

	<b>GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b>		
	<b>Chapter:</b>	(13) Independent Living Program	<b>Effective Date:</b> October 2015
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Written Transitional Living Plan	
<b>Policy Number:</b>	13.3	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	13.3

### CODES/REFERENCES

O.C.G.A. § 15-11-231 Permanency Planning Report

O.C.G.A. § 49-5-3

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, P.L. 110-351

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169) as incorporated in the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C § 677 and amended in 45 CFR 1356)

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act sections 475(1)(D) and 475A(b)

Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-183)

### REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall develop or update the Written Transitional Living Plan (WTLP) within **30 calendar days** of:

1. A youth 14 years or older entering foster care;
2. A youth in foster care reaching 14 years of age;
3. A youth reaching 18 years of age and receiving Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS);
4. A youth's return to foster care to receive EYSS after opting out at 18 years of age or older<sup>1</sup>;
5. Identifying additional needs for a youth with an existing WTLP, including those identified upon completion of the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA);
6. New goals and/or steps being order by the court; or
7. WTLP goals being achieved.

The WTLP shall be submitted to the juvenile court with the initial 30- day case plan and at each case review and permanency plan hearing completed by the court thereafter.

DFCS shall update the WTLP a minimum of every six months<sup>2</sup> to reflect the youth's progress toward the achievement of WTLP goals.

*DFCS shall incorporate the WTLP into the case plan for youth 14 years of age and older and ensure the WTLP includes a written description of the programs and services that will assist the youth with preparing for the transition from foster care to independent living.* In addition to other case plan requirements, the description shall include all of the following:

1. The anticipated age at which the youth will be discharged from foster care;

<sup>1</sup> Youth must return within six months of exiting care in order to be eligible.

<sup>2</sup> Youth who are no longer in foster care or the EYSS program who are receiving ILP services will consult with their ILS as needed to develop or update the WTLP.

2. The anticipated amount of time available to prepare the youth for the transition from foster care to independent living;
3. The anticipated location and living situation of the youth upon discharge from foster care;
4. A description of the assessment processes, tools, and methods that have been or will be used to determine the programs and services needed to assist the youth in preparing for the transition from foster care to independent living;
5. The rationale for each program or service that is or will be provided to assist the youth in preparing for the transition from foster care to independent living, the time frames for delivering such programs or services, and the intended outcome of such programs or services; and
6. A description of specific recruitment efforts that will be used to facilitate orderly and timely in-state and interstate placements, when the recommended permanency plan is referral for termination of parental rights and adoption or placement in another home.

*The WTLP shall include a document that describes the rights of the youth with respect to education, health, visitation, court participation, the right to be provided with documents specified in section 475(5)(l) in accordance with that section (see policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#)), the right to receive an annual credit report, and the right to stay safe and avoid exploitation.*

*The WTLP shall include an acknowledgement signed by the youth that confirms the youth has been provided with a copy of the documentation and that the rights contained in the document have been explained to the youth in an age-appropriate way (see policy [13.7 Youth Rights and Responsibilities](#)).*

DFCS shall utilize meetings involving the youth and members of the youth's support team (e.g. Youth-centered Family Team Meeting (FTM)<sup>3</sup>, Transition Roundtable (TRT), etc.) as a forum to develop, update, and implement the WTLP.

DFCS shall discuss the WTLP goals with the youth during monthly visits to determine whether goals are being achieved and if any need to be amended or revised.

## PROCEDURES

### **Youth Currently in Foster Care or Participating in the EYSS Program**

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will develop or update the WTLP<sup>4</sup> by:

1. Initiating a youth centered Family Team Meeting or Transition Roundtable with the youth and the youth's support system;  
**NOTE:** Youth must be given the opportunity to invite their identified support system.
2. Engaging and assisting the youth with the completion of the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA) (see policy [13.2 Independent Living Program: Casey Life Skills Assessment](#));  
**NOTE:** The CLSA is not required for youth 18 years and older; however, prior to development of the WTLP it is important to review previous CLSAs for any information that may be helpful in developing or modifying goals.

<sup>3</sup> The youth-centered FTM may be incorporated into an existing planned FTM.

<sup>4</sup> When possible the Independent Living Specialist (ILS) should also participate in the development and/or revision of the WTLP with the SSCM and the youth.

