

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES
TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES-Revised DECEMBER, 2013
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SERVICES**

Transitional Living Services provides a systemic and integrated approach in transition planning, the provision of transitional services, and access to and information about benefits that affect both older youth in foster care and those who have aged out. Transitional Living Services are multipurpose and available to youth and young adults ages 14 up to age 23.

Experiential Life Skills Training for Youth Age 14 and older

Foster parents and other providers are required to include training in independent living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, nutrition education, and cooking, use of public transportation when appropriate, financial literacy training to include money management, credit history, and balancing a checkbook and performing basic household tasks for youth age 14 and older. The youth's experiential learning while in care and the receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's service and transition plan.

TRANSITION PLANNING/PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR OLDER YOUTH

TRANSITION PLAN: The transition plan identifies services for each youth to accomplish goals to assist them in obtaining positive permanency or transitioning from foster care. The plan is used statewide and is **incorporated into the youth's plan of service** to ensure consistency of services. Procedures for identifying caring adults for youth and involving them in transition planning help to ensure personal and community connections are incorporated into the transition planning process. Transition planning continues to be conducted for those young adults in the Extended Foster Care program.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT (COS): A Circle of Support is a youth driven process based on Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). COS's are offered to youth beginning at 16 years of age (although they can be offered as early as 14). This is a coordinated and facilitated meeting with participants that a youth identifies as "caring adults" who make up their support system. COS participants can include a youth's birth family members, substitute care providers, teachers, church members, a mentor and so on. Participants come together to develop and review the youth's permanency and transition plan, identifying strengths, hopes and dreams, goals and needs in the areas of permanency, education, employment, health/mental health needs, housing, and PAL life skills training components. All participants sign the transition plan to seal their agreements. [CPS Policy Section-6274](#)

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES/PROGRAMS

PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIVING (PAL) SERVICES/BENEFITS: The DFPS PAL program assists older youth in foster care prepare for their departure and transition from DFPS care and support. Supportive services and benefits are provided by [PAL Staff](#) or [PAL Contract Providers](#) to eligible young adults up to age 21 to become self-sufficient and productive. PAL is funded by the *federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*, State general revenue funds and/or community match (20%). [CPS Policy Section 10200](#)

PAL services include:

- Life skills assessment (Casey Life Skills Assessment) to assess strength and needs in life skills attainment www.caseylifeskills.org (assessments are conducted before Life skills training);
- Life skills training (age 16 to 18) in the following core areas:
 - Health and Safety;
 - Housing and Transportation;
 - Job Readiness;
 - Financial Management;
 - Life Decisions/Responsibility;
 - Personal/Social Relationships
- Educational/vocational services
- Supportive services (based on need and funding availability) may include:
 - graduation items,
 - counseling,
 - tutoring,
 - driver's education fees, or
 - mentoring.
- A transitional living allowance of up to \$1,000 - distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who participated in PAL training, to help with initial start-up costs in adult living.
- Aftercare room and board assistance (ages 18-21) is based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult).
- Case management to help young adults with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

***Contact Regional PAL Staff for more information about all Transitional Living Services at:

[List of PAL Coordinators](#)

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Extended Foster Care Program: With the implementation of the federal **Fostering Connections Act** (*Title IV-E of the Social Security Act*) on **10-1-2010**, a young adult who ages out of foster care at age 18 will continue to be eligible for Extended Foster Care provided there is an available placement, the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets at least one of the following conditions:

18 up to 22 year olds, and:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is

18 up to 21 years old and;

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EXTENDED FOSTER CARE GO TO: [CPS PROGRAM INFORMATION-EXTENDED FOSTER CARE](#)

SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL) PROGRAM: The federal Fostering Connections legislation in 2008 established a Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program which is a component of the Extended Foster Care program. The SIL program allows young adults to live independently under a minimally supervised living arrangement provided by a DFPS contracted provider. A young adult in SIL is not supervised 24-hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities, such as managing their own finances, buying groceries/personal items, and working with a landlord. Living arrangements may include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings. Individuals are assisted in transitioning to independent living, achieving identified education and employment goals, accessing community resources, engaging in needed life skills trainings, and establishing important relationships.

