term treatment designed to springboard them into the community. This treatment will be no longer than six months and must have targeted and specific outcome measures incorporated into every treatment plan. Discharge planning will begin immediately upon admission and be incorporated into the youth's treatment goals.

Reference: Effectiveness of Group Care Literature Summary.

Normative Experiences

DCF recognizes the importance of normative experiences in the healthy development of adolescents. Adolescents in congregate care shall participate in normative social, school and athletic events within the community. This includes but is not limited to participation on an athletic team, social functions such as dances or movies with friends, time to go to the library or mall, participation in school committees that meet after school and summer camps.

Reference: Public Act 15-199, An Act Expanding Guardianship Opportunities for Children and Implementing the Provisions of the Federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

Healthy Teenagers

DCF is committed to the health of our youth. Congregate care settings will abide by the existing DCF nutritional standards and engage youth in healthy physical activity on a consistent basis.

References: [DCF Health Equity Report](#), [Nutritional Guidelines](#), [DCF Nursing Guidelines for Care of Obese or Overweight Child](#).

Developmentally-Appropriate Treatment

DCF recognizes the importance that adolescent development plays in the functioning and behavior of teenagers. Treatment of youth in congregate care will be informed by adolescent neuroscience with an emphasis placed on the social and emotional development of teens. This treatment will also be gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

Reference: The Adolescent Brain, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011.

Identity Development

DCF recognizes the importance of racial, ethnic and sexual identity to healthy adolescent development. Youth in congregate care settings are encouraged to appropriately and safely develop their racial, ethnic and sexual identities.

References: [True Colors](#), [LGBTQI Youth in Foster Care Have Rights](#), [Developing a Multiculturally Competent Service System](#), [Transgender Practice Guide](#).

Independent Living

DCF is committed to strengthening the capacity for youth to be prepared for a self-sufficient and productive adult life. Youth in congregate care settings will participate in appropriate independent living activities and curriculum.

Rights of Adolescents in Congregate Care

Adolescents living in congregate care have rights that must be respected and honored. Treatments providers will have policy and practices that are consistent with these rights.

Reference: [Speak UP! Your Legal Rights in Shelters, STAR Homes, Group Homes or Residential Treatment Centers](#).

Supportive Work Education and Transition Program (SWETP) Transitional Living Programs

Community group living situations will prepare youth for adulthood; develop safe, secure and permanent family relationships; and create linkages for youth within existing community networks. A group living setting shall be established to support continuing life skills education by teaching skills within the context of normal daily activities. In addition, this setting provides youth with the necessary support, structure and supervision to help with the transition to a less-restrictive setting, while providing the necessary support to develop self-sufficiency.

This program provides specialized services to youth who may not be prepared for independence, as well as family and community support to promote successful, independent living skills.

Note: A DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post-Majority (SPM)," must be signed by all youth prior to their 18th birthdays indicating their desire to continue to receive services.

Vocational Assessment and Services

The community group living program shall provide career counseling, vocational guidance, soft skills training, and actual work experiences for its participants, either by direct service provision or by linkage with existing community resources.

Programs are encouraged to partner with their local Work To Learn programs and local Department of Labor programs for additional vocational or employment opportunities that might be available for youth in care.

Training should prioritize youth who have little or no employment experience. Summer youth employment is available to all eligible DCF youth and should be offered to youth residing in the community group living programs to begin a youth's employment resume.

The program's Educational and Vocational Specialist (EVS) is responsible for coordinating the resident's educational and vocational experiences. The EVS will be responsible for interfacing with the school system, participating in PPTs and other educational meetings and developing individualized educational and vocational plans for each youth. The EVS will work in conjunction with other staff at the program to maximize educational and vocational outcomes for each youth.

Educational Assessment and Services

The program shall secure appropriate educational assessments of participants who lack current educational achievement scores.

Based on the youth's individual educational profile, tutoring and remediation services shall be provided or the youth shall be connected to such services in the community.

Community and Permanent Connections

The program will encourage the youth's integration into the community including collaboration with community-based pre-employment and employment training programs, permanent connections with family and fictive kin and involvement with supportive adults, mentoring programs, volunteer programs and access to local and regional programs (*e.g.*, the public library, local recreational programs, summer activities).

Life Skills Assessment

Each program shall utilize a DCF-approved life skills assessment to analyze the young person's needs and competencies in terms of the basic life skills areas and domains listed below. Using the life skills assessment, the program shall develop realistic plans and goals with the youth that are measurable and objective and will lead to increased knowledge and competency and ultimately, to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Interdependence and interconnectedness will also be a focus. Programs will provide the DCF Adolescent Specialist with information regarding life skills assessment results for inclusion in the youth's case plan.

The basic life skills covered are:

- cultural competency awareness;
- safe, healthy relationships with family and other caring adults;
- trauma awareness;
- money management;
- consumer awareness;
- food management;
- hygiene and personal appearance;
- health and health management;
- housekeeping;
- housing;
- transportation;
- educational planning;
- job seeking skills and employment maintenance skills;
- emergency and safety skills;
- knowledge of community resources including how to access services, especially behavioral health services;
- interpersonal skills; and
- skills related to handling personal legal matters.