3. Discussing the results of the CLSA with the youth during a regular visit and utilizing the results to develop goals and steps for the WTLP with the youth's input;
4. Ensuring the following requirements are included, as appropriate:
  - a. The anticipated age that the youth will be discharged from foster care;
  - b. The anticipated amount of time available to prepare the youth for the transition from foster care to independent living;
  - c. The anticipated location and living situation of the youth upon discharge from foster care;
  - d. A description of the assessment processes, tools, and methods that have been, or will be used to determine the programs and services needed to assist the youth in preparing for the transition from foster care to independent living;
  - e. The rationale for each program or service that is or will be provided to assist the youth in preparing for the transition from foster care to independent living, the time frames for delivering such programs or services, and the intended outcome of such programs or services;
  - f. A description of specific recruitment efforts (e.g. state, regional, and national adoption exchanges, including electronic exchange systems) to be used to facilitate orderly and timely in state and interstate placements when the recommended permanency plan is referral for termination of parental rights and adoption or placement in another home, include.
  - g. Providing the youth a document that describes their rights, and a discussion of the youth's rights and responsibilities; and having the youth to sign the document that they received and understand their rights.
5. Documenting the WTLP in Georgia SHINES, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, and submitting it to the Social Services Supervisor (SSS) for approval within 72 hours of the FTM or TRT; and
6. Upon completion and approval of a newly developed or updated WTLP, provide an approved and signed copy to the juvenile court (for youth under 18 years old), the Independent Living Specialist, and the youth.

**NOTE:** The SSCM is responsible for completion of the WTLP for youth in foster care and youth participating in the EYSS program. The ILS is responsible for the completion of the WTLP for youth who have opted out of participation in the EYSS program, but who continue to receive ILP services.

### **Youth No Longer In Foster Care or Participating in the EYSS Program**

Independent Living Program services may be available to youth who are no longer in foster care if eligibility requirements are met. When a youth who is no longer in foster care or in the EYSS program is approved to receive ILP services, the ILS will:

1. Discuss eligibility criteria and the requirements to receive the ILP services the youth has requested;
2. Develop WTLP goals and steps with the youth;
3. Assist the youth in completing a paper copy of the WTLP (if available) and upload it into External Documentation in Georgia SHINES (if available);
4. Provide a copy of the WTLP to the youth; and
5. Review and update the WTLP annually (at a minimum) based on the progress and services being provided to the youth.

## Ongoing Reviews of the Written Transitional Living Plan

1. At least every six months and prior to any case review or permanency plan hearing conducted by the juvenile court, the SSCM will have conversations with the youth during regular monthly contacts and review the goals, steps and services being provided. Conversations should include a discussion of the following:
  - a. Progress towards permanency;
  - b. What progress has been made toward goal achievement;
  - c. What, if any barriers exist that may be influencing goal achievement and potential solutions;
  - d. The extent to which the youth is participating in any services being provided and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the services;
  - e. The youth's participation in any formal Independent Living Program activities;
  - f. The youth's support system;
  - g. The youth's rights and responsibilities;
  - h. Any issues with the youth's placement;
  - i. Benefits and opportunities available as a participant in the EYSS program;
  - j. Transition planning;
  - k. Any changes that need to be made to the WTLP;
  - l. Results of the Casey Life Skills Assessment (if applicable); and
  - m. All other relevant factors that may impact the youth's overall progress.
2. At least 90 calendar days prior to the youth reaching the age of 18 or their eventual exit from foster care (if they are participating in the EYSS program), the SSCM will also complete the steps outlined in number one above in order to assess the youth's readiness to transition to adulthood (see policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#) for additional information on transition planning).
3. Based on the contact with the youth the SSCM will:
  - a. Document the results of the ECEM visit or other visits as appropriate, in Georgia SHINES within 72 hours of occurrence;
  - b. Update the Youth Detail Report Page to reflect services discussed outlined in the service categories under the Youth Detail Reporting Page (see policy [13.13 Independent Living Program: National Youth in Transition Database](#));
  - c. Staff the case with the Social Services Supervisor (SSS), and discuss the results of the conversation with the youth concerning the WTLP goals, steps, and services;
  - d. Discuss any potential changes to the WTLP with the SSS;
  - e. Complete changes to the WTLP, as necessary, based on visits with the youth and discussions with the SSS;
  - f. Notify the Independent Living Specialist (ILS) of any changes to the WTLP;
  - g. Notify the juvenile court of any changes to the WTLP and seek court approval as necessary;
  - h. Provide copies of the completed, approved and signed WTLP to the juvenile court, the ILS and the youth;
  - i. Document the results of any staffing or changes to the WTLP in Georgia SHINES within 72 hours of occurrence.
4. The SSS will:
  - a. Review the SSCM's documentation and conduct a staffing to discuss the youth's progress on the goals outlined in the WTLP and any potential changes that need to be made in the plan;

- b. Ensure that the WTLP has been reviewed with the youth prior to any review or permanency plan hearing completed by the juvenile court; and that a copy of the WTLP has been provided to the youth; and
- c. Ensure that both the Youth Detail Report and Youth Detail Reporting Page has been updated reflecting the services and support the youth in receiving and that information on the page is accurate;
- d. Review and approve any changes that are made in the WTLP on an ongoing basis.

