



Independent Living Minimum Standards Recommended for Children in Foster Care

at a glance

The Department of Children and Families' Independent Living Transition Services Program provides children and young adults formerly in foster care with services and financial assistance to help them successfully transition into adulthood. As directed by law, this report recommends standards for providing independent living transition services. These standards are organized into eight areas:

- life skills;
- housing;
- education;
- employment;
- health;
- aftercare and transition;
- training; and
- data collection and evaluation.

We also provide examples of programs throughout the state that are working to follow these practices.

Scope

This is the first of two reports examining services designed to prepare youth in foster care for adult independence. The Legislature directed OPPAGA to recommend minimum system standards in providing foster youth

with independent living services.¹ These services are designed to help foster youth transition from state-sponsored care to living independently as productive citizens. The Department of Children and Families contracts with private providers for independent living services. The department is responsible for overseeing these providers. A second report will examine performance issues associated with the delivery of independent living services.

Background

Independent living transition services are designed to help foster youth and young adults formerly in foster care obtain life skills and education so that they can live independently. Adolescence is a time of growth, learning, and developing independence, and most youth, with the support of their family, make a successful transition to adulthood. However, youth in the foster care system often lack the guidance, support, and training to learn the skills necessary to function independently when they leave the system.

¹ Chapter 2004-362(5), *Laws of Florida*.

To improve the success of foster youth, Congress passed the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-169) which provides funding to states to improve services and expand eligibility for independent living services. This act also mandates reporting requirements and provides flexibility for state programs. In 2002, the Legislature created s. 409.1451, *Florida Statutes*, which established a framework for Florida's independent living program.

Florida law requires a continuum of services and financial assistance to assist foster youth. As of October 31, 2004, there were 5,301 foster

youth between the ages of 13 and 17, inclusive, under state care and all were required to receive pre-independent living services. In addition, as of October 31, 2004, 1,815 former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 22, inclusive, were receiving aftercare and transition services. (See Exhibit 1 for eligibility and service requirements.) These services are important because when foster youth turn 18, their foster families or group homes no longer receive payment from the state for their care. Consequently, many must move out of their homes and are not always fully prepared to live independently.

Exhibit 1

Florida Law Requires Independent Living Transition Services for Foster Youth

Service	Eligibility	Description
Pre-independent living services	All 13-14-year-olds in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life skills training Educational field trips Conferences
Life skills services	All 15-17-year-olds in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banking and budgeting skills Interviewing skills Parenting skills Educational support Employment training Counseling
Subsidized independent living services	Some 16 and 17-year-olds chosen by the department as being able to demonstrate independent living skills	Arrangements that allow a child to live independently of the daily care and supervision of an adult.
Aftercare support services	Youth aged 18-22, inclusively, who have been in foster care, meet certain conditions, and are determined eligible by the department. Temporary assistance provided to prevent homelessness. The amount provided is based on funds available.	<p>Services to assist young adults who were formerly in foster care to continue to develop the skills and abilities necessary for independent living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring and tutoring Mental health services and substance abuse counseling Life skills classes, including credit management and preventative health activities Parenting classes Job skills training Counselor consultations Temporary financial assistance
Road to Independence Scholarship	<p>Youth aged 18-20-year-olds (initial award)</p> <p>Under 23 (renewal awards)</p> <p>Must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <p>(1) earned a high school diploma or its</p>	<p>Financial assistance to help former foster children to receive the educational and vocational training needed to achieve independence.</p> <p>Amount of award based on the living and</p>

Service	Eligibility	Description
	equivalent and has been admitted for full-time enrollment in an eligible postsecondary education institution; (2) enrolled full time in an accredited high school; (3) is enrolled full time in an accredited adult education program designed to provide the student with a high school diploma or its equivalent	educational needs of the young adult and may be up to, but shall not exceed, the amount of earnings that the student would have been eligible to earn working a 40-hour-a-week federal minimum wage job.
Transitional Support Services	Youth aged 18-22, inclusively, who have been in foster care, and that demonstrate that the services are critical to the young adult's own efforts to develop a personal support system and achieve self-sufficiency.	Other appropriate short-term services, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial ▪ Housing ▪ Counseling ▪ Employment ▪ Education ▪ Mental health ▪ Disability ▪ Other services, if the young adult demonstrates that the services are "critical" to achieve self-sufficiency

Source: Section 409.1451, *Florida Statutes*.