Individual Competencies

Using the aforementioned life skills assessment, the program shall develop realistic plans and goals with the youth that will lead to increased knowledge and competency and, ultimately, to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Interdependence and interconnectedness will also be a focus. Programs will provide the DCF Adolescent Specialist with information regarding life skills assessment results for inclusion in the youth's case plan as well as periodic progress made in overall life skills acquisition.

Goals of Community Housing

The program shall:

- support the case planning efforts to achieve legal or relational permanency;
- develop a transition plan with the youth with the goal of community housing and self-sufficiency; and
- work cooperatively with the DCF Adolescent Specialist to formulate a transition plan for the youth which may include post-secondary education and training, gainful full time employment or a volunteer experience.

Service Agreement

A DCF-2166A, Adolescent Services Service Agreement," signed by the youth and program staff, shall be developed with each youth, and it may include but not be limited to:

- clarification of roles for the youth, program and DCF;
- assignment of responsibilities and time frames for the youth, the program and DCF;
- establishment of expectations for the youth, the program and DCF;
- goals, which must be attainable; and
- a statement regarding action to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the agreement or the program requirements.

Reporting Requirements

The program's Transitional Living Case Manager is expected to submit monthly reports and a quarterly progress plan to the Adolescent Specialist regarding the youth.

Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)

DCF may offer the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) and provide financial assistance to youth who were committed uncared for, abused or neglected as of their 18th birthdays who demonstrate an interest and ability to pursue post- secondary education or vocational training. DCF offers youth in care several living options coupled with support services to assist with their gradual move towards successful adult living. Housing options include but are not limited to individual and shared apartments, boarding arrangements and on-campus dormitories. Program funding is based on available DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with DCF policy.

Purpose

DCF recognizes the importance of allowing youth in care the opportunity to practice living independently while still receiving supportive services to assist with their transition to adulthood. DCF offers youth in care several living options coupled with support services to assist with their gradual move towards successful adult living.

Productive Hours

Youth shall account for, at a minimum, 40 productive hours per week. A “productive hour” is defined as time devoted to classes, study time, extra-curricular activities, part-time work, internship, volunteering, training, apprenticeship, treatment activities or any combination of those activities.

Continuing Eligibility

Youth in a post-secondary vocational training program may be eligible to continue receiving support from DCF through the end of the school year of his or her 21st birthday as long as he or she meets the aforementioned eligibility criteria.

Youth in a post-secondary college degree program may be eligible for extended support from DCF through the end of the school year during the year in which the youth turns 23 years of age as long as he or she has stayed in compliance with the continuation requirements.

Youth who are married or on active duty within any of the armed forces of the United States shall not be eligible for continuing CHAP services.

CHAP Funding

Apartment Deposit

DCF may provide a one-time apartment deposit for eligible CHAP youth. The apartment deposit may include the first and last month’s rent but may not exceed the Area Office rental amount defined in this policy. If a youth successfully completes his or her post-secondary educational or vocational program, the youth may keep the deposit.

Start-Up Furniture

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a maximum of \$1,500.00, which must be used for the purchase of furniture. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- kitchen – table and chairs;
- bedroom – bed frame, twin or full-size mattress and box spring and dresser; and
- living room – sofa and coffee table.

If a youth has obtained any or all of the above items through other means, he or she may negotiate with the Adolescent Specialist for the purchase of additional housing items.

Housewares Start-Up Assistance

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household supplies. Youth living in on-campus housing may access these funds for room start-up items if needed.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- pots, pans, utensils and dishes;
- towels and sheets; and
- cleaning supplies.

Start-Up Food Supplies

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a one-time payment voucher or a direct payment to a vendor not to exceed \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items.

Monthly Subsidies

The Adolescent Specialist and CHAP Case Manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

If the youth receives Social Security benefits or any other entitlements, these monies shall be subtracted from the funding limits provided in DCF policy and will be considered a part of the overall budget for the youth.

Once the subsidy is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth to spend on budgeted items. The youth shall save all cancelled checks and receipts for these expenditures, and the Adolescent Specialist and Community Case Manager shall monitor these items to assess the youth's compliance with his or her budget.

A provider number must be established at least 21 days prior to placement for youth entering CHAP. The CHAP subsidy must be processed in the computer system by the fifth day of the month in order to cover expenses for the following month.

