

# ADOLESCENT SERVICES

## Adolescent Services

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### Policy

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) shall provide youth in care with the necessary services and supports to increase their competencies, self-reliance and self-sufficiency as they transition into independence. DCF shall provide a variety of services to eligible youth through the Adolescent Services program.

All youth in care aged 14 and older shall receive adolescent planning regardless of their permanency plan. This program shall include 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 shall offer supports and services that will allow youth to have age-appropriate normative experiences as well as assistance with developing a natural long-term support system.

DCF shall also work to achieve either legal or relational permanency for all adolescents in care. The permanency goal shall be a priority in all interactions between DCF youth and staff and contracted providers.

### Adolescent Case Transfer Conference

An Adolescent Case Transfer Conference shall be held for every DCF youth age 14 or older, in out-of-home placement and committed as abused, neglected or uncared for except when:

- the case is already assigned to an Adolescent Specialist;
- the youth is receiving Voluntary Services;
- there is an adoption pending; or
- the youth will be returning home within six months.

**Related form:** DCF-2084, "Adolescent Case Transfer Conference."

### Adolescent Specialist

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

### 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 shall 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.

### 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 shall 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 shall meet with the Commissioner on a quarterly basis or as requested.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-10c.

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### Services Post-Majority - Administrative Requirements

Youth who are committed abused, neglected, or uncared for as of their 18th birthday shall have their current "family" case closed in the computer system and re-opened as a "Services Post-Majority" case in order to continue receiving services.

Youth in Services Post-Majority (SPM) cases shall be eligible to receive continued support from DCF if one of the following criteria is met:

- the youth is completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- the youth is enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education; or
- the youth is participating in a program or activity designed to promote or to remove barriers to employment.

The Adolescent Specialist shall ensure that the youth's SPM case contains the current Individual Case Plan and placement, payment, medical, educational, legal and other necessary information from the previous case record.

The Adolescent Specialist shall complete the DCF-779 "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post Majority"; DCF-550 (system generated), and DCF-551 (system generated), and file the originals in the case record.

The Adolescent Specialist shall file in Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, on behalf of the youth, a Motion for Determination Regarding Continuance in Care within 120 days of the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Court must rule on the motion within 180 days of the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

If there is no approved permanency plan, a Motion for Review of Permanency Plan shall be filed concurrently with the Motion for Determination Regarding Continuance in Care and then annually thereafter. In all other cases, a Motion for Review of Permanency Plan shall be filed annually in accordance with the current schedule.

DCF shall continue to hold Administrative Case Reviews every six months for as long as the youth is receiving services.

### 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 discharged from DCF care.

**Note:** State and federal law state that the credit report requirement applies to "foster children" age 14 and over. However, federal law defines "foster child" very broadly and includes almost any child who is in out-of-home placement. Therefore, this policy applies to all youth placed by DCF in out- of home care including Voluntary Services clients, as well as youth in congregate care facilities, hospitals, on-campus housing, and independent living arrangements.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-114b; 42 U.S.C. §475(5)(I); "consumer report" is defined in 15 U.S.C. 1681 (a).

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### Accessing Credit Reports

The DCF Office of Fiscal Services (OFS) shall act as a liaison to the three major credit reporting agencies (TransUnion, Experian and Equifax). A Fiscal Services representative shall secure the necessary credit reports and pass them on to the youth's assigned Adolescent Specialist Social Worker, noting any anomalous credit activity.

Youth age 18 and over shall sign a consent for OFS staff to secure consumer credit reports or the assigned Adolescent Specialist may teach youth how to obtain the credit report for themselves by using the free online service "annualcreditreport.com."

At the end of each fiscal year quarter, the OFS shall obtain from the computer system a list of DCF youth in out-of-home placement who are turning 14 years of age. Within 15 days after the youth's 14th birthday, the youth's name and other necessary information shall be submitted by OFS to the three major credit reporting agencies using procedures developed in conjunction with those agencies.

At the end of each fiscal year, the OFS staff shall obtain from the computer system a list of all DCF foster youth who are age 14 and older and submit the names and other necessary information to the credit reporting agencies within one year of the date the last credit report was requested.

When a credit report is received from an agency, the assigned OFS staff shall review it for anomalous credit activity. The credit report shall then be sent to the youth's Social Worker with a note stating whether there are any issues that may require resolution.

### Review of Credit Reports

The Social Worker shall provide the credit report to the youth and help the youth interpret it. The Social Worker shall 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 Social Worker shall send a copy of the credit report to the youth's attorney using the DCF-777 "Credit Report Letter to Child's Attorney", which requests that the attorney also review the report with the youth and assist with any problem.

At each Administrative Case Review, the youth's most recent credit report shall be reviewed and any activity related to addressing issues shall be discussed.

### Resolving Credit Report Issues

The Social Worker shall work with the assigned OFS credit agency liaison, the youth's attorney, the youth's creditors and DCF legal staff, as necessary, to resolve all issues on the credit report including the expungement of fraudulent information.

The credit reporting agencies may require a copy of the youth's birth certificate and the court order of commitment before expunging information. The Social Worker shall obtain the birth certificate and court order for the OFS staff. If the birth certificate or court order is not provided to OFS staff in a timely manner, the OFS staff shall notify the Social Work Supervisor and Program Supervisor. If the OFS staff still does not receive the requested information, the Area Office Director shall be notified. The credit reporting agency will provide written acknowledgement to the OFS staff of the request for expungement and the action taken.

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### **Resolving Credit Report Issues** (Continued)

Credit fraud or identify theft discovered shall be reported to OFS, which shall notify the Office of the Chief State's Attorney using the DCF-778 "Credit Report Letter to State's Attorney". The Social Worker shall promptly provide any additional information requested by the Chief State's Attorney for investigation and prosecution.

All documentation to and from the credit reporting agencies shall be copied by OFS staff to the Social Worker and filed in the uniform case record.

All conversations and activity related to a youth's credit report shall be documented in the computer system.

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### **Secondary School Senior Year Expenses**

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.

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

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

A youth requesting secondary school senior year expense funds shall submit a request in writing to his or her Adolescent Specialist, with supporting documentation of the item(s) and the 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 approved, the Adolescent Specialist shall enter the payment into the computer system. The Adolescent Specialist shall apply for a vendor number for the youth, if one is not available, and funding shall be issued directly to the youth.

All requests for high school expenses shall be documented in the computer system and copy of the requests shall be filed in the Uniform Case Record.

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

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### **Driver's Permit and License**

If a youth age 16 or older who is in DCF care wishes to secure a driver's license, the Adolescent Specialist shall review the request with the youth and caregiver and determine whether the youth has exhibited sufficiently responsible behavior to be eligible for this privilege. DCF shall provide financial assistance to eligible youth to obtain a driver's license.

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### **Driver's Permit and License** (Continued)

Youth under age 18 shall successfully complete a certified driver's education program in order to obtain a driver's license. DCF shall pay 100% of the cost of one driver's education program for eligible youth.