Young adults are eligible for financial assistance through the program. The Road to Independence Scholarship provides cash awards of up to \$892 per month for young adults finishing high school or enrolled full-time in postsecondary education. Former foster youth are exempt from paying tuition at state universities, so the scholarship funds are generally used to support their housing and expenses. Young adults are also eligible to receive aftercare and transition funding to provide temporary financial support to prevent homelessness or to assist with living expenses. Maximum funding for transitional and aftercare services are \$5,000 and \$1,000, respectively, and depend on the funds available.

Currently, private child welfare organizations deliver most of the independent living services in Florida through the community-based care model.² The Department of Children and Families will provide these services in Brevard and Miami-Dade counties until January 2005, when community-based care organizations will begin providing these services.

For Fiscal Year 2004-05, the Independent Living Transition Services Program has an approved operating budget of \$18.8 million. This includes \$16.6 million in H. Chafee Independence Program and Education and Training Voucher grants (including 20% state match). The remaining \$2.2 million is general revenue used primarily to serve young adults 22-to-23 years old who are not covered by the federal grants.

Standards for Independent Living Services

As directed by the Legislature, we recommended minimum standards for independent living services. We identified these standards through reviews of literature and discussions with stakeholders, including foster youth, foster parents, advocates, Department of Children and Families officials, and community-based care providers that administer and deliver independent living services to foster youth. These standards are organized into eight areas: life skills, housing, education, employment, health, aftercare and transitional services, training, and data

² See OPPAGA [Report No. 04-65](#) for more information on the implementation of community-based care in Florida.

collection and evaluation. This report also includes examples of Florida programs that currently follow these practices.

Life Skills

OBJECTIVE - Providers should offer foster youth life skills in daily living, self-care, and money management.

Research shows that as a result of being raised in institutions or a succession of foster homes, many foster youth nearing emancipation have not mastered the skills necessary for self-sufficiency. While youth living with parents can gradually learn how to cook and clean, manage money, problem solve, and practice suitable self-care, most foster youth have not significantly bonded with an adult who can mentor and teach these skills. School changes accompanying the succession of foster institutions and homes further works against foster youth benefiting from any life skills courses taught in schools.

Focused life skills classes can help fill these developmental gaps. Research shows that community-based care providers should offer “hands-on” and “real-world” opportunities in the areas of daily living skills, self-care, and money management.³

Minimum standards

- Daily living skills should include instruction in nutrition, menu planning, grocery shopping, meal preparation, dining decorum, kitchen cleanup, food storage, home management, and home safety. Opportunities for youth to apply these skills would include developing menus, shopping for ingredients, preparing meals, cleaning the kitchen and dishes at the conclusion of the meals, and appropriately storing leftover food.
- Self-care skills should include instruction about topics such as hygiene, health,

alcohol, drugs, tobacco, parenting skills, and responsible sexuality. Opportunities for youth to apply these skills would include discussions as well as role playing and rehearsal of parenting and hygiene skills.

- Money management skills should include budgeting, saving, managing credit, opening bank accounts, filing income taxes, and becoming an informed consumer. Opportunities for youth to apply these skills would include opening checking and savings accounts, developing budgets based on income and monies in bank accounts, filing taxes, and working with caregivers to monitor their respective budgets.

Current program examples

- The Opportunity Passport Program in St. John’s County is funded through a grant from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Program staff help foster youth open a debit account to deposit their pay or benefits checks and pay their bills. Youth are also provided with a matched savings account to develop the habit of savings as a means to attain the economic self-sufficiency such savings provides. The matched savings account is seeded with \$100 from the community-based care provider and is matched dollar-for-dollar with deposits made by the youth up to \$1,000. This national program is being implemented by the Family Integrity Program.
- Y Girls Rule, operated by the Ophelia Project of Tampa Bay for foster girls aged 13 to 17, promotes self-care, self-awareness, and financial literacy. Girls meet weekly with a facilitator and adult mentor to participate in activities intended to teach effective problem solving and stress reduction, money management, and making and preparing healthy food choices.

³ “Life Skills Guidebook,” *Casey Family Programs*, 2001; “Promising Practices,” *National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement*, 2004.