The following chart details the basic cost of living standard with a maximum subsidy of \$1,883:

Rent	SFY 2013 \$709 - \$1,327 Rent will be based on the current HUD Fair Market rental rates for a one bedroom apartment that includes heat
Stipend	\$556 Stipend amounts are based on current cost of living per state and federal guidelines
Food	\$200
Personal Care Items	\$34
Utilities (includes water, gas, and electricity, but not heat)	\$114
Heat	If not included in the rent, a subsidy for heat may be added but the total for rent and heat cannot exceed the maximum Area Office rental amount
Telephone	\$50
Transportation	\$70
Clothing	\$88
Total	\$1,265-\$1,883

The following chart shows the maximum rental payment available by Area Office:

DCF Region	Area Offices	HUD 2013
1	Bridgeport	967
	Norwalk	1,327
2	Milford	1,047
	New Haven	1,047
3	Middletown	883
	Norwich	829
	Willimantic	709
4	Hartford	883
	Manchester	883
5	Danbury	1,023
	Torrington	830
	Waterbury	772
6	Meriden	1,055
	New Britain	883

Note: The subsidy may be below the \$1,883 limit.

Post-Secondary Education (PSE) and Vocational Youth

When calculating a youth's monthly subsidy, the PSE annual funding limit must be taken into consideration. After tuition, books and fees are calculated and subtracted from the limit, the remaining amount may be used for rent and stipend as long as it is within the funding amounts identified. CHAP categories and line item limits contained within this policy may not be exceeded.

If a youth is participating in a paid internship, fellowship or any learning opportunity that involves a subsidy, this funding must be subtracted from the funding limits provided in this policy and will be considered as part of the overall budget for the youth.

Additional funding for housing and living are available for youth during school breaks if the youth has reached his or her PSE limit. Any funding for school breaks must follow the funding structure below.

If a PSE youth returns to stay with his or her biological parent(s) during school breaks, the youth is eligible for a CHAP stipend only.

Out-of-State PSE Youth

If a youth is attending an approved PSE program out of state and is living off campus, the HUD Fair Market Rental Rates for that state and area where youth is living must be used when calculating monthly rental subsidies. DCF CHAP boarding rates must be utilized if a youth is boarding out of state. CHAP stipends are used for youth in out-of-state and boarding arrangements.

CHAP Categories

CHAP Post-Secondary Education Program (PSE) with Case Management

Full-time college or vocational students, residing in their own apartment and receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider shall receive five hours of case management per week, of which three hours will be face-to-face contact and two hours will be collateral contacts.

CHAP PSE Case Management Rate - Hourly

The hourly case management rate can be used when additional case management hours, pre-service activities or travel are necessary. The DCF-2163, "Request for Additional Case Management Services (CHAP/CHEER)," must be submitted by the Area Office and sent to the Central Office CHAP Program Coordinator for approval.

CHAP PSE without Case Management

This service is for full-time students who have completed the case management and independent living skills program.

CHAP PSE Stipend

A youth who is in a full-time college or vocational program and who is residing on campus may receive a monthly stipend if, when the stipend is added to the cost of tuition, room and board, the total does not exceed the yearly PSE funding limits.

If a youth is attending a college or vocational program where housing or any of the stipend categories are being provided, the youth is eligible only for the categories not covered or for amounts that do not exceed the CHAP stipend amounts. This also applies to summer internships and bridge programs.

CHAP PSE Boarding

A youth who is attending a college or vocational program full-time and who is residing in the community with an approved caregiver or at an approved location is entitled to the following monthly subsidies:

Categories	2013 Maximum Amounts
Housing (rent)	320
Utilities	114
Heat	90
Telephone	50
Food	200
Clothing	70
Personal care items	34

If the youth will be residing in the approved home of a relative, friend or former foster parent, the responsible adult(s) in the home must sign the youth's CHAP contract agreeing to such an arrangement. Roles, rules and responsibilities for all involved must be identified and agreed upon in the CHAP contract and be updated quarterly.

Note: Any funding going directly to an identified adult in the household for rent is considered taxable and reportable income.

Non-CHAP Adolescent Service Type

For youth who are in secondary school, an adult education program or in a general equivalency diploma (GED) program, and in an approved living arrangement, the placement shall be entered in the computer system under the service type "Non CHAP Adolescent," #791. This service type is ONLY authorized for Child Welfare Accounting (CWA) use. The Adolescent Specialist must make requests for this service type to the Central Office CHAP Program Lead. Upon approval from Central Office, CWA will enter the placement into the computer system and will notify the Adolescent Specialist.

Payments for Minor Children

Payments received by a youth for minor children in his or her custody shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income or the youth's DCF annual "cost of attendance" funding limit.

Earned Income

Earned income is the net income from wages, salary or profits from employment.

Employment is a requirement under CHAP once the youth has demonstrated academic stability (e.g., following a successful freshman year). A youth must be employed for a minimum of ten hours per week and for no more than 20 hours per week. Youth must be willing to commit to a savings plan, as described below.

Fifty percent of a youth's earned income may be used for discretionary spending, as determined by the youth. The remaining 50% of earned income shall be deposited into an interest-bearing savings account and saved for the youth's transition period from DCF.

Savings and planning for a youth's transition from care must be documented in the CHAP contract at least every six months.