At age 16, a youth may take the written exam to obtain his or her driver's permit. A youth may take the driving test to obtain his or her license six months after obtaining the permit.

The Area Office Director or designee shall sign the Department of Motor Vehicles form 2D, "Parents' or Guardians' Certification," for youth who are ages 16 and 17.

The Adolescent Specialist shall verify with the owner of any car that the youth plans to drive that the required insurance is being carried and that the owner assumes responsibility for the actions of the youth while he or she is driving the car.

### **Secondary Education And General Equivalency Diploma (GED)**

Youth who are committed abused, neglected, uncared for, or for whom the Commissioner is the statutory parent, shall be in full-time attendance in a secondary school (high school) program, adult high school credit diploma program or general equivalency diploma (GED) program. Adult high school or GED programs may be approved by the Commissioner in lieu of secondary school on a case-by-case basis. Youth shall be required to complete the adult high school or GED program by age 21.

All youth shall be encouraged to remain in and graduate from secondary school. In the event that it is in the best interest of the youth to pursue alternative means to secondary education completion, the Adolescent Specialist shall seek prior approval from the Commissioner. The Adolescent Specialist shall prepare a memorandum for the Commissioner to review which shall also include the prior approvals of the Area Office Director and the Regional Administrator. The following documents shall be included in memorandum:

- school transcripts;
- test scores;
- GED practice and test scores;
- anticipated Post-Secondary Education or Employment Plan; and
- anticipated time frame for GED completion.

Youth who have been approved to attend a GED program shall be required to accept additional support services, to include tutoring, in order to complete the program within six months. These youth shall be encouraged to also enroll in a post-secondary education program or employment training.

### **Encouragement to Remain in School**

Adolescent Specialists shall encourage all youth to remain in and graduate from high school. GED youth are eligible for post-secondary educational programs only if approved by the Commissioner.

### **Adolescent and Adult Programs**

The Department of Children and Families shall, within available appropriations, provide an array of services to the adolescents in its care and the young adults who have chosen to remain with DCF.

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### Life Skills Education and Training

DCF shall provide youth in the Adolescent Services Program with the tools necessary to achieve self-sufficiency by providing instruction in life skills training, which shall include skills in:

- daily living and social relationships;
- self-care;
- work and study;
- career planning;
- finances;
- communication; and
- reproductive health care counseling consistent with national guidelines.

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### Congregate Care

The Department of Children Families shall provide short-term treatment in congregate care settings when indicated. The treatment shall be strength-based and developmentally-appropriate. The treatment shall also be gender-responsive, trauma-informed and support the youth's race, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity.

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### Transitional Living Program - SWETP

DCF shall provide a range of transitional living options for youth in care who need to practice their independent living skills within a supportive instructional environment including the Supportive Work Education and Transition Program (SWETP). Transitional living programs offer youth an opportunity to learn and practice independent living skills, attend school in the community and hold jobs while residing in a 24-hour supportive structured supervised setting.

To be eligible for a transitional living program, the youth shall be:

- in DCF out-of-home care;
- age 14 and over;
- prepared for involvement in a less-restrictive setting; and
- not yet ready for living independently in the community.

A youth shall be ineligible for a transitional living program if he or she:

- is married;
- is on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States;
- is displaying actively psychotic, violent or assaultive behavior; or
- has an active substance abuse problem that would interfere with the group process and interventions.

Program staff shall develop, in conjunction with the youth and DCF, a service agreement (DCF-2166 A) that shall include roles, responsibilities, expectations, goals and time frames for the youth. Additionally, the service agreement shall include a statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the service agreement or program requirements.

The DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post-Majority (SPM)," shall be signed by all youth prior to the eighteenth birthday indicating the youth's desire to voluntarily continue to receive services after age 18.

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### Community Housing Assistance Program ("CHAP")

DCF shall offer a Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) and provide financial assistance to youth who were committed abused, neglected, or uncared for as of their 18th birthday who demonstrate an interest in and ability to pursue post-secondary education or vocational training. DCF shall offer 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.

### CHAP Eligibility and Program Requirements

To be eligible for admission to the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP), a youth shall:

- be committed abused, neglected, or uncared for, upon the youth's 18th birthday;
- have obtained a high school diploma or a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- have exhibited adequate social, behavioral and life skills as determined by the Adolescent Specialist's assessment and documentation in the case record;
- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday indicating his or her desire to continue receiving services;
- have successfully completed a DCF-approved Life Skills Program;
- have a Post-Secondary Education Plan approved by a DCF Post-Secondary Education Consultant;
- be enrolled and in good standing (in accordance with the standards of the institution) in an educational or vocational program; and
- have a referral packet reviewed and approved by the DCF Central Office CHAP Coordinator.

**Note:** Successful completion of the Life Skills Program alone shall not entitle a youth to CHAP admission.

Youth shall account for, at a minimum, 40 productive hours per week. A productive hour is defined as time devoted to:

- classes;
- study;
- extra-curricular activities;
- part-time work;
- internship;
- volunteering;
- training;
- apprenticeship;
- treatment activities; or
- any combination of these activities.

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#### **CHAP Eligibility and Program Requirements** (continued)

Ten of the 40 hours shall be dedicated to a part-time job, internship, training or apprenticeship program. A youth who cannot identify one of these four options shall volunteer a minimum of ten hours per week.

During summer breaks, the youth shall work, take classes or intern in his or her chosen profession and shall be required to save half of his or her earnings. Yearly documentation of the youth's savings plan and ability to provide for him- or herself after leaving DCF shall be documented in the computer system each September.

The DCF-2251, "DCF CHAP Contract" shall be written by the Adolescent Specialist in conjunction with the youth and signed twice a year as part of the ACR process. The contract shall be reviewed quarterly by the youth and the Adolescent Specialist and the Community Case Manager (if applicable), and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- agreed-upon place of residence;
- roles and responsibilities of the youth, DCF and Community Case Manager and caregiver;
- plan for full-time educational or vocational program;
- financial arrangements (*e.g.*, budget, savings);
- statement regarding a proposed timeline to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management;
- statement regarding the youth's successful completion in a DCF-approved Life Skills Program or other recommended programming;
- statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements; and
- statement regarding DCF-approved roommates.

A youth may be discharged from the CHAP 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.

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 Benefits" as soon as the youth is deemed to be out of compliance by the Adolescent Specialist. The youth's Adolescent Specialist shall also mail or give directly to the client the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate DCF Benefits." If the client wishes to have a hearing, he or she must complete the reverse side of the DCF-800 and mail it to the Administrative Hearings Unit within 60 days of the date the notice was mailed. DCF shall hold a meeting with the youth and review the DCF-2092, "Adolescent Discharge Plan" to discuss the details outlined in the discharge and transition plan.



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#### CHAP Funding

Funding for CHAP housing is based on the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) fair market rental rates for a one bedroom apartment that includes heat or based on housing costs allowed under the foster care rate for youth age 16 years and older. Stipend amounts are based on the current cost of living set by federal and state guidelines.