Housing

OBJECTIVE - Providers should offer opportunities for supervised independent living and identify innovative housing options.

Securing housing for foster youth who turn 18 is crucial, since group and foster family homes are no longer obligated to care for these youth once they become adults, even if the youth is in the middle of his or her senior year of high school. Many foster youth have difficulty making the transition from group and foster family homes to self-supported housing. This difficulty is caused by three barriers: high rental costs, a limited number of affordable rental units, and the unwillingness of landlords to rent to young tenants with no work or credit history.

Helping foster youth overcome these barriers is important. Research reported by the National Conference of State Legislatures shows that 20% to 25% of the homeless were at one time in foster care.⁴ Homelessness jeopardizes the investment that caregivers and taxpayers have made in ensuring that foster youth acquire the sufficient skills required for productive citizenship.

Minimum standards

- Community-based care providers should develop contacts with housing programs and develop working agreements with government housing authorities and landlords willing to set aside rental units for foster youth while also waiving income, credit, and co-signing requirements.⁵
- Providers should develop or create housing options for youth by acquiring apartments or apartment leases that are set aside for rental to foster youth. These programs are

typically referred to as “scattered site” housing, as foster youth live with limited supervision in these units that are scattered around town.

- An independent living coordinator or a case worker should regularly visit youth in independent living housing to help resolve any problems that may occur and to help ensure youth are properly caring for themselves and the property.

Current program examples

- Turtle Nest Village, a private non-profit organization in Palm Beach County, provides housing to emancipated foster youth by leasing and paying for rental units scattered throughout the county. A social worker routinely checks in on the youth and makes sure youth are caring for themselves and the property. When the youth graduate 18 to 24 months after entering the program, the apartment leases are transferred to the youth’s name, if so desired by the youth. Turtle Nest Village takes this action to facilitate the youth’s transition to stable independence.
- Place of Hope, in Palm Beach Gardens, provides four licensed family cottages to serve up to 24 foster youth. This organization also provides mentoring and tutoring to help youth prepare for life after foster care. Supervision is provided by two full-time professionally trained parent-figures who live in each of the four cottages.
- The Sarasota YMCA has secured federal Housing and Urban Development funding, which entitles youth to Section 8 housing as an alternative to homelessness.

⁴ Independent Living for Foster Youth, *National Conference for State Legislatures*, Report No. 6315, February 2002.

⁵ Most foster youth at 18 have no credit history, little work experience, and insufficient income to qualify for the apartments on their own.

Education

OBJECTIVE - Providers should coordinate educational services, facilitate career plan development, provide tutors, and help youth attain postsecondary education.

Research has shown that foster youth often fall behind their peers in educational attainment due to disruptions throughout their educational careers. Youth in foster care are more likely to drop out of school, less likely to receive a high school diploma or a GED, and less likely to participate in postsecondary education. Since educational success is a key to financial self-sufficiency, coordinated educational services are critical to help foster youth succeed academically. Programs that promote educational stability and integration are most likely to promote educational success.

Minimum standards

- Providers should assign youth an education advocate to help youth gain access to needed resources and participate fully in curricular and extracurricular activities. These assigned advocates should communicate regularly with school personnel and monitor school enrollment, attendance, course selection, educational placement, and performance. If foster youth are struggling academically, their advocates should help them obtain appropriate support, accommodations, and services to improve their chances of success. To ensure that youth receive appropriate support, the advocate should educate school personnel on the special needs of foster care youth and promote closer collaboration among school guidance counselors, foster parents, and providers (e.g., the independent living coordinator and foster parent should attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) staffing and the guidance counselor should attend foster youth staffings.)
- Independent living providers should help foster youth develop a career plan. The plan should include the youth's interests, strengths in school, visions for career and personal life, and opportunities for career and work experience.
- Providers should assist youth in accessing postsecondary education to increase the likelihood that foster youth will follow through on plans for future education. To encourage youth to go on to postsecondary education, independent living coordinators need to be particularly involved in helping youth with entrance and financial aid applications. They also should take youth to visit college campuses and maintain relationships with the financial aid offices of local colleges. Once they are enrolled in an educational or vocational program, providers should offer services to help the youth remain in school. For instance, if the student is living on campus, providers should find places for youth to spend holidays and summer vacations when college housing is not available.
- Providers should assign tutors to foster care youth. Tutors can help youth improve their grades and, as a result, their chances to succeed. Since many of these youth fall behind in school, access to additional academic help is crucial. Assistance can come from the school system, local universities, local literacy programs, and volunteer organizations such as the Kiwanis Club.