Employment during the summer is required, unless the youth is in summer school on a full-time basis. Employment sites should be geared toward providing youth with experiences related to their career goals whenever possible. Available unpaid internships related to the youth's course of study are also encouraged and, when appropriate, may be used as a substitute for paid summer employment. Youth must keep in mind what they will need to support themselves after leaving care when making decisions on unpaid internships vs. paid employment.

Youth taking summer classes or who are involved in a year-round vocational program are also encouraged to work. Work requirements will be based on the youth's individual program, number of hours dedicated to instruction, internships and other program requirements and will be adjusted accordingly.

Preparation for transitioning from care must be taken into consideration when waiving the employment requirement for youth. Youth will be required to submit their yearly savings account statement to their Adolescent Specialist to ensure that they do not leave DCF care inadequately funded. Social work staff will also be required to document in the computer system each September the efforts made to assist and monitor youth with their planning for transition from care.

Community Case Management

While involved in CHAP, a youth may receive two years of case management services. Services may include:

- developing a DCF CHAP contract with the youth and DCF Adolescent Specialist;
- identification, development and support of permanent family and supportive relationships and network of community providers;
- assistance in developing a monthly budget;
- determining the monthly subsidy in collaboration with the youth;
- monitoring expenditures, at least monthly;
- providing crisis intervention;
- providing supportive intervention and on-going contact;
- providing community referral services;
- conducting a DCF-approved life skills assessment;
- developing individualized independent living plans and goals;
- conducting a strengths and needs assessment with the youth;

- monitoring and assessing the youth's educational status;
- assessing and understanding the youth's trauma history, triggers and successful coping mechanisms;
- assisting youth with management of behavioral health issues, including medication, by addressing how to access care, how to navigate the involved systems, and how to pay for services;
- monitoring the youth's employment status and adherence to the savings plan described above;
- submitting monthly, written case management progress reports that specify the desired outcomes, goals and objectives and the dates, times and number of case management hours; and
- submitting a quarterly life skills acquisition report that includes transition progress.

Discharge from Participation

A youth may be discharged from the program if he or she has:

- achieved self-sufficiency to the extent that there is no longer a need for financial support or services from DCF;
- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program;
- passed from care or has had commitment revoked by the court; or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the contract.

Discontinuation of Services and Transitioning from Care

Youth who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing DCF benefits shall be given written notice through the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits." The DCF-800 shall be issued to the youth as soon as the youth is deemed to be out of compliance by the Adolescent Specialist. The Adolescent Specialist shall also mail with DCF-800 or give directly to the client the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits." If the youth wishes to have a hearing to contest the proposed action, he or she must complete the reverse side of the DCF-800 and mail it to the Administrative Hearings Unit at Central Office within 60 days from the date the notice was mailed.

Youth who wish to have their benefits continue pending the hearing decision must submit the hearing request to the Administrative Hearings Unit postmarked within ten days after the DCF-800 is mailed. The Adolescent Specialist will not take action on the benefit until after the ten-day period has expired, unless the client has signed the DCF-800A agreeing to the proposed action. Upon receipt of a request for a hearing within the ten-day period, the Administrative Hearings Unit will immediately notify the Area Office to continue benefits where appropriate. Under these circumstances, DCF shall continue to pay the existing expenses and subsidies until a final decision is issued by the Administrative Hearings Unit.

When a youth is discontinued from benefits or voluntarily chooses to leave DCF care, the

Adolescent Specialist shall conduct a face-to-face Transition Plan meeting to discuss the transition. This should include, but is not limited to, scheduling an Administrative Case Review conference for the purpose of identifying community services and resources that will help the young adult with the transition and to help set up final medical and dental check-ups as required in DCF Policy 36-3, "Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan." DCF shall hold a conference with the youth and review the DCF-2092, "Adolescent Transition Plan," to discuss the details of the transition plan. The transition plan must be reviewed by the Adolescent Specialist and Program Supervisor to ensure the youth has been provided all legal documents and has maximized on all available services. The youth should be made aware of available community resources, employment and educational opportunities.

The DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form," shall be completed by the Adolescent Specialist and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the youth passes from care. Some youth may be eligible for continued medical insurance through the Department of Social Services (DSS). Youth must be informed by the Adolescent Specialist that they must contact DSS directly for such a determination and for information as to what will be needed for them to continue with DSS benefits.

Adolescent Parent Program and Funding

Introduction

DCF shall provide funding for a youth in care who is the custodial parent of a minor child.

DCF recognizes the importance of providing specific and targeted services to youth who become pregnant or who are parents while in care. Services will begin immediately following a pregnancy disclosure and will include medical care (physical and behavioral health counseling). DCF will ensure that all children born to youth who are in and remain in care are provided with services and supports that will allow them to live in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Net Income

Payments for minor children shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income.

Essential Parenting Equipment

DCF shall provide DCF-committed adolescents who are CHAP, CHEER or SWETP participants, and are the custodial parents of a minor child, with essential parenting equipment that cannot be secured through Covenant to Care or other donor sources. Examples of items include, but are not limited to, crib and mattress, stroller, car seat and diaper bag. Additional major equipment items may be purchased for the adolescent parent if there is a demonstrated need (*e.g.*, special medical equipment, playpen, backpack carrier.)