For more information about SIL go to: [CPS Program Information-Supervised Independent Living](#)

Return for the Extended Foster Care Program: Young adults who aged out of DFPS conservatorship may return to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program until the age of 21 if the required stipulations are met:

- Is offered an available placement;
- Understand that court jurisdiction will be extended, if the court permits;
- Sign or re-sign a Voluntary Extended Foster Care agreement; and
- Agree to one of the Extended Foster Care activities within 30 days of being placed in Extended Foster Care.

PAL staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care and refer to the regional re-entry staff.

Regional Re-entry Staff Contact List- <http://intranet/CPS/Regional/re-entry.asp>

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION:

Trial Independence Period (TI): (Effective 9/19/11): A young adult in DFPS conservatorship who turns 18 as well as a young adult enrolled in the Extended Foster Care Program may leave foster care for a "trial independence" period of 6 months (or up to 12 months with a court order). During the TI period, the young adult may be living independently and receiving other transitional living benefits such as **PAL, ETV, and Texas Medicaid coverage**. A Young adult that elects to return for Extended Foster Care during the TI period may do so without losing Title IV-E eligibility.

Extended Court Jurisdiction: Young adults that leave foster care at age 18 for a TI period will have court jurisdiction extended for 6 months. Additionally court jurisdiction may be extended for a 12 month TI period if ordered by the court. If a young adult is in Extended Foster Care, court jurisdiction will continue during this period but will not exceed the month of their 21st birthday. More information is available at: [Extended Court Jurisdiction-CPS Policy 5600](#)

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INFORMATION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM: ETV is a *federally-funded (Chafee)* and state-administered program. Based on the cost of attendance as established by higher education, youth in foster care or other eligible young adults ages 16 up to the age of 23 may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance per year to help them reach their postsecondary education goals if they meet the following scholastic eligibility criteria:

- Have a high school diploma or GED or be exempt from required school attendance; or
- Enrolled in a dual-credit course or other course at an institution of higher education for which the student will earn a high school diploma and college credit.

Individuals eligible for ETV include:

- Youth in DFPS foster care who are at least 16 and likely to remain in care until 18; or

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- Youth who aged out of DFPS foster care but have not yet turned 21; or
- Youth who were adopted from DFPS foster care after turning age 16 and are not yet 21; or
- Youth who enter Permanency Care Assistance after age 16; or
- Youth who are in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (formerly TJJC) and are in a Title IV-E placement when turning age 18; or
- Tribal youth or young adults in tribal foster care; or
- Students who move out of state to attend school and were originally enrolled in ETV in Texas.

ETV program eligibility-students must apply for and be approved for ETV before his or her 21st birthday, meet college enrollment requirements and be enrolled at least 6 semester hours in an *accredited or pre-accredited*

- public or non-profit program that provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or
- a public or non-profit program that provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment; or
- a public or non-profit program, or a private institution that has been in existence for two years and offers training programs to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than one year).

Students participating in the ETV Program on their 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23rd birthday as long as they are enrolled in ETV and making satisfactory academic progress toward completing their postsecondary education or training program as determined by the institution.

Students interested in specific educational programs such as Correspondence Courses, Distance Education Courses, or Continuing Education courses must contact ETV staff for prior approval to ensure accreditation and that courses lead to a degree or recognized certificate program. These courses must apply to a Student's academic degree or certificate program.

Note: Youth or young adults in DFPS paid foster care, enrolled in higher education and eligible for ETV may have certain expenses paid by the ETV program (ex., books, computers, child care, and transportation). ETV will not cover residential housing, personal items and food since this is provided for in the placement.