Current program examples

- The Broward County School District and a local independent living provider have established an interagency agreement to improve school permanency. If a child moves out of a particular school zone due to a change in the foster home placement, the school district will not require the child to change schools but will continue to transport the child to the original school.

- ChildNet, in Broward County, employs an educational services specialist who serves as a consultant/liaison with independent living specialists, foster parents, and service providers about specific issues related to school board processes, procedures, and services. The specialist will also track the educational progress of the youth.
- FamiliesFirst Network, in Escambia County, has an agreement with Sylvan Learning Center to reserve slots for foster youth to receive tutoring.

Employment

OBJECTIVE - Independent living providers should connect youth with local industries and employment programs so that youth have the opportunity to explore career opportunities and develop a plan to achieve their career aspirations.

Without employable skills, former foster youth are far more likely than other young people to experience poverty and go on welfare. According to a national study, 40% of youth were unemployed 12 to 18 months after leaving foster care. However, foster youth who have held a job before their eighteenth birthdays are four times more likely to graduate from high school and work after emancipation.⁶

Minimum standards

- Providers should develop partnerships with employment programs and local industries so foster youth will have opportunities to learn about career options and gain career-related work experiences. These partnerships may lead to opportunities such as career days, job shadowing, job mentoring, and internships. Youth are more likely to pursue their educational and career goals when they have the opportunity to earn

money while working in a field they are interested in.

- Providers should offer job search training in areas such as resume writing and interviewing. These classes can help youth develop the techniques and skills they need to get and keep a job. For example, providers should conduct mock interviews with the youth to help them learn crucial interviewing skills.
- Providers should help youth obtain part-time work while in foster care. Since part-time work while in foster care is a strong predictor of long-term educational and economic success, connecting young people in foster care to part-time jobs should be a high priority. Community leaders, educators, employers, and child welfare officials should develop community-based opportunities for foster youth. Youth who have the opportunity to earn money while working in a field of interest are more likely to pursue their educational and career goals.

Current program examples

- Several community-based care organizations work with their local One-Stop Career Centers (formerly known as unemployment offices), to help young adults find jobs and learn the skills needed to obtain these jobs. For example, ChildNet and the Sarasota YMCA have an independent living coordinator on the local workforce board, which increases awareness of the needs of the foster care population. Coordination with these offices is important because they provide job skills classes that teach skills such as resume writing and interviewing. Workforce offices can also assist youth through their extensive database of job listings.

⁶ *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*, The Youth Transition Funders Group Foster Care Work Group with the Finance Project, March 2004.

- The Youth Passport Program, provided through the Sarasota YMCA, teaches teenagers skills needed to succeed in the workplace through adoption of workplace practices such as completing a timesheet, dressing appropriately, and professional etiquette. This program has a two-stage process. The first stage provides youth work readiness skills and the second places the youth in employment or training so that they can apply their new skills immediately.

Health

OBJECTIVE - Providers should teach health care education; offer health screenings; prepare youth to manage their own medical, dental, and mental health needs; and link them with community health resources.

Research shows that foster youth are more likely to have physical and mental health problems than the general population. One study found that foster youth have three to seven times as many health, developmental, and emotional problems as non-foster youth from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, youth lose their Medicaid eligibility when they leave the foster care system and generally find employment in low wage jobs that offer little or no health insurance.