Adolescent parents shall be encouraged to utilize resources such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) or Covenant to Care to help defray other expenses.

The Adolescent Specialist will assist the youth with developing a list of necessary start-up items and the costs. The Adolescent Specialist shall obtain approval for the cost of baby start-up items from the Social Work Supervisor and Program Supervisor. Approved requests must be entered into and paid through the computer system.

Documentation

The Adolescent Specialist shall document in the computer system the requests for, and provision of, financial assistance and equipment.

A copy of the youth's CHAP or CHEER contract shall be kept in the Uniform Case Record.

Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER)

Introduction

The Department of Children and Families may offer a Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resource (CHEER) that provides financial assistance to youth who were committed uncared for, abused, or neglected as of their 18th birthdays and who demonstrate strong motivation and the ability to pursue a post-secondary employment training and career development program. Such programs may include non-certified vocational or technical training and apprenticeship programs or job readiness development and job placement.

DCF recognizes the need to provide youth in care with opportunities that will lead to gainful employment and assist with self-sufficiency as an alternative to a college education or formal vocational program. For youth who were committed as of their eighteenth birthday and deemed eligible may be offered the opportunity to participate in an employment training or career development program while practicing living in the community. Youth will gradually assume the cost of their care during this time-limited period. Participating youth will also have the opportunity to transfer into a post-secondary or vocational program if they have not yet reached their 21st birthday. (Alternately, a youth may be eligible to participate in CHEER after participating in a post-secondary or vocational program if they have not yet reached the age of 21.)

CHEER services shall be available on a voluntary basis to a youth 18 or older, immediately following secondary school graduation or completion of GED, and for a time period not to exceed 18 months. A youth who has not yet reached his or her 21st birthday and has already participated in one or more post-secondary educational or vocational program may be eligible for CHEER.

Youth participating in CHEER may elect to change programs and enroll in a post - secondary educational or vocational program if they have not reached their 21st birthday. All requests for PSE plan programs will need to include a complete PSE packet that has been approved by the Area Office Adolescent Program Supervisor and submitted to the DCF post-secondary education staff for final review and approval.

A youth who has participated in one or more PSE programs may elect to participate in CHEER.

Volunteer Experience

A youth may also be approved to participate in a formally-recognized volunteer community service program for up to one year immediately following secondary school graduation. Only youth who have been accepted into a degree-awarding college program and deferred such acceptance, may participate in this volunteer experience. All volunteer programs must be

approved by Post-Secondary Education staff. Youth will be eligible for subsidies allowed under the CHEER policy but will be exempt from the reduction formula during this year as long as they are in compliance with the program. If the volunteer program provides any funding for living expenses, this funding will be subtracted from allowable line items.

If a youth successfully completes such volunteer experience, he may continue with DCF and pursue a PSE program as long as he remains in compliance with the eligibility criteria outlined in Policy 42-4.

Productive Hours

Youth shall account for a minimum of 40 productive hours per week. A “productive hour” is defined as time devoted to classes, study time, part-time work, internship, volunteering (if approved), training, apprenticeship, treatment activities, transportation time used for these activities, and any combination of these activities.

Continuing Eligibility

Youth shall remain eligible for services as long as they are in good standing with the standards of the employment program and are in compliance with the requirements of the CHEER contract. The DCF CHEER contract will be reviewed quarterly for compliance.

Youth who are married or on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States shall not be eligible for continuing CHEER services.

Monthly Subsidy

The Adolescent Specialist and CHAP Community Case Manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

Once the subsidy is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth to spend on budget items. The youth shall save all documentation for said expenditures and the Adolescent Specialist and Community Case Manager shall monitor these items to assess the youth’s compliance with his or her budget.

Youth will be required to save and deposit into an interest-bearing savings account 50% of income from employment during the first nine months. Youth will begin to assume a portion of the cost of his or her care at month ten* utilizing earnings from employment. Monthly subsidies will be reduced by 25% each quarter beginning at the 4th quarter or at the beginning of month 10. Subsidies will be reduced by 25% each quarter thereafter.

*If an employment training program is longer than 10 months, the reduction in subsidy begins in the quarter following program completion and when youth is working.

Example:

- From month 1 to month 9, youth will receive the full monthly subsidy and is saving 50% of his or her earnings from employment.
- From month 10 through month 12, youth will receive 75% of their monthly subsidy.
- From month 13 through month 15, youth will receive 50% of their monthly subsidy.
- From month 16 through month 18, youth will receive 25% of their monthly subsidy.

The CHEER subsidy must be processed in the computer system by the fifth day of the month in order to cover expenses for the following month. The payment request should show the fifth of the month as the Request Date and the last Friday of the month as the Scheduled Date. In order for a youth to enter CHEER, the Adolescent Specialist must establish a provider number for the youth at least 21 days prior to placement.