[CPS Policy Section 10300](#)

Apply for the ETV Program at: <http://www.texasetv.com> or call toll free 877-268-4063.

COLLEGE TUITION AND FEE WAIVER-Texas Law (Sec. 54.366 and 54.367-Texas Education Code (2009): The college tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions from payment of tuition and fees at Texas' **state supported institutions** of higher education to individuals formerly in Texas state foster care and adopted youth. To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, youth or young adults must have been in DFPS conservatorship. Exemptions occur:

- the day before the student's 18th birthday;
- the day of the student's 14th birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights being terminated) on or after that day;
- the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- if a youth was adopted and the adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009;
- if permanent managing conservatorship of the youth was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009; or
- when a student is enrolled in a dual credit course or other course in which the student may earn joint high school and college credit. *Note: Youth enrolled in a dual credit course may access ETV funds to cover certain educational expenses related to college attendance.*

Youth or young adults must check with each school to ensure that the courses they are enrolling in are exempt from tuition and fees. Some vocational / certificate courses may not be exempt tuition and fees. Young adults must be enrolled as an undergraduate **no later than his or hers 25th birthday**.

Adopted youth subject to an adoption assistance agreement that provides monthly payments and Medicaid benefits are also eligible for the college tuition and fee waiver. For these students there is no age limit to enroll in college in order to take advantage of the tuition and fee waiver. [CPS Policy Section 10311](#)

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DFPS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS:

Freshmen Success Fund for Foster Youth (est. April 2013): This is a grant for first time college freshmen formerly in DFPS foster care. Each year there will be 4 one time grants of \$1,000 available for young adults enrolling in their freshmen year. These grants are to cover basic non-tuition related expenses such as books and supplies, computers and software, tools and uniforms and transportation. Students must be enrolled in a Texas state-supported college, university, or vocational/technical school that accepts the state college tuition and fee waiver. More information about this scholarship is available at: [Freshmen Success Fund](#)

C. Ed Davis-PAL Scholarship (est. July 2012): This scholarship is for basic non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. Scholarships are for \$1,000 per academic year and are available to sophomore, junior, or senior year students. More information about this scholarship is available at: [C Ed Davis Scholarship](#)

COLLEGE HOUSING RESOURCE

TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE BETWEEN ACADEMIC TERMS (EFFECTIVE 9/1/2011): Texas' institutes of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices.

Vaccination Requirements

BACTERIAL MENINGITIS VACCINE FOR STUDENTS ENTERING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (EFFECTIVE 1/2/2012): Students under age 30 entering a Texas institution of higher education must be vaccinated for bacterial meningitis. For DFPS foster youth, payments for doctor's visits and vaccination costs are covered by Texas Medicaid (STAR Health or STAR) programs. Young adults are encouraged to check college admissions policies for more information about vaccination requirements.

TEXAS MEDICAID FOR INDIVIDUALS AGES 18 THROUGH 25 WHO WERE IN FOSTER CARE (EFFECTIVE JAN. 1, 2014)

FORMER FOSTER CARE CHILDREN (FFCC) PROGRAM: Provides continuous healthcare coverage through age 25 to young adults who age out of Texas foster care and are receiving Medicaid when they aged out. This population will receive healthcare services in two separate programs based on age;

- Young adults aged 18 through 20 will be enrolled in STAR Health but can switch to STAR; and
- Young adults aged 21 through 25 will receive Medicaid through the STAR plan of their choice.

To be eligible for the FFCC program, the young adult must:

- Be age 18 through 25;
- Have been in Texas foster care on his or her 18th birthday or older;
- Be receiving Medicaid when he or she aged out of Texas foster care; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or have a qualified alien status, such as a green card.

MEDICAID FOR TRANSITIONING FOSTER CARE YOUTH (MTFCY): Provides medical coverage to young adults age 18 through 20 who are not eligible for the FFCC program because they were not receiving Medicaid at the time they aged out of foster care. The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Be age 18 through 20 years of age;
- Have been in Texas foster care at age 18, or older;
- Have no other healthcare coverage;
- Meet program rules for income; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or have a qualified alien status, such as a green card.