### **Juvenile Court Approval of the WTLP**

For youth in foster care ages 14 -17, the juvenile court must approve the WTLP. To secure juvenile court approval of the WTLP the SSCM and SSS will:

1. Submit the WTLP to the court as outlined in the above procedures;
2. Review the youth's final dispositional order to ensure language reflecting approval of the initial WTLP has been included in the court order;
3. At subsequent Citizen Panel Reviews, Judicial Reviews or Permanency Plan hearings ensure ongoing approval of the WTLP by reviewing the accompanying court order for language that incorporates the WTLP;
4. Ensure the court issues a modification order reflecting any changes to the WTLP that occur outside of the normal review process; and
5. Contact the Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) should there be any issues with court orders relating to the incorporation of the WTLP into the case plan.

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

### **Disabled Youth**

A WTLP is still required for a mentally or physically disabled youth and should contain information regarding the youth's particular disability and individual needs. Collaboration with other agencies such as the Department of Aging Services (APS), DFCS' System of Care Unit and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) should be sought when developing WTLP goals for this population of youth. To support a youth's smooth transition to adulthood with no gap in services, the SSCM and the ILS must work in conjunction with other community agencies to ensure that needed services will continue to be provided as the youth transitions to adulthood.

### **Developing, Reviewing, and Amending the WTLP**

The youth and other persons identified by the youth as his or her support system should be engaged to develop or amend the goals and steps outlined in the WTLP. Once initially completed, the same process of engagement with the youth and their identified support system should be employed to update the as WTLP goals are achieved or issues are identified that may require amending the WTLP. For example, if it is determined that a youth's grades have declined dramatically, the SSCM should engage the youth and the youth's identified support system to determine the root cause of the dramatic change in grades. As a result of this engagement, the SSCM could receive information that indicates the youth has just lost interest or is having some emotional issues related to being placed in foster care that are impacting school performance. The SSCM would then be able to engage in a conversation with the youth regarding the identified problem area and discuss helpful services, such as a tutoring program or counseling. The updated services should then be included in the updated WTLP. The updated services should be documented in Georgia SHINES on Youth Detail Reporting Page under the

service categories (see policy [13.13 Independent Living Program: National Youth in Transition Database](#)). Engagement with youth can occur individually during an ECEM visit or during a meeting (e.g. Youth Centered FTM, Roundtable meeting, etc.). In either setting, it is important to obtain buy in from the youth and a commitment from the youth's support system to provide assistance toward achieving the goals and steps in the WTLP. This will help lead to successful outcomes.

### **Youth-Centered Family Team Meeting**

A youth-centered Family Team Meeting (FTM) is a gathering of a youth's family members, friends, community support system, faith based supports and other professionals who have joined together to develop an individualized plan that will help to ensure the youth has permanent connections and strengthen the youth's ability to transition to self-sufficiency. The FTM is often the meeting in which the youth's support team comes together to help the youth develop or change the WTLP.

A youth-centered FTM fully engages the youth in the planning process. During the FTM, the team develops specific plans to address permanent connections, education, job skills, living skills, and identifies supports and services that are focused on the youth's individualized needs. The youth's transition team is developed at the FTM, and it will meet at least once a year, but more, if needed to review the progress made by the youth toward achieving the goals outlined in the WTLP.

Participation in the youth-centered FTM or other meeting is based on who is currently active in the youth's life, or individuals who the youth would like to be included on his/her support team. The SSCM should ensure that the following individuals, at a minimum, are invited:

1. Youth
2. Parents/Caregivers
3. Placement resource
4. Independent Living Specialist
5. Service providers
6. Family members
7. Other individuals who have shown a substantial commitment to the youth
8. Department of Education- School personnel
9. Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD); (if needed)
10. System of Care Clinical Program Specialist; (if needed)
11. Division of Aging Services- Adult Protective Services representative (at age 17 and older for youth unable to make decisions on their own behalf)

### **Transition Roundtable (TRT)**

The TRT jointly develops specific plans with youth to address permanent connections, housing, health insurance/health needs, education, job skills, independent living skills, and designs services and identifies supports as defined by the Fostering Connections Act. Prior to the transition roundtable, youth should participate in a Preparation Meeting and be encouraged to identify significant people in their lives or permanent connections who can participate in their meeting. The location of the TRT should be convenient for the youth and their supportive partners.

**FORMS AND TOOLS**

N/A