CHEER Funding

Apartment Deposit

DCF may provide a one-time apartment deposit for eligible CHEER youth. The apartment deposit may include the first and last months' rent but may not exceed the Area office rental amount as set forth in DCF policy. If a youth successfully completes his or her post-secondary employment program, the youth may keep the deposit.

Start-Up Furniture

DCF may provide an eligible youth with a maximum of \$1,500.00, which must be used for the purchase of furniture.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- kitchen – table and chairs;
- bedroom – bed frame, twin or full-size mattress and box spring and dresser; and
- living room – sofa and coffee table.

If a youth has obtained any or all of the above items through donations, he or she may negotiate with the Adolescent Specialist for the purchase of additional housing items.

Housewares Start-Up Assistance

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household supplies.

If youth is in a program where housing is provided, youth may access these funds for room start-up costs as needed.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- pots, pans, utensils and dishes;
- towels and sheets; and
- cleaning supplies.

Start-Up Food Supplies

DCF may provide eligible youth with a maximum of \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items only.

The following details the basic cost of living standard with a maximum subsidy of \$1,883:

Rent	SFY 2013 \$709-\$1,327
Stipend	\$556
Food	\$200
Personal Care Items	\$34
Utilities (includes water, gas, and electricity, but not heat, as it is included in rental allotment) Heat (if not included in the rent, may be added but cannot exceed area office rental amount)	\$114
Telephone	\$50
Transportation	\$70
Clothing	\$88
Total	\$1,265 -\$1,883

Rental Rates - for one bedroom apartment

DCF Region	Area Offices	HUD 2013
1	Bridgeport	967
	Norwalk	1,327
2	Milford	1,047
	New Haven	1,047
3	Middletown	883
	Norwich	829
	Willimanti	709
4	Hartford	883
	Manchester	883
5	Danbury	1,023
	Torrington	830
	n	772
6	Meriden	1,055
	New Britain	883

Calculating the Monthly Subsidy

The subsidy may be below the HUD rate limit. If heat is not included in the rent, the amount for heat and rent combined cannot exceed the limit for rent for that Area Office.

When calculating a youth's monthly subsidy, the post-secondary education (PSE) annual funding limit must be taken into consideration. After training costs, materials or other fees related to the approved program are calculated and subtracted from the yearly PSE limit, the remaining amount may be used for rent and stipend as long as it is within funding amounts identified. CHEER categories and line item limits may not be exceeded.

If a youth is participating in a paid internship, fellowship or any learning opportunity that pays a subsidy, this funding is to be subtracted from the funding limits provided in this policy and is considered as part of the overall budget for youth.

If a CHEER youth returns to stay with his or her biological parent(s) during program breaks, youth is eligible for CHEER stipend only.

CHEER Stipend Only

Full-time CHEER youth who are participating in a program where housing and living expenses are being provided may receive the subsidy only. Any funding for living expenses provided by the program must be subtracted from allowable policy limits.

Food	\$100
Personal Care Items	\$34
Telephone	\$50
Transportation	\$70
Clothing	\$88

CHEER Boarding

Full-time CHEER youth residing in the community with an approved caregiver or at an approved location, *e.g.*, former foster home, relative, friend or boarding home.*

Food	\$200
Personal Care Items	\$34
Utilities	\$114
Heat	\$90
Telephone	\$50
Transportation	\$70
Clothing	\$88

*If the youth will be residing in a relative's, friend's or former foster home, the responsible adult(s) in the home must sign off on youth's CHEER contract agreeing to such an arrangement. The roles, rules and responsibilities of all involved must be identified and agreed upon in the youth's CHEER contract and updated quarterly.

Note: Any funding going directly to the identified adult in the household for rent is considered taxable and reportable income.

Out-of-State CHEER Youth

If a youth is attending an approved CHEER program out-of-state and living arrangements are not provided, the HUD Fair Market Rental Rates for that state and area where youth is living must be used when calculating monthly rental subsidies. DCF CHEER boarding rates shall be used if youth is boarding out-of-state. CHEER stipends are used for youth in out-of-state and boarding arrangements.

CHEER Categories

CHEER with Case Management

Full-time CHEER youth residing in their own apartments and receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider. This service includes five hours of case management per week: three hours face-to-face and two hours for collateral contact.

CHEER Case Management Rate – Hourly

To be used for hourly case management, additional case management hours, pre-service activities and travel. The DCF-2163, "Request for Additional Case Management Services (CHAP/CHEER)," must be submitted by the Area Office and sent to the Central Office CHEER Program Coordinator for approval. Private CHAP providers are eligible to provide CHEER case management hours.

CHEER without Case Management

Full-time CHEER youth residing in their own apartments and NOT receiving case management services from a private CHAP provider.

