



Department of
Children's Services



Identifying & Accessing Independent Living Services Manual

Independent Living Program

Tennessee Department of Children's Services | IL Procedures | June 2022



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Establishing the Independent Living (IL) Program Eligibility and Service Referral Record in TFACTS:

The IL Program Eligibility and Service Referral function in **TFACTS** supports the determination of Chafee services eligibility, but also accommodates the referral of non-paid services such as Life Skills instruction. The establishment of this record is required in order to make case service referrals, or otherwise record the service provisions outlined in this protocol. There are four (4) IL Program Eligibility Types, to be established and utilized as follows:

1. **Custodial**: This eligibility type is established for all youth in state custody 14 years of age or older.
2. **Extension of Foster Care Services**: This eligibility type is established for all young adults receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care.
3. **SPG/Adoption**: This is only to be used for youth who exited state custody at or after 16 years of age, who are still under a contract for subsidy and need applicable IL Services.
4. **Limited Independent Living**: This eligibility type is only used for youth and young adults that are eligible for IL services, but do not fall under the other eligibility types.
5. **Transitional Living**: This is only to be used to record services administered by a contracted Transitional Living provider.

Staff with the DCS Office of Independent Living will establish and approve all IL Program Eligibility records. The Extension of Foster Care Services eligibility record must be established and approved within thirty (30) business days of approval for Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care for Young Adults, so coordination between the Regions and the DCS Office of Independent Living is imperative.

Life Skills Assessment and Life Skills Instruction

The first step when identifying Independent Living Services for youth is to assess need. This is accomplished with young adults receiving voluntary services upon their request and with their consent. The following is a guide for administering and utilizing the Life Skills Assessment:

The following outlines the specific guidelines and points for consideration to effectively assess life skills strengths and concerns for youth and young adults. Links to help staff and caregivers locate resources that can be used to help youth build life skills proficiency are included. Conventions for utilization of the Life Skills Assessment module in **TFACTS** complete this protocol.

Guidelines Specific to the Administration of the Life Skills

Assessment:

1. The following are the primary guidelines associated with administration of the Life Skills Assessment: All youth in state custody 14 years of age or older must have a Life Skills Assessment completed at least annually.
2. Young adults 18-21 receiving Extension of Foster Care Services may have an assessment recommended if the young adult or the Child and Family Team (CFT) identify a need, but are not required to do so. Young adults will otherwise have needs assessed based on self-reporting or factors identified by the C&FT if barriers to attaining the goal of the Transition Plan or the young adult's safety and/or well-being are identified.
3. The FSW or staff person assigned as Extension of Foster Care Worker (hereafter described as "Worker") is responsible for developing the Independent Living Plan or Transition Plan as a part of the Family Permanency Plan as required by DCS Policy [16.51, Independent Living and Transition Planning](#). The results and recommendations of the life skills assessment will be used to develop individualized strength, concern, and responsibilities information, if applicable. The Life Skills Assessment must be completed no later than fourteen (14) days after a youth enters custody in order to fully integrate the results in the IL or Transition Plan. The Life Skills Assessment results must be recorded in **TFACTS** in advance of Family Permanency Plan development.

The assessment currently required is the Life skills Assessment in TFACTS. It is also recommended that the Casey Life Skills Assessment be administered, and also CLS "Additional Assessments" Supplements that can be optionally administered based on other factors, such as the need to assess pregnant or parenting youth, etc.

It is extremely important that the results are discussed with the youth, and caregiver whenever possible, and must be used to develop strengths, needs and responsibilities in the IL section of the Family Permanency Plan.

The following storyboard provides information on how to use the Life Skills Assessment.

Guidelines for Utilization of the Life Skills Assessment Module in

TFACTS

The ***Life Skills Assessment*** module in **TFACTS** allows workers to identify youths' areas of strength and need and consolidate the results in order to create strength and need records.

The Life Skills Assessment results must be recorded in **TFACTS** in advance of Family Permanency Plan development.

Alternative Life Skills Assessment Protocol:

There are situations when it may not be possible to complete a Life Skills Assessment timely because sufficient information can't be obtained about a youth, particularly for initial Family Permanency Plans, such as when a youth is on runaway or escapee status.

The appropriate Life Skills Assessment must be administered at the first available opportunity, and the results utilized to complete the Family Permanency Plan in **TFACTS**.