**Note:** Refer to the Adolescent Practice Guide for specific rate information.

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 as established by DCF. If a youth successfully completes his or her post-secondary education or vocational program, the youth may keep the deposit.);
- an eligible youth with a maximum of \$1,500.00 which must be used for the purchase of furniture;
- 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;
- 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.

When calculating a youth's monthly subsidy, the post-secondary annual funding limit shall 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 the costs are within the established funding amounts. CHAP categories and line item limits contained within this policy shall not be exceeded.

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

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

Additional funding for housing and living are available during school breaks if the youth has reached the post-secondary education funding limit. Any funding for school breaks must follow the funding structure below.

If a youth in post-secondary education returns to stay with his or her biological parent(s) during school breaks, the youth shall be eligible for the CHAP stipend only,

If a youth is attending an approved post-secondary education program out of state and is living off-campus, the HUD fair market rental rates for that state and area where the youth is living shall be used when calculating the monthly rental subsidy. DCF CHAP boarding rates shall be utilized if the youth is boarding out of state.

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### CHAP Funding (Continued)

If a youth is attending a college or vocational program in which housing or any of the items in the stipend categories are being provided, the youth shall be eligible only for those categories not covered or that do not exceed the identified CHAP stipend amounts. This includes summer internships and bridge programs.

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

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

Employment shall be required under the CHAP program once the youth has demonstrated academic stability (*e.g.*, following a successful freshman year). A youth shall be employed for a minimum of ten hours per week and for no more than 20 hours per week. Youth shall commit to a savings plan.

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 shall be documented in the CHAP contract at least every six months.

Employment during the summer shall be required, unless the youth is in summer school full time. Employment sites shall be geared toward providing youth with experiences related to his or her career goals whenever possible. Unpaid internships related to the youth's course of study shall also be encouraged and, when appropriate, may be used as a substitute for paid summer employment.

**Note:** Youth must keep in mind what they will need to support themselves after leaving DCF care when making decisions on unpaid internships vs. paid employment.

While involved in CHAP, a youth may receive two years of case management services. See "Adolescent Practice Guide" for case management services details.

### Adolescent Parent Program and Funding

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

All services and opportunities that will assist the youth to become a healthy, responsible parent (*e.g.*, fatherhood training) shall be made available within DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with policy.

The Adolescent Specialist shall enter into the computer system the expected due date of a pregnancy and the outcome. When a birth has been confirmed and paternity has been legally established, the child's information shall be entered and linked to the youth in care in the electronic record.

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#### **Adolescent Parent Program and Funding** (Continued)

The Adolescent Specialist shall ensure that a committed youth under the age of 18 who is the custodial parent of a minor child is enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through the Department of Social Services (DSS). Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) provides:

- licensed day care so the youth may attend high school;
- medical coverage; and
- financial payments for the minor child.

DCF shall be responsible for any day care expenses incurred by the youth for work-related purposes. If written notification is received from DSS that day care funds through that agency are exhausted, DCF shall pay for the cost of a licensed day care provider.

Youth ages 18 or older who are CHAP, CHEER and SWETP participants and are the custodial parent of a child shall receive financial assistance from DCF. DCF payments shall include funds for:

- the youth's living needs;
- the minor child (at \$100.00 per month per child if not already included in the program rate); and
- licensed day care if needed.

Medical coverage for the minor child shall be provided by DSS.

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

#### **Reproductive Health**

Youth served by DCF shall have access to a full array of reproductive health services. DCF shall follow the Centers for Disease Control's, American Academy of Pediatrics' and American College of Obstetrics' recommendations for regular health care services including providing youth with information about the importance of delaying the initiation of sexual activity and about contraceptive options. DCF shall follow the established guidelines for meeting the reproductive health care needs for adolescents in care.

Youth ages 12 and up shall receive health guidance annually regarding responsible sexual behaviors, including abstinence. The array of birth control options (including but not limited to IUDs, birth control pills and condoms) and methods to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) shall be made available along with instructions on how to use them effectively.

All sexually active females shall be offered a yearly routine gynecologic examination, including associated testing. The Social Worker or Adolescent Specialist shall make the referral to a gynecologist, family planning clinic or OB/GYN clinic as needed or requested by youth. The Social Worker or Adolescent Specialist shall ensure that well child visits are completed and documented in the case record (EPSDT).

DCF shall identify young parents for additional interventions focusing on delaying additional pregnancies.

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### **Eligibility for Mentoring Program**

All youth age 14 and older in the care and custody of DCF are eligible for volunteer mentor services. Providers will prioritize assignments as follows:

- youth in foster homes;
- youth in group homes;
- youth in transitional living apartments, including Supported Work and Education and Transitions Programs (SWETP);
- youth in independent living apartments or the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP);
- youth in residential treatment.

Exceptions may be made for the following by request to the Area Office Director in writing:

- youth under the age of 14; and
  - youth who are not in the care or custody of DCF.
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### **Provider Responsibility for Mentoring Program**

Providers are responsible for:

- recruiting, screening, training and supporting potential adult mentors;
  - provide ongoing training;
  - facilitating a match;
  - providing ongoing supervision to mentors;
  - providing recreational activities for mentors and mentees;
  - providing awards dinners, sports events, barbecues, excursions or outings two times per year;
  - maintaining data and submitting necessary reports to DCF;
  - providing standardized program outlines; and
  - providing ongoing supervision to mentors.
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### **Mentor Responsibilities**

Mentors shall have meaningful and dependable contact with his or her assigned mentee. This is achieved through:

- making a minimum of a one year commitment to the match;
  - having weekly contact with the mentee;
  - having face-to-face contact with the mentee a minimum of three times per month;
  - attending two scheduled group events per year;
  - attending two trainings per year;
  - providing monthly contact logs or reports; and
  - responding to yearly mentor surveys.
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### **Mentee Responsibilities**

All youth in the One-on-One Mentoring Program shall:

- complete the interest inventory;
  - make himself or herself available to the assigned mentor; and
  - meet face-to-face with the mentor at least three times per month.
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#### **Post-Secondary Education Program (PSE)**

The Department of Children and Families may offer funding for a post-secondary education (PSE) program to youth who:

- are committed to DCF as abused, neglected or uncared for, as of the youth's 18th birthday;
- have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- demonstrate an interest and ability to pursue an accredited PSE program.

"Post-secondary education program" or "PSE" means a program that leads to an academic college degree or certification in a vocation or employment training.

The PSE Program shall be administered by the DCF Education Division.

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#### **Eligibility for PSE Funding**

Funding shall be based on available DCF budget appropriations. To be eligible for assistance for post-secondary education funding, the youth shall:

- be adjudicated abused, neglected or uncared for and committed to DCF by the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters at the time the child turns 18 years of age;
- have obtained a high school diploma or received approval for and completed a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- demonstrate adequate social skills and appropriate behavior, as assessed by the Adolescent Specialist and the case history;
- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Services Post Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday in order to continue receiving services beyond age 18;
- maintain compliance with DCF through an individual post-majority contract;

AND EITHER:

- begin in a full-time PSE program immediately after receiving a high school diploma or GED; and
- have an approved PSE plan;

OR

- successfully complete CHEER before the youth's 21st birthday; and
- have an approved PSE plan.