Non CHAP Adolescent Service Type

For youth who are in secondary school, adult education or in a general equivalency diploma (GED) program, and in an approved boarding living arrangement, the placement shall be entered in the computer system under the service type "Non CHAP Adolescent" #791. This service type is ONLY authorized for Child Welfare Accounting (CWA) use. The Adolescent Specialist will make requests for this service type to the CO CHEER Program Coordinator. Upon approval from CO, CWA will enter the placement in the computer system and will notify the Adolescent Specialist.

Funding for a "Non-CHAP Adolescent Service Type," #791 placement that is considered "boarding" is limited to the CHEER boarding funding limits stated above.

Payments for Minor Children

Payments received by the youth for minor children in his or her custody shall not be included in the calculation of the youth's net income or the youth's PSE funding limit.

Youth who are the custodial parents of a minor child and who are participating in CHEER are eligible for the benefits outlined in DCF Policy 42-3, "Adolescent and Young Adult Programs."

Community Case Management

While involved in CHEER, a youth may receive CHAP case management services which include the following:

- development of a DCF CHEER contract with the Adolescent Specialist;
- identification, development and support of permanent family and fictive

- kin relationships and a network of community providers;
- assistance in developing a monthly budget;
- a monthly subsidy;
- monitoring of employment income and savings plan requirements;
- monitoring of expenditures;
- a DCF-approved Life Skills Assessment;
- a strength/needs assessment with the youth;
- monitoring and assessing of employment status;
- assistance with educational and career exploration;
- crisis intervention;
- trauma-informed training;
- supportive intervention and on-going contact;
- community referral services;
- monthly case management written progress reports that contain specific dates, times and number of case management hours; and
- a quarterly life skills acquisition report including transition planning progress.

Discharge from Participation

A youth may be discharged from the program if he or she has:

- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program; or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the CHEER contract and DCF decides to discharge the youth from participation.

Adolescent Transition Planning

Introduction

The [DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form"](#) shall be completed by the Adolescent Specialist and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the young adult passes from care. Youth will be responsible to continue their medical insurance coverage and eligibility by contacting DSS when they pass from care.

DCF recognizes the importance of assisting youth in care with the development of a meaningful transition plan that will assist them when discharging from care and becoming self-sufficient.

Adolescent Transition Plan ACR

The Adolescent Specialist shall develop the [Adolescent Transition Plan \(DCF-2092\)](#) in collaboration with the youth beginning at age 16th and reviewed at the next ACR. The Transition Plan shall be reviewed and revised at subsequent ACR's as long as the youth remains in DCF care.

For youth 18 and older who are transitioning from DCF care the Transition Plan shall be updated and a transition plan shall be developed and reviewed at an ACR within the 90 prior to discharge.

The ACR shall be held at a place and time that meet the youth's needs.

Note: A Transition Plan shall be reviewed for each youth transitioning from DCF care after age 16, even if he or she is being terminated from DCF services due to non-compliance.

Cross reference: [Policy 36-3, Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan.](#)

Adolescent Transition Plan Conference Invitees

The conference invitees shall include:

- the Adolescent Specialist;
- the Social Work Supervisor;

- the youth;
- any significant individuals, as requested by the youth, especially family members and supportive adults;
- youth's attorney;
- youth's guardian *ad litem* (GAL);
- foster parent or caregiver;
- Regional Education Consultant or LEA representative; and
- Regional Resource Group, if applicable; and
- community service providers.

The Adolescent Specialist shall document the invitations in the computer system.

Adolescent Transition Plan Conference Topics

Topics which shall be discussed at the Transition Planning portion of the ACR conference include, but are not limited to:

Safety (Physical and Psychological):

- any difficulties with the move toward more independence which the foster parents, biological parents, relatives or any professional who has been providing services to the youth foresee.

Permanency:

- the identification of any adults committed to providing a supportive long term relationship and a description of their commitment to the youth; and
- expectations about the youth's continuation with any services or program.

Well-Being:

- any concerns the youth has about being transitioned from the care of DCF;
- any benefits which the youth shall be entitled to such as Social Security and medical coverage;
- any benefits or services which will or may be discontinued, and the effects on the youth's plan; and
- re-entry services policy.

Appointment of Health Care Representative for the Youth

The Transition Plan shall also include information about the importance of designating another individual to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of the youth if the youth becomes unable to participate in such decisions and the youth does not have, or does not want, a relative who would otherwise be authorized under state law to make such decisions.

At the ACR at which the Transition Plan is reviewed, a youth over the age of 18 shall be given the option to execute either a DCF-3013, "Appointment of Health Care Representative" or a DCF-3014, "Living Will." The Adolescent Specialist shall provide these documents to the youth and his or her attorney prior to the ACR so that the youth may consult with the attorney and make an informed legal decision regarding whether to execute either document. Youth who do not have legal representation may request assistance with understanding and completing these forms.

Note: The DCF-3013 and DCF-3014 are legal documents. Read the instructions on each form carefully and do not make any changes to the documents without legal consultation.

Appeal

If the youth chooses to appeal DCF's discontinuance of benefits, he or she may request that a Fair Hearing be held pursuant to the instructions on the DCF-800.