More Information on Healthcare coverage and **Contact** information may be found at:

[STAR Health Benefit sheet](#); or

[STAR Member Services](#)

Program Information Handout [1014.pdf](#)

Health Passport: The Health Passport is a computer-based system that has health data about youth and young adults in the STAR Health program. The Health Passport is not a full medical record. It has information on doctor and dentist visits, hospital stays, prescriptions and shot records. If a young adult wants access to his or hers Health Passport visit www.fostercaretx.com. NOTE: Young adults must register for their Health Passport before exiting foster care by using his or hers Personal ID number that is available from the caseworker.

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2-1-1 TEXAS: To report any changes to an address or other contact information, young adults must contact **2-1-1** and report calling about the **Former Foster Care Children** or **Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth** programs. Young adults may also go to <https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com> to set up an account, update contact information, report changes in his or her case, receive an identification card, or find out about other benefit information. Additionally, **2-1-1** may be contacted for non-medical issues such as applying for food stamps and medical assistance for other members of the family. More information about **2-1-1** may be accessed at <https://www.211texas.org/211/>

OTHER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Driver License Fee Waiver (Effective May 2012) driver license fees are waived for youth in DFPS temporary or permanent managing conservatorship and for young adults at least 18 years of age, but younger than age 21, who reside in a DFPS paid foster care placement. [Driver License Policy 10600](#)

TEXAS YOUTH HOTLINE is a resource for young adults who are under 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of the foster care system. Individuals may contact the statewide hotline at **1-800-210-2278** for telephone counseling, information, and referrals. The hotline can help locate services available in local communities.

TEXAS YOUTH CONNECTION is a website designed with input from youth and young adults and is a resource for youth in the Texas foster care system, alumni of foster care, and stakeholders seeking general tips and information. This website offers information and resources in education, finances, records, diversity, health, contacts, job links, food, housing, books, stories, Transition Center information, hotlines and other hot stuff. This website is also the location of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Youth Survey. Check this resource out at: www.texasyouthconnection.org

Texas Youth Connection-FACEBOOK PAGE was launched to provide another source for youth and young adults to find resources, benefits, and other relevant topics such as NYTD updates, accessing current educational and career resources, learning about current trends and fun topics of interest. This page allows DFPS to stay connected with youth and young adults using a popular social media website. The page is located at www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection.

Regional and Statewide Youth Leadership Councils (YLC) are comprised of two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) per region. These councils address identified issues and formulate recommendations for improving services to children and youth in foster care. YLC's review state policies and programs and provide feedback. Regional YLC activity details are located at www.texasyouthconnection.com under "Events". Benefits of youth participation include:

- Opportunities for Community Services and Outreach projects to support foster youth;
- Advocacy training to ensure the voices of foster youth are heard and incorporated into policy and practice;
- Leadership building skills;
- Planning and facilitating events;
- Learn how to strategically share their story; and
- Developing supportive friendships/caring adults.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR YOUTH:

- **PAL PEAKS Camp**-Two, four-day experiential learning camps held annually for children and youth aimed at increasing self-esteem, improving communications, problem-solving, and having fun. The Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) offers the PEAKS Camp through a partnership with DFPS <http://www.tnoys.org/>.
- **PAL Statewide Teen Conference**-Annual three day conference held on a college campus offering workshops for youth that lead to self-sufficiency and independence.
- **PAL College Conference**-Texas A&M Commerce host an annual two day (weekend) conference for youth to learn about and prepare for higher education opportunities.
- **Aging-Out Seminars:** These seminars are provided to youth ages 15½ to 18 in two (2) separate tracks before they leave care. Seminars include topic areas identified by youth to reinforce their knowledge and skills about DFPS programs, benefits, resources and other Life Skills topics. These seminars build on information from PAL Life Skills Training classes.
- **Statewide Youth Leadership Councils (Youth Advisory Boards)-Regional Activities**-Some regions may host regional Teen Conferences (based on fund availability) and other activities to help youth/young adults prepare to transition to adulthood and to provide leadership opportunities.