Exceptions may be granted in cases in which a youth who has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or is an English Language Learner graduates from high school after his or her 21st birthday or due to other extraordinary circumstances.

A youth and his or her Adolescent Specialist shall work together to pursue an appropriate educational plan that meets the youth's educational needs and goals, including his or her cultural and linguistic needs.

Youth shall be made aware of the funding limits for the post-secondary education program and encouraged to remember these funding limits when selecting a program.

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### Ineligibility for PSE Funding

DCF shall not pay PSE expenses for any youth who:

- was a Voluntary Services client placed in out-of-home care by DCF as of the youth's 18th birthday;
- is residing in a living arrangement not authorized by DCF;
- is married;
- is on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States; or
- has already benefited from the PSE program and was unsuccessful in two PSE programs.

**Note:** For purposes of this policy, "active duty" is defined as a full-time occupation as part of a division of the armed forces of the United States.

### Voluntary Community Service Program Participation

Only youth who have been accepted into and deferred their matriculation at an accredited college or university are eligible to participate in a formally-recognized volunteer community service program for up to one year immediately following high school graduation.

All volunteer programs shall be approved by PSE staff.

Youth shall be eligible for subsidies available under the CHEER policy but shall be exempt from the reduction formula during the volunteer year as long as they are in compliance with the Voluntary Community Service Program. If the volunteer program provides any funding for living expenses, this funding shall be subtracted from allowable line items.

If a youth successfully completes his or her volunteer experience, he or she may continue with DCF and pursue the deferred PSE program as long as he or she remains eligible for PSE.

### Post- Secondary Education Plans - Academic

For any youth interested in pursuing post-secondary education, the DCF Adolescent Specialist shall submit a Post-Secondary Education (PSE) plan to a Post-Secondary Education Consultant. Plans shall contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment results (SBA), if applicable;
- CAPT Science score;
- SAT and ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, if applicable;
- most recent psychological or achievement evaluation conducted;
- a youth-prepared summary with a proposed education plan that identifies the following:
  - type of program;
  - field of study or major;
  - career goal; and

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### Post-Secondary Education Plans – Academic (Continued)

- length of program and projected completion (e.g., certificate program, 18 months; computer programming, associate's degree, two years; criminal justice, bachelor's degree, four years);
- list of schools to which the youth intends to apply or has applied; and
- an approved Preliminary PSE plan.

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### Post-Secondary Education Plans - Vocational

For any youth interested in pursuing post-secondary vocational training, the Adolescent Specialist shall submit a PSE plan to a Post- Secondary Education Specialist. Plans shall contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment results (SBA), if applicable;
- CAPT Science score;
- SAT or ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, if applicable;
- most recent psychological or achievement evaluation conducted;
- proposed employment training plan that identifies the type of employment training program, including the length of the program and the area being pursued; and
- a list of employment training programs to which the youth intends to apply or has applied.

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### PSE Plans - Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources Program (CHEER)

For any youth interested in pursuing the Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources Program (CHEER), the DCF Adolescent Specialist shall submit a PSE plan to PSE staff. PSE staff shall forward the plan to the CHEER Coordinator. Plans must contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- SAT and ACT scores;
  - official high school transcript;
  - for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
  - most recent 504 Plan, if applicable;
  - youth prepared summary with a proposed education plan that identified the following:
    - trade of interest;
    - career goal; and
    - length of program and projected completion;
  - list of employment training programs to which the youth intends to apply or has applied; and
  - an approved preliminary PSE plan.
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### **PSE participation for Youth Transitioning to DMHAS**

Youth who have been accepted into a Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) program shall be eligible for funding to pursue post-secondary education. However, these youth, like youth with physical diagnoses, shall factor their treatment needs into their PSE plans. DCF staff shall work with DMHAS to address and prioritize each youth's treatment needs while pursuing post-secondary education.

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### **Approval of PSE Plans**

PSE plans shall be approved by a DCF PSE Consultant. If the youth also plans to participate in CHEER, the plan shall also be approved by the CHEER Coordinator.

If the PSE plan is not approved by either the PSE Consultant or CHEER Coordinator, a case conference shall be held between the PSE Consultant, CHEER Coordinator and the Area Office staff (DCF Social Worker, Supervisor and/or Program Supervisor).

Disagreements shall be resolved by the Superintendent of USD #2 or designee, in consultation with the Regional Administrator, and the decision shall be final.

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### **PSE Part-Time Attendance Criteria**

A youth who otherwise meets the PSE program eligibility requirements, and who demonstrates a need, may request permission each semester from the Commissioner or designee to attend courses on a part-time basis.

Factors that shall be considered when determining whether part-time attendance is appropriate include, but are not limited to, whether the youth:

- presents with or develops a health or mental health condition;
  - was identified as a student in need of special education and related services prior to completing high school; or
  - had an accommodation plan developed prior to completing high school and continues to need accommodations in order to complete his or her post-secondary education.
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### **PSE Remedial Courses**

A youth who meets the PSE program eligibility criteria may enroll in remedial courses for the first semester/trimester/quarter of attendance in his or her post-secondary program.

Subsequent to this, youth may enroll in remedial courses but must also enroll for a minimum of 12 non-remedial course credits for each semester/trimester/quarter of attendance that counts towards the awarding of the educational program's goal (e.g., certificate, degree).

Youth may enroll in remedial courses in an accredited post-secondary education program during the summer that immediately follows high school graduation or after earning a GED in addition to or in lieu of enrolling in remedial courses during the regular academic school year.

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#### **PSE Program Funding Continuation Requirements**

Following the first year of study, a youth in a post-secondary education program shall be expected to complete a minimum of 24 non-remedial credits in each consecutive 12-month period, while maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0 each semester (unless the youth is on a pre-approved reduced schedule or has taken remedial courses during the 12-month period). Youth taking remedial courses shall complete a minimum of 24 credits during any consecutive 12-month period and maintain a 2.0 GPA for those credits each semester.

**Note:** The consecutive 12-month period for a youth starts on the first month of the first semester in a PSE program. For example, for a youth who starts his or her first semester in September, the 12-month period ends in August the following year. For a youth who starts his or her first semester in January, the 12-month period ends in December of that year.

If a youth enrolled in a college, vocational or employment training program does not maintain good academic standing or compliance with program expectations, an educational meeting shall be held with the youth, the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff (DCF Social Worker, Supervisor and/or Program Supervisor). At this meeting, if it is determined that the youth is non-compliant, a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits," shall be issued and a service agreement shall be developed with the youth. If appropriate, the youth may be given the opportunity to withdraw from the current program or track and select and enroll in another unrelated program.

If the youth does not succeed in the subsequent program, he or she shall no longer be eligible for post-secondary education funds and the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits," shall be re-issued to the youth.

If a pre-approved part-time youth does not maintain a 2.0 GPA for an average of six course credits or two classes per semester/trimester/ quarter, a PSE consult as described above shall be held.