Minimum standards

- Providers should ensure that youth are provided health care education prior to leaving the foster care system. Basic health education includes first aid, nutrition, physical fitness, mental and emotional health, medication use, and basic methods of assessing one's own medical needs. The curriculum also should include education on responsible sex and information on communicable diseases.
- Providers should require that each youth undergo health screenings prior to leaving the foster care system, including screenings for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases, gynecological health, eating disorders, and emotional health. The provider should offer basic health care management consistent with youths' specific health problems. For example, if a health screening finds that a foster youth has asthma, the provider should make sure the youth knows how to manage his or her asthma.
- Providers should help youth develop a health plan as part of their transition plan from foster care to prepare them to manage their health care needs when they are living independently. Providers should ensure that each youth's transition plan includes all previous health information (e.g., immunizations, past health care treatment), future routine health care needs (e.g., annual physicals and dental cleanings), health insurance options (Medicaid or private provider), and specific health care providers the youth can visit to continue his or her health care, such as a primary care physician and dentist.
- Providers should identify community health resources and link youth with these services. For example, providers should identify physicians who are willing to serve Medicaid enrollees and/or former foster youth at low or no cost. Providers also should cultivate relationships with the health care community and educate them on the special needs of this population. One way to do this is to invite members of the medical community to serve on the board of directors of a community-based care organization. Local county health departments or local walk-in clinics are also good resources for low-cost health care. Some community-based care providers are better positioned to offer certain types of health care because they belong to larger parent organizations that offer these services.

Current program examples

- Hillsborough Kids, Inc., works with the county health department to provide a low cost health care system for foster youth who are not Medicaid eligible.
- The FamiliesFirst Network, an independent living provider in Pensacola, is part of the Baptist Health Care Corporation and therefore has access to the corporation's health care network. In addition, Intervention Services Incorporated, in Orlando, which offers independent living services, also provides mental health services to the community.
- Manatee Glens, a provider located in Sarasota, has identified local medical providers who agreed to provide free mental health care to foster youth.

Aftercare and Transitional Services

OBJECTIVE - Providers should require youth to develop a transition plan to prepare them for independence and should assign mentors to help them as they transition to adulthood.

Former foster youth are eligible to receive aftercare and transitional services. These services include temporary financial assistance, parenting classes, education, job training, and counseling services. These services are important because many youth have not mastered the skills necessary to live on their own. To better ensure the success of these services, providers should help foster youth plan for transition and link them with mentors.

Minimum standards

- Before youth leave the foster care system, providers and youth should jointly develop and sign a formal transition plan describing how the youth will successfully move from state custody to independence. At a minimum, the plan should indicate what steps the youth will take to meet his or her education and vocational goals, identify

community services the youth can turn to if he or she needs assistance, and outline individualized tasks the youth will undertake to meet specific challenges identified on his or her personal independent living assessment.

- In addition to the transition plan, foster care providers should connect each youth aging out of the system with adult mentors in the community. Mentoring relationships provide support and advocacy for foster youth and assist them with personal, academic, and career development. A supportive mentoring relationship is crucial for young adults aging out of the foster care system who lose their support structures, such as a foster family or group home environment. Providers should offer specialized training to mentors (e.g., crisis management, effective communication techniques) to help youth deal with the obstacles of young adult life and should have a strong employment history in order to assist with work readiness.

These mentors could include volunteers in the community or, if resources are available, employees of the independent living provider. Foster care providers should tap into existing community mentoring resources, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, or identify local businesses that are willing to link its employees with the youth. Some providers have recruited adults who have successfully transitioned from foster care to serve as mentors for recently emancipated youth.

Current program examples

- Hillsborough Kids, Inc. requires youth to sign a formal transition plan prior to leaving foster care. The plan is in effect a contract between the youth and the provider that requires youth to meet the plan's requirements in areas such as life skills, education, and employment. If the youth fails to follow the plan's

requirements, the provider can terminate services, including financial assistance.

- The CHARLEE program in Miami-Dade County has drafted an Independent Living Resource Guide that provides youth with housing, identification (e.g., drivers' license), health care, educational, and legal resources in the Miami-Dade area.
- Kids@Home in Fort Lauderdale employs "life coaches" to assist young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. These mentors help link the youth with medical, dental, housing, and educational resources in the community regardless of whether the youth are receiving services. The goal is to have a knowledgeable adult who is involved with the youth on a consistent basis.

Training

OBJECTIVE - Providers should require continuing education and training for staff in order to better serve the needs of youth and to improve their advocacy skills for promoting community delivery of services to these youth.

To help ensure that foster youth throughout the state are provided with independent living programs of consistent content and quality, the Department of Children and Families should create statewide training standards. Such standards will help ensure that regardless of whether training is administered to groups or individuals, or in rural or urban areas of the state, the content and quality of the programs will be the same. Opportunities for community-based care providers to share with one another how they are meeting these requirements should also be provided to further ensure consistency across the state.