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION:

Transition Centers provide a central clearinghouse of one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of current and former foster youth, homeless youth, or other at-risk youth. Services may include employment assistance, educational support, access and referrals to community partners and resources and various transitional living services such as PAL classes, food

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and housing assistance, and substance abuse / mental health counseling. Transition Centers also provide co-location opportunities for local partners such as local Workforce Solutions offices, and community colleges and universities to jointly serve the diverse needs of the youth in one location. As of December 2013 there are 17 Transition Centers which are independently funded, operated and supported by partnerships between DFPS, their Providers, community partners and the Texas Workforce Commission. A list of these Centers with contact information is available at: [Transition Centers](#)

Texas Workforce Commission/Local Workforce Boards Partnership: DFPS regional offices and 28 local Workforce Development Boards have jointly developed and entered into Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) addressing the unique challenges facing current and former foster youth transitioning to independent living, including improving employment outcomes for these youth. The purpose of the MOU relates to:

- Furthering the objectives of the DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program;
- Ensuring services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of current and former foster youth; and
- Making referrals, where feasible, for short term housing for foster youth who need housing.

DFPS staff, caregivers, and PAL contractors refer youth ages 16 and older to local Workforce Solutions offices for job search and readiness assistance, career exploration, and job placement services. Each Board has designated a point of contact for staff and youth to access for assistance and services. Additionally all youth and young adults are encouraged to register in the state job search system- www.WorkInTexas.com

National Youth in Transition Data Base (NYTD): NYTD is a data collection system created to track independent living services and to learn how successful states are in preparing youth to move from state care into adulthood. Texas will survey youth in foster care when they turn age 17 and will conduct follow-up surveys of some of these same youth at age 19 and again at age 21. From October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013, a follow up survey was conducted on some of the 19 year olds who were surveyed when they were age 17.

Youth Specialists (alumni of foster care) are hired as full time employees in each DFPS region. Youth Specialists and their supervisors play a key role in the development and support of Youth Leadership Councils, ensure that the voices of foster youth are heard, and engage foster youth in advocating activities. Youth specialists also serve to help strengthen and support CPS casework by informing DFPS of initiatives and activities affecting policy and practice. A list of regional Youth Specialists is available at [Regional Youth Specialists](#)

Employment Preference to Former Foster Youth- Texas Government Code 672.002 (2009) requires state agencies to give an employment preference to former foster youth who were in the permanent managing conservatorship of DFPS on the day preceding the young adult's 18th birthday over other applicants for the same position who do not have a greater qualification. An individual is entitled to an employment preference only if the young adult is 25 years of age or younger (day before turning 26). PAL staff provide the employment preference letter to eligible young adults when they turn 18 or upon request.

Medical Consent-A youth in foster care who is at least 16 years old may consent to receiving medical care if the court with continuing jurisdiction determines that the youth has the capacity to consent to medical care. [Medical Consent-CPS Policy 11130](#)

Provision of Personal Documents to Youth/Young Adults (Ages 16 and 18) [Personal Documents Policy Section 10130](#)

Age 16-Youth in DFPS conservatorship on or before they turn age 16 must be provided with a:

- Certified copy of the youth's birth certificate;
- Social Security card or replacement Social Security card, as appropriate; and
- Personal identification certificate/card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Age 18-Young Adults discharged from foster care or are legally emancipated will receive:

- A certified copy of his or her birth certificate;
- A Social Security card or a replacement Social Security card;
- A personal state identification certificate/card issued by DPS;
- Immunization records;
- Information contained in the youth's health passport;
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate; and
- Medical Power of Attorney Information-Forms 2559 [A](#) and [B](#)
- *Almost 18 Letter* and Youth Transition Portfolio