A youth who originally pursued a vocational education program after having completed high school or obtained a GED and successfully completes such a program, shall be eligible for continued PSE funding if he or she elects to enroll in a subsequent program. Any subsequent program shall be determined by the Program Supervisor to be a continuation of similar subject matter as the certificate program the youth has completed (*e.g.*, CNA to LPN or RN program) or a subsequent program that will support the youth in a career goal (*e.g.*, a youth with a career goal of owning a beauty salon may opt to enroll in a certificate program within this field and then pursue a business program). The youth shall begin attending the subsequent program immediately after completing the first program.

**Note:** Youth whose original track was a college degree program and who switched to a vocational education or employment training program have used the two PSE opportunities provided by DCF and are not eligible for any additional funding.

(Continued next page)

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### **PSE Program Funding Continuation Requirements** (Continued)

A youth who enrolls in a degree-awarding program which results in an associate's degree may enroll in a bachelor's degree program. Any such program shall be determined by the Program Supervisor to be a continuation of the program the youth has completed.

Youth are not eligible for PSE funding from DCF following completion of a bachelor's degree or outside the time frames identified in this policy. DCF shall not provide support for advanced degree programs (*e.g.*, master's degree).

### **PSE Funding Requirements**

In order to qualify for PSE funding from DCF, a youth shall:

- have a post-secondary education plan (filed in the Education section of the Uniform Case Record) that has been reviewed and approved by a PSE Consultant;
- demonstrate the ability and strong desire to pursue post-secondary education;
- if age 18 or over, voluntarily agree to continue to receive services from DCF and understand that most services and funding from DCF shall terminate upon reaching age 21, and all funding shall terminate at age 23, or earlier if the conditions of post-secondary education are not met;
- complete the U.S. Department of Education's Free Application for Federal Youth Aid (FAFSA) no later than 90 days prior to the expected award of a high school diploma or GED and annually thereafter;
- complete, if required by the PSE program, the institution-specific financial aid application; and
- apply, or compete, for appropriate grants and scholarships to offset costs.

DCF shall not provide financial assistance unless such efforts by the youth are reflected in the total funding request. A youth who requests PSE funding shall provide the following documentation to his or her Adolescent Specialist:

- proof of enrollment or registration at an accredited institution;
- the Free Application for Federal Youth Aid (FAFSA) submission receipt;
- any institution-specific application(s) for financial aid;
- a high school transcript;
- a copy of the financial aid award letter or Student Award Report (SAR); and
- copies of all grant and scholarship applications and corresponding award determination letters.

### **PSE Funding Limits**

DCF funding for the costs of attendance in a PSE program is limited to an amount not to exceed the maximum cost of attendance at a Connecticut State University. Youth who choose to attend programs or colleges that exceed the DCF funding limit shall be solely responsible for any and all additional funding costs.

The maximum funding for cost of attendance in a PSE program shall be based upon Connecticut State University's "Financial Aid Cost of Attendance Budget" for an undergraduate, in-state, full-time, on-campus youth for the current state fiscal year.

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#### **PSE Funding Limits**

(Continued)

Costs of attendance include:

- tuition and fees;
- room and board (on campus) and/or CHAP rent and stipend (off campus); and
- books, equipment, supplies and materials required of all youth in the same course of study.

Youth who have exceeded the funding amount may, within available appropriations, be eligible for the following with the Office Director's approval:

- a computer;
- accommodations related to a youth's disability that are not funded by another source; and
- two round-trip transportation expenses to be used to visit caregivers during educational breaks if attending an out-of- state institution.

A youth who is residing in a congregate care setting, PASS, SWEPT or a therapeutic foster home shall not be eligible for the room and board portion of the costs of attendance because the room and board portion shall be paid to the housing provider.

Youth who have not exceeded the tuition funding limit for that academic year and wish to take additional courses during the winter or summer sessions may do so with the Program Supervisor's permission.

Youth who are participating in a summer internship or bridge program where housing, stipends or living expenses are provided are only eligible for expenses not otherwise covered. These expenses should not exceed the CHAP rent or stipend line item amounts.

Youth are also eligible for case management services to age 21.

#### **Requesting Financial Assistance for PSE**

The Adolescent Specialist shall complete the DCF-632, "Financial Assistance Required for Post-Secondary Education," annually prior to the start of the school year. The DCF-632 shall be submitted with a copy of the financial aid award letter from the school to which the youth applied and was accepted, and the youth's Student Aid Report (SAR). The Adolescent Specialist shall submit the DCF-632 and supporting documents for review and approval to the Adolescent Social Work Supervisor, Program Supervisor and Office Director.

The Adolescent Specialist shall forward a copy of the completed DCF-632 to Child Welfare Accounting (CWA), once approved.

An Adolescent Specialist who has a youth planning to attend a post- secondary program out of state shall contact a DCF Health Advocate to coordinate medical coverage and identify providers in that state

The Adolescent Specialist shall submit the DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form," to the Health Advocate.

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<b>Confirmation of Funding for PSE</b>	<p>The Adolescent Specialist shall confirm the level of PSE funding that DCF provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the youth, using the DCF-633, "Statement of Financial Assistance – Post-Secondary Education, Employment Training";</li><li>• the educational institution's financial aid office, using the DCF-634, "Confirmation of Financial Assistance"; and</li><li>• the bookstore at the educational institution, using the DCF-635, "Notification to Bookstore".</li></ul>
<b>PSE Educational Review</b>	<p>The Adolescent Specialist shall conduct a semester/ trimester/quarterly review to determine the youth's progress in his or her PSE program. The youth shall maintain good academic standing and financial aid eligibility, and cooperate with DCF to remain eligible for continued financial assistance.</p> <p>The review shall include the youth's academic performance and financial status on a semester/trimester/quarterly basis to ensure ongoing eligibility for financial assistance from DCF. Based upon this periodic review, the Adolescent Specialist shall update the PSE plan in the computer system to reflect the youth's progress and the benchmarks achieved.</p> <p>If concerns arise regarding the academic progress or program progress for a youth in a post-secondary education or employment training program based either on the periodic review or from other sources, the Adolescent Specialist shall request a PSE consultation immediately to determine if additional supports are necessary. (<b>Cross reference:</b> "PSE Program Funding Continuation Requirements" section above.)</p> <p>The Adolescent Specialist shall document the following in the computer system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• all discussions with the youth or others at the program the youth is attending;</li><li>• all eligibility reviews;</li><li>• all educational consults;</li><li>• course grades and GPA;</li><li>• programs completed;</li><li>• financial status;</li><li>• earned credits; and</li><li>• all new post-majority contracts that are approved.</li></ul> <p>All relevant forms shall be filed in the Uniform Case Record.</p>
<b>PSE Subsidies During Academic Breaks</b>	<p>A youth may be eligible for an additional subsidy (based on CHAP funding amounts) for housing and other living expenses from DCF during academic breaks when other housing is not available, including summer months. A youth is not eligible for this additional subsidy during academic sessions.</p> <p>This subsidy is an additional stipend which shall be prorated based upon the number of days the youth is on an academic break and requires housing and living expenses. The daily prorated amount is 1/30th of the total monthly funding limit. (See "Adolescent Services Practice Guide" for subsidy amounts.)</p>

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### Criteria for PSE Eligibility after 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday

The Adolescent Services Specialist shall review the case of each youth who is approaching his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday for continued service eligibility. Youth who were approved for admission to a PSE program and began such program prior to his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, shall be eligible for funding to complete the program in which he or she is enrolled until his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday occurs. Youth attending a college degree program shall meet the requirements of this policy to remain eligible for continued services until his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday occurs.