Minimum standards

- Training requirements should include an overview of the foster care system and all the services required by law to be delivered to the youth. Training that outlines these

services is important because staff are now required to submit to the court a report showing how the law has been met in providing each youth the services and assessments necessary to prepare him or her for independence (s. 39.701, *Florida Statutes*).

- Data collection and program evaluation training should include data sampling and evaluation techniques that indicate whether youth are advancing toward self-sufficiency. If provider programs do not yield positive results, they should be revamped. To make these assessments, data must be properly collected and evaluated.
- Training should include techniques for both administering and interpreting the Ansel-Casey and Daniel Memorial life skills assessment instruments. Interpretation of these assessments is especially important because they identify problem areas that can delay a youth's progress toward independence. In addition, proper interpretation of these assessments helps ensure that staff focuses on developing those skills most needed by the youth.
- Crisis intervention and behavior management training geared toward adolescents should be included to help ensure that staff are trained to deal with the unique needs of adolescents.
- Training addressing the needs of youth with disabilities, particularly youth with educational disabilities (e.g., youth in exceptional student education) is necessary. These standards will help ensure that special needs youth will not be left behind and can, like their cohorts, successfully transition to living independently.
- Training standards should require outreach with other community service providers, like schools, medical providers, employment agencies, etc., help inform these other providers how they can help meet the special needs of foster youth.

This is particularly important with schools, since independent living providers reported that school districts are not generally aware of the special educational challenges of foster youth and need training on the importance of school permanency and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) planning with foster youth. Training that teaches staff how to convey to foster parents what they need to be teaching the youth in their care is also important.

Current program examples

- The Department of Children and Families sponsors a yearly Dependency Court Improvement Summit that provides a forum for best practices in the foster care system. At this summit, community-based care providers have an opportunity to share what is working and not working with the youth in their care and to gain ideas for innovative programs that can improve the lives of foster youth.

Data Collection and Evaluation

Providers should track client progress to assess individual and program performance.

It is important for providers to track youth progress in meeting independent living goals, such as educational milestones and completion of life skills training. Pre- and post-test comparisons and longitudinal tracking enables providers to ensure that their programs are having a positive result. Programs that are not getting desired results should be revamped.

Providers should not only track program results, but also how many youth they are reaching. Offering an effective independent living program to only a fraction of the program's foster youth is not effective for youth or taxpayers. Providers need to seek ways to keep foster youth engaged and participating in their programs.

At a minimum, the success of a provider's program should be based on how well foster youth progress on three major variables: education, life skills, and employment. Without minimum skills in these three areas, foster youth cannot hope to live self-sufficiently. Indicators upon which each of these variables should be measured are described below.⁷

Minimum standards:

At a minimum, education indicators should include

- percentage of youth at or above grade level;
- percentage of youth taking college preparatory courses;
- percentage of youth graduating from high school;
- percentage of youth completing a general equivalency degree (GED); and
- percentage of youth entering and completing a two-year and/or four-year postsecondary education.
- percentage of youth completing a vocational program.

At a minimum, life skills indicators should include

- percentage of youth receiving life skills training;
- percentage youth completing a financial literacy course;
- percentage of youth opening and maintaining an active bank account;
- percentage of youth with a medical care provider;
- percentage of youth who are unwed parents;

⁷ Many of these indicators are drawn from the publication entitled *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*. It was prepared by the Youth Transition Foster Care Work Group and the Finance Project in March 2004.

- percentage of youth 18 and over with housing;
- percentage of youth homeless for at least one night;
- percentage of youth arrested;
- percentage of youth on probation; and
- percentage of youth incarcerated by the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice.

At a minimum, employment indicators should include:

- percentage of youth who are employed;
- average length of time youth retain their jobs;
- percentage of youth in jobs with health benefits;
- percentage of youth employed in jobs paying above minimum wage.

Current program examples

- The Corner Drug Store in Gainesville tracks a number of these outcomes on specialized software designed for this purpose.

Conclusions

Comprehensive and effective independent living transition services are a key to helping youth function as productive citizens and acquire skills needed for pursuing an education, finding a job, obtaining suitable housing, and protecting their health and well being when they leave the foster care system. The recommended minimum statewide standards of care should help ensure that providers provide services to better ensure that foster youth leave the system prepared for adulthood.

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