Decision to Decline Services

Any youth who is older than 18 years of age may decline services following an Adolescent Transition Plan Conference. DCF shall not accept a decision to decline services by committed youth who are younger than 18 years of age, unless a transition from DCF care has been sanctioned by a court order such as a revocation of commitment or emancipation.

DCF understands that normative adolescent development includes separating from parents, adults and authority figures in order to experience for themselves more independence. Despite DCF's best efforts to offer supports and services to older youth in care, many chose to leave. To ensure that a youth is making an informed decision and leaves with as much information and documentation as possible, DCF requires that prior to discharging from care, the youth participate in an Adolescent Transition Planning Conference.

Youth Refuses Further Services

The youth shall be apprised of continuum of care opportunities as well as services available if he or she remains eligible. Issues to be discussed include medical coverage, behavioral health services educational opportunities, identification, development and support of lifelong connections and permanent family relationships.

If, after discussion of the above topics, the youth, who is over the age of 18 still wishes to leave care, he or she shall read and sign the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits," through which the youth acknowledges that he or she is leaving care.

Re-entry to Adolescent Services Program

Introduction

DCF recognizes that many DCF youth leave care without being fully prepared for self-sufficiency and to become productive members of society. In order to assist these youth, DCF allows eligible youth to return and re-enter care for educational or vocational or employment services which can lead to gainful employment. Youth who have left care without completing their secondary education are especially vulnerable and are at most risk of living in poverty, being homeless or requiring the assistance from other state and federal agencies.

Program Goal

If a youth applies for re-entry and is found eligible, he or she will be eligible to:

1. re-enter and follow an "Adolescent Services Service Agreement" (DCF-2166A), which will include the necessary steps to maintain eligibility; or
2. re-enter and enroll in an approved educational program;

Process for Requesting Re-entry Services

For re-entry into the Adolescent Services Program, a youth must contact the DCF Careline to initiate the process.

DCF Careline Staff Duties:

- document the referral and submit the information to the Regional Re-entry Liaison; and
- conduct an in-state criminal background check.

Regional Re-entry Liaison Duties:

- review the request to determine eligibility;
- review closing summary for history and basic information;
- review hearing outcomes;
- contact the previous worker to assess viability of applicant and obtain a recommendation;
- consult with the Post-Secondary Education staff on the secondary or post-secondary educational plan; and if applicable;
- contact and consult with the DMHAS or DDS liaison;
- contact applicant to schedule interview;
- assess or refer the youth for medical and behavioral health, substance abuse or educational evaluations or services;
- send the youth the DCF-2095, "Application for Re-Entry to Adolescent Services Program," by certified mail or email;

- document the re-entry request and outcome in the computer system; and
- obtain a Commissioner's waiver, if necessary for policy exceptions

Youth Responsibilities:

- be willing to sign a DCF-2131(T), "Release of Information;"
- be willing to cooperate with educational, vocational, behavioral health or substance abuse assessments as recommended;
- provide proof of acceptance or enrollment to an educational or vocational program;
- provide secondary and post-secondary education documentation (e.g., transcripts, report cards, diploma);
- provide proof of substance abuse screening, if applicable;
- provide a letter from behavioral health provider, if applicable;
- agree to an aptitude or interests assessment from a credentialed provider if recommended by a Post-Secondary Education Consultant; and
- incorporate the assessment recommendations into his or her plan for post-secondary education.

Regional Re-entry Liaison Responsibilities:

- if case is accepted for re-entry, create a Voluntary Service Re-Entry intake in the computer system and assign the case to the Area Office Worker;
- base Area Office assignment on the youth's input and location, availability of services, the educational or employment training plan, and the location where the youth would ultimately like to reside and where he or she feels most connected and supported; and
- if the case is transferred to a new Area Office, convene a transfer meeting to include the Area Office Social Work Supervisor and Social Worker. The Regional Re-entry Liaison will track each youth by presenting quarterly data utilizing the

Results Based Accountability model.

Note: If the case is not accepted for re-entry, the Liaison will document the reasons in the computer system and the close the case.

Social Worker Responsibilities:

- review all the information and documentation;
- explain to the youth the expectations and the length of service and limitations;
- develop a "Adolescent Services Service Agreement" (DCF-2166A); and
- provide services.

Substance Abuse

If, as a result of a substance abuse assessment, it is determined that the youth requires in-

patient treatment services or extensive outpatient services, which preclude attendance in a full-time educational program, the youth shall be encouraged to complete treatment prior to re-entry.

Criminal History

Youth may be determined to be ineligible for re-entry services if he or she has serious criminal charges pending or is currently on probation or incarcerated.

Youth requesting re-entry services who are coming directly from incarceration are required to agree to the following:

- sign a DCF-2166A that includes a statement that he or she will demonstrate an appropriate level of commitment and conduct that will allow him or her to benefit from any programs or services that may be offered; and
- provide parole or probation orders to the Reentry Coordinator.