A youth who has an IEP until his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday shall be eligible for funding under this policy until his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

In order to remain eligible, the youth must:

- already be attending an approved post-secondary education program;
- have a GPA of 2.0 or better per semester; and
- have earned 24 credits per calendar year.

Youth who are eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) may receive educational funding through DCF up to age 23 if they meet the requirements set forth in this policy. Youth must be willing to comply and remain in compliance with treatment recommendations to receive post-secondary education funding from DCF.

Post-secondary education funding after age 21 is limited to the maximum costs of attendance (tuition, room, board, fees) as set forth in this policy, housing during academic breaks and start-up household expenses, if not already exhausted. The youth may also be eligible for medical coverage.

### Transition After PSE Program

For youth who have completed a college degree or vocational training program, a transitional period may be provided for up to 90 days and shall begin immediately following graduation and continue for a maximum of 90 days. (The most common request for a transition period is for youth who have completed a college degree or vocational/technical program and need time to secure full time employment.)

Youth may request an extension of services for up to an additional three months. The decision regarding the application for extension of services shall be made by the Commissioner. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final. The youth shall not be entitled to appeal the decision.

Applications for an extension should be submitted using DCF-781, "Transition Extension Application for Postsecondary Graduates". Applications should be submitted to the DCF Commissioner's Office 2 months prior to the anticipated graduation date. The decision of the Commissioner will be communicated to the region and area office from which the application originated.

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**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 Discontinuation of DCF 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 youth may request a Fair Hearing. If requested within ten days DCF shall continue to pay PSE expenses until a Final Decision is issued by the Commissioner or designee.

**Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER)** The Department of Children and Families (DCF) may offer a Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resource (CHEER) that provides financial assistance to youth who were committed abused, neglected, or uncared for as of their 18th birthday and who demonstrate strong motivation and the ability to pursue a post-secondary employment training and career development program.

Funding shall be based on available DCF budget appropriations.

CHEER may include training for non-certified vocational or technical programs, apprenticeship programs or job readiness development. CHEER may also provide job placement assistance.

CHEER shall provide several living options coupled with support services to assist the youth with a gradual move towards successful adult living. Housing options may include, but are not limited to, individual and shared apartments, boarding arrangements and on-site living arrangements offered by an employment program.

While involved in CHEER, a youth shall receive community case management services up to his or her 21st birthday. Case management shall be provided by CHAP private providers that demonstrate competencies in job training, job coaching and job placement.

**CHEER Eligibility and Program Requirements**

To be eligible for admission to CHEER, a youth shall:

- be DCF committed abused, neglected, or uncared for, at the time of the youth's 18th birthday;
- have not yet reached his or her 21st birthday;
- have obtained a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- have exhibited adequate social, behavioral and life skills, as assessed by the Adolescent Specialist and as reflected in the uniform case record;
- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Service Post Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday indicating his or her desire to continue receiving services;
- have successfully completed a DCF-approved Life Skills Program;
- be highly motivated to pursue employment training or job readiness services that will lead to gainful employment;
- participate in activities consistent with job training or job acquisition for 40 hours each week;

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#### **CHEER Eligibility and Program Requirements (Continued)**

- have an approved post-secondary employment training plan (CHEER plan) developed by the CHEER Coordinator and the Area Office Adolescent Program Supervisor;
- be in good standing in accordance with the standards of the employment program;
- be in compliance with relevant DCF policies; and
- have a referral packet reviewed and approved by the DCF Central Office CHEER Coordinator.

Exceptions may be granted in cases in which a Special Education youth or an English Language Learner graduates from high school after his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and in accordance with an Individualized Education Plan or due to other extraordinary circumstances.

A DCF-2252 "CHEER Contract" shall be written by the Adolescent Specialist and the youth and signed twice a year as part of the ACR process. The CHEER contract shall be reviewed quarterly by the youth, the Adolescent Specialist and the Community Case Manager (if applicable).

The CHEER contract shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- agreed-upon place of residence;
- roles and responsibilities of the youth, DCF and Community Case Manager;
- plan for full-time employment training and employment;
- financial arrangements (e.g., budget, savings);
- statement regarding a proposed timeline to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management;
- statement regarding the youth's successful completion in a DCF-approved Life Skills Program and other recommended programming;
- statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements; and
- statement regarding DCF-approved roommates.

**Note:** Successful completion of the Life Skills Program alone does not entitle youth to CHEER admission.

If a youth will reside in the home of a DCF-approved relative, friend or former foster parent, the responsible adult(s) in the home shall sign off on the youth's CHEER contract agreeing to such an arrangement. Roles, rules and responsibilities of all involved persons shall be identified and agreed to in the youth's CHEER contract and updated on a quarterly basis.

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

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.

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#### **CHEER Funding**

Funding for CHEER housing shall be based on the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) fair market rental rates for a one bedroom apartment that includes heat. The amount of a youth's stipend shall be based on the current cost of living pursuant to state and federal guidelines.

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

**Note:** A CHEER stipend may be used for a youth in out-of-state and boarding arrangements. 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 shall be used when calculating the rent portion of the stipend. DCF CHEER boarding rates shall be used if the youth is boarding out of state.

To determine a youth's stipend, the Adolescent Specialist and community case manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

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

When calculating the stipend, the post-secondary education annual funding limit shall be taken into consideration. After training costs, materials and other fees related to the approved program are calculated and subtracted from the annual PSE limit, the remaining amount may be used for the stipend.

Once the stipend is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth for these items. The youth shall save all documentation for these expenditures and produce them on request. The Adolescent Specialist and Community Case Manager shall monitor spending on these items to assess the youth's compliance with his or her budget.

Youth shall be required to save and deposit 50% of income from employment during the first nine months of the CHEER contract in an interest-bearing savings account.

Youth shall begin to assume the cost of their care at month ten of the CHEER contract by utilizing earnings from employment. The monthly stipend paid to the youth shall be reduced by 25% each quarter beginning at the 4th quarter or at the beginning of month ten. The stipend shall be reduced by 25% each quarter thereafter.

**Note:** If the employment training program is longer than ten months, the stipend reduction shall be in the quarter following program completion.

A youth in CHEER may reside in another program approved by DCF through which housing and living expenses are included. These youth shall be eligible for funding for their employment training programs up to the amount of CCSU's tuition, books and fees.

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### CHEER Funding (Continued)

A youth in CHEER may be provided with a maximum of:

- \$1,500.00 for the purchase of furniture;
- \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple start up items;
- \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household start up items.

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

The CHEER stipend shall be processed in the computer system by the fifth day of each month in order to cover expenses for the following month. The payment request shall show the fifth of the month as the request date and the last Friday of the month as the scheduled date.

**Note:** When a youth is accepted to CHEER, the Adolescent Specialist shall establish a provider number for the youth at least 21 days prior to the beginning of the youth's contract.

### CHEER Part- Time Attendance

A youth may be approved for CHEER on a part-time basis with the approval of the Commissioner or designee if:

- the youth presents with or develops a physical health, behavioral health or substance abuse need;
- the youth has been identified as a special education student or the youth has had a 504 Accommodation Plan and continues to need special accommodations;

OR

- the Commissioner has approved a special exception; and
- the youth otherwise meets the criteria set forth in this policy.

Youth approved for a part-time employment enrichment plan shall be responsible for a minimum of 20 productive hours per week.

### CHEER Change of Program

A youth who has not reached his or her 21st birthday and is participating in CHEER may elect to change programs one time and to enroll in a post-secondary education or vocational program if they have not already used their two post-secondary education opportunities. The youth must make his or her decision and apply for a PSE program by the end of the 12th month of the CHEER contract in order to be eligible for this additional opportunity.

All requests for PSE programs shall include a complete PSE packet that has been approved by the Adolescent Program Supervisor and submitted to the DCF Post-Secondary Educational staff for final review and approval. If approved, this program shall be considered the youth's second and final program.

A youth who has participated in a PSE program may elect to participate in CHEER instead as his or her second post-secondary opportunity.

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### Discharge from CHEER

A youth may be discharged from the CHEER 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.
- 

### Detained and Incarcerated Youth

The Department of Children and Families shall continue to support and plan for detained and incarcerated youth during the pretrial period and, if sentenced to the custody of the Department of Correction (DOC) for 12 months or less, continuing through the period of incarceration when the youth:

- is committed as abused, neglected, or uncared for or when the Commissioner is the youth's statutory parent;
- was in a DCF out-of-home placement immediately prior to detention or incarceration;
- is under the age of 21; and
- is otherwise eligible for continued DCF services.

Youth who are committed to DCF and who are subsequently incarcerated may lack appropriate family supports and have no contact outside the correctional facility. The DCF Area Office Social Worker may be the youth's only source of support and information.

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### Bail Policy

In cases in which a DCF youth is arrested and bail is set, DCF shall not post the bond.

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### Incarcerated Youth Who Are Not Committed or in DCF Out-of-Home Placement

In cases in which an incarcerated youth or the youth's family is involved with DCF but the youth is not committed to DCF or is not in a DCF out-of-home placement, the Social Worker shall assist the family by providing reasonable and available services such as transportation to visit the youth and accompanying the family to court hearings.

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### Incarcerated Youth Who Are Committed and were in a DCF Out-of-Home Placement

When DCF learns that a youth is in DOC custody, DCF shall inform DOC of the youth's legal status. For those youth who are committed to DCF, or for whom DCF is the statutory parent, and who were in out-of-home placement, the Social Worker shall request to be notified by DOC if any other party seeks to affect the release of the youth.

DCF shall assess the incarcerated youth to determine if it is appropriate to seek his or her release. This assessment shall include a review of the history of the youth and his or her family, the current situation and the offense for which the youth in incarcerated. This information shall be used to determine whether:

- release appears to be in the youth's best interest;
  - release will pose a threat to the youth or to others; and
  - release will be a threat to the community.
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### **Incarcerated Youth Who Are Committed and were in a DCF Out-of-Home Placement** (Continued)

If it is determined that the youth can be safely released, the Social Worker shall develop an appropriate discharge plan, including an alternative placement. This plan shall be presented to the criminal court through the State's Attorney and the youth's criminal defense attorney, and the Social Worker may advocate that it be accepted and agreed to as an alternative to incarceration.

If the youth is assessed as ready for release but does not have a court date within a reasonable period of time, the Social Worker shall consult with DCF legal staff and the youth's criminal defense attorney to determine how to bring the release plan to the attention of the court.

For those youth who have been assessed as not ready for release, continued efforts shall be made by the Social Worker to provide appropriate services during the period of incarceration. Services shall include, but not be limited to, arranging for family members to visit the youth, reasonable commissary deposits, and regular visits and other contact with the Social Worker.

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### **Planning for Incarcerated Youth**

The DCF-DOC liaison shall arrange for, invite participants to, and attend an Initial Planning Conference (IPC) for a youth prior to the next criminal court hearing.

The IPC shall be held at the correctional facility whenever possible and include appropriate correctional staff.

Other invitees shall include the youth whenever possible, all appropriate DCF staff, service providers, family members and the youth's attorney and guardian ad litem, if applicable.

For those youth having significant mental health or addiction problems or who are cognitively limited, invitees may also include DCF Central Office staff, as well as staff from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) or the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

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### **Services to DCF Youth upon Release from Incarceration**

In collaboration with the youth's primary DOC clinician and the DCF-DOC liaison, the Social Worker shall make timely referrals to appropriate community resources to promote a successful transition from DOC custody and continuity of care.

The Social Worker, along with the DCF-DOC liaison, shall develop a plan to fill the youth's medication prescriptions at the time of release.

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### **Adolescent Transition Plan**

DCF shall develop an Adolescent Transition Plan (DCF-2092) for each youth in DCF care at age 16 for the purpose of permanency planning and preparation for transition from care. Transition planning shall be youth-driven and based on the youth's identified needs prior to and at the time of transition. The Transition Plan shall be reviewed at the first Administrative Case Review after the youth's 16th birthday.

Plans shall include specific options on housing, health insurance, education, personal and community supports, work force supports and employment services.

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### Adolescent Transition Plan

(Continued)

Transition Plans shall be updated, revised and reviewed at subsequent Administrative Case Reviews for youth who remain in DCF care.

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.

**Legal reference:** 42 U.S.C. § 675(1)(D).

**Cross-reference:** DCF Policy 20-1, "Case Planning Overview".

### Contents of the Transition Plan

The Transition Plan shall be personalized in collaboration with the youth, and be as detailed as the youth chooses and shall include specific options for:

- the anticipated date the youth will leave DCF care;
- names and contact information for at least three significant family members or other adults;
- the youth's anticipated living arrangements;
- an estimated budget;
- sources and amount of income;
- health insurance;
- education;
- local opportunities for mentoring;
- continuing support services, including application for benefits and how to access them;
- workforce supports;
- employment services;
- immigration services, to the extent not previously addressed; and
- any other needs the youth may have.

### Health Care Proxy

In addition to the Transition Plan, all youth committed abused, neglected or uncared for, shall be given the option to execute a DCF-3013, "Appointment of Health Care Representative" and a DCF-3014, "Living Will" and shall be informed of related legal rights. The youth and his or her attorney shall be provided with the health care proxy documents prior to the ACR by the Social Worker. If a youth does not have legal representation, he or she may request legal assistance with these forms from DCF.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §19a-577 and §19a-575.

### Youth 18 and Older Discharging from DCF Care

For youth age 18 and older who are discharging from DCF care, DCF, during the 90-day period immediately prior to the date on which the youth will leave care, shall hold an Administrative Case Review for the purpose of ensuring the youth has a concrete Transition Plan. This ACR shall be known as the Adolescent Transition Plan Conference.

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

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### Information to be Provided to Discharging Youth

The Social Worker shall consult with the Office of Fiscal Services and shall document any trust account funds owed to the youth. If there are trust funds, the Social Worker shall assist the youth in obtaining proper financial management services and arrange for the funds to be disbursed at the time of the youth's transition.

Upon transition from care, each youth who is over 18 years of age, and has resided in foster care for at least 6 months, shall be provided proof of placement in foster care. The Social Worker shall complete the DCF-782, "Proof of Foster Care" and provide to the youth. A copy shall be kept in the uniform case record.

Upon transition from care, each youth who is over 18 years of age, and the legal guardian of a youth who is under 18 years of age, shall be given a copy of the youth's:

- educational records;
- medical records, including medical history of biological family members, to the extent known and obtained from DCF records and as permitted by law;
- original birth certificate and an extra copy;
- original Social Security card and an extra copy;
- passport; and
- immigration and citizenship papers.

The Social Worker shall consult with the Area Office legal staff before turning over confidential records.

If the youth's whereabouts are unknown, the Social Worker shall send a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction or Discontinuance of Department of Children and Families Benefits," to:

- the youth at his or her last known address;
- the youth's most recent caregiver;
- the youth's attorney and guardian ad litem; and
- any person, including a provider, who may have knowledge of the whereabouts of the youth.

If the youth chooses to appeal DCF's decision to discontinue benefits, he or she may request a Fair Hearing pursuant to the instructions on the DCF-800.

### Youth's Decision to Decline Services

Any youth who is age 18 or older 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 revocation of commitment or emancipation. If a youth age 18 or older declines further DCF services, he or she shall be apprised of continuum of care opportunities as well as services available if he or she remains in care. Issues to be discussed shall include:

- medical coverage;
- behavioral health services;
- educational opportunities; and
- the identification, development and support of lifelong connections and permanent family relationships.

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#### **Youth's Decision to Decline Services** (Continued)

If, after discussion of the above topics, a youth who is over the age of 18 still wishes to decline further services, an Adolescent Transition Plan Conference shall be held.

A youth who is older than 18 years of age may be transitioned at his or request by:

- receiving the DCF-800; and
- signing the DCF-800A, "Client's Agreement to Suspend, Reduce or Terminate Department of Children and Families Benefits."

Youth who decline services after turning 18 years of age may be eligible:

- to re-enter the Adolescent Services Program and shall be informed of this option and provided with the policy; or
- for continued medical benefits and shall be informed of these rights and their responsibilities.

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. Youth shall be responsible for remaining in contact with DSS when they pass from care in order to remain eligible for medical coverage.

Eligible youth will automatically continue to receive medical insurance coverage through the month of his or her 26th birthday without having to re-determine. It is, however, up to the youth to keep his or her address current with the Department of Social Services (DSS) after he or she leaves DCF care.

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 2-2, "Fiscal Services Division".

#### **Uncooperative Youth Under Age 18**

The Social Worker shall conscientiously pursue efforts to advise a committed youth who:

- is on runaway status;
- is experiencing a placement disruption;
- is presenting with signs and symptoms of adverse childhood experiences or child traumatic stress including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- is disengaged from services; or
- has sought alternative placement not approved by DCF.

Best efforts shall be employed to persuade the youth to remain in care.

The Adolescent Specialist shall file a Motion to Revoke Commitment with the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters if the youth is committed to DCF as abused, neglected or uncared for and is under 18 years of age. The Adolescent Specialist shall nevertheless continue to engage the youth regarding services even after the Motion to Revoke Commitment has been filed.

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### Re-Entry to the Adolescent Services Program

The Department of Children and Families may offer a youth who was committed as of his or her 18th birthday and subsequently left DCF care the opportunity to re-enter DCF's Adolescent Services Program.

A youth may apply for re-entry to the Adolescent Services Program if the youth:

- was committed as abused, neglected or uncared for at the time of his or her 18th birthday;
- left DCF care after age 18, but before age 21, and did not participate in two post-secondary education or employment training programs;
- has had his or her case closed for at least 90 days in the computer system, or has had services discontinued for at least 90 days;
- has proof of an educational plan or employment, including transcripts, certificates, report cards, proof of enrollment or acceptance or start date letters;
- is not married; and
- is not on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States.

If a youth has not attained a secondary school diploma and is pursuing a GED, approval from the Commissioner or Regional Administrator or designee shall be required for re-entry. A youth who has been approved to attend a GED program shall be required to accept additional support services that may include tutoring, in order for the youth to complete the GED in six months. These youth shall be encouraged to simultaneously enroll in an employment training program or sequentially pursue a post-secondary education or training program.

If a youth seeking re-entry has been determined, as a result of a substance abuse assessment, to be in need of in-patient or extensive outpatient treatment, the youth shall be encouraged to complete treatment prior to re-entry.

Youth who have already participated in two post-secondary educational or employment opportunities are not eligible for re-entry.

### Adolescent Services Program Components

Adolescents who are approved for re-entry may be eligible to participate in appropriate services as determined by DCF. These services include, but are not limited to:

- referrals to community services;
- referrals to obtain medical, dental, behavioral health, substance abuse, cognitive, educational and vocational evaluations;
- referrals for trauma assessment or treatment;
- assistance with coordination of services;
- case management services;
- assistance with obtaining needed documents;
- assistance with obtaining medical benefits;
- financial assistance for secondary or post-secondary educational and vocational programming; and
- assistance with transitioning to community providers.

The primary focus of re-entry shall be post-secondary education or training. Re-entry shall not be construed as a housing program.

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#### Process for Requesting Re-entry Services

A youth who wishes to re-enter DCF care shall initiate the process by calling the DCF Careline.

The Regional Re-entry Liaison shall:

- review the request to determine eligibility;
- review the closing summary for history and basic information;
- review hearing outcomes;
- contact the previous Social Worker to assess the viability of the applicant and obtain a recommendation;
- consult with the post-secondary education staff on the educational plan;
- contact and consult with DMHAS and DDS, if applicable;
- contact the applicant to schedule an interview;
- assess or refer the applicant for medical and behavioral health, substance abuse and educational evaluations and services, as appropriate;
- 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 the Commissioner's waiver, if necessary for policy exceptions.

The youth shall:

- be willing to sign the DCF-2131(T), "Release of Information;"
- be willing to cooperate with educational, vocational, behavioral health and substance abuse assessments as recommended;
- provide proof of acceptance to or enrollment in 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; and
- provide a letter from a behavioral health provider, if applicable.