Consider the following when using Life Skills Assessment information to guide IL and Transition Plan (Permanency Plan) Development:

1. The IL Plan is developed as part of the initial Permanency Plan for youth 14 up to 17 years of age. Youth 17 years and up will have a Transition Plan developed (refer to the [**Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide**](#) and the [**Permanency Plan Development Guide**](#) for more information).
2. Review and revision of the IL and custodial Transition Plan occurs with the same frequency as the review and revision of the Family Permanency Plan (refer to DCS Policy [**16.31, Permanency Planning for Children/Youth in the Department of Children's Services Custody**](#) for more information). The Transition Plan must be updated at least annually for young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services as adults, and life skills concerns will be addressed on the Transition Plan for youth 17 years of age or older, as applicable. However, it may be appropriate to administer life skills assessments (as applicable), and update Independent Living strengths, concerns, and responsibilities more often if the youth or young adult's circumstances change and the CFT warrants it. The Life Skills Assessment results must be recorded in TFACTS in advance of Family Permanency Plan development, as applicable.
3. Youth and young adults must be afforded every opportunity to actively participate in identifying their Independent Living needs and associated services, and in the development of their Independent Living/Transition Plans. The recommendations made by youth and young adults must be incorporated to the extent that the CFT agrees such recommendations to be in the youth or young adult's best interest, comply with applicable policies and statutes, and do not adversely affect the safety or well-being of the youth, young adult or others. It is

appropriate for the CFT members to discuss the possible consequences of not accepting or following recommended responsibilities with youth and young adults. Additionally:

4. Foster parents or providers will assist in the healthy development of youth/young adults in care through implementing “reasonable and prudent parent” decision making that supports health, safety and best interest of the youth. These decisions can include opportunities for risk-taking like those typically made by parents of youth who are not in foster care, or young adults not in EFCS. That planning will promote “normalcy” and the ability to engage in healthy developmentally appropriate activities that promote well-being for all youth/young adults in care.
5. Foster parents or providers will also assist the youth/young adult in making developmentally appropriate choices in choosing normal activities which include, but are not limited to: extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities, that may include dating, outdoor activities, “hanging out” with friends, prom, sports, clubs, vocational activities, religious/cultural events, field trips, driver’s education, etc.

Provision of Life Skills Instruction

1. Youth in custody must receive life skills instruction as a component of Independent Living Services, as outlined in DCS Policy [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#), Section A. Such instruction must also be offered to young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services if they request it, and encouraged if young adults appear to display problems generalizing life skills instruction already received. The scope of such instruction must be consistent with life skills assessment results and recommendations, and provided in accordance with the youth or young adult’s developmental capabilities. Youth who exited state custody to permanency through adoption or subsidized permanent guardianship, or who are solely receiving scholarship assistance, and/or limited IL Wraparound services may be offered such services but are not required to participate.
2. Life skills instruction may include, but is not limited to, formal classroom instruction, informal in-home learning opportunities, community workshops, school-based programs, and standardized curricula as provided by trained staff and resource parents. All eligible youth, and participating young adults, must have the opportunity to receive the areas of instruction outlined in the following: [**Life Skill Instruction Tip Sheet**](#).

3. The DCS Office of Independent Living serves as a centralized resource to assist FSW's, provider agencies and caregivers by performing the following functions:
 - a) Support FSW's, Workers, provider agencies and caregivers by relaying pertinent skill and content information as it relates to the identification of independent living needs, life skills assessment and life skills instruction.
 - b) Train FSW's, Workers, provider agency staff and caregivers on identifying and utilizing life skills assessment tools. Will assist with individualizing assessment tools as needed.
 - c) Make life skills curricula available to FSW's, provider agency staff and caregivers. Will provide training and assistance on delivery of such instruction, and on individualizing instruction as needed.
 - d) Identify community-based life skill instructional resources.
 - e) Coordinate the delivery of life skills workshops, with a focus on providing intensified instruction to youth at risk of emancipating to adulthood from state custody; and
4. Youth identified as having special needs will require an individualized approach to benefit from the life skills assessment and instructional tools. FSW's or Workers must consult with clinical professionals to ensure that the appropriate life skills assessments and instructional interventions are utilized. The FSW or Worker must outline strengths, needs and responsibilities derived from these assessment results, and the instructional recommendations that proceed from them, in the youth's Independent Living Plan.
5. Refer to the *Alternative Life Skills Assessment Protocol* (Page 4 of this manual), in advance of initial planning, to address circumstances that may affect administration of a life skills assessment.
6. FSWs and other applicable staff must document life skills instruction that youth or young adults receive from DCS staff, resource parents, and providers as case services in TFACTS. IL Specialists document life skills instruction when they directly provide the training. The FSW documents such instruction in all other instances, except when such documentation is required of provider agencies.
7. Contracted independent living providers must provide, track and document life skills instruction in accordance with the [**Contract Provider Manual**](#) and their established contracts.

Identifying Needed Independent Living Wraparound Services:

1. Independent Living Wraparound funding is established as a resource to support the provision of certain Independent Living Services for eligible youth and young adults. These resources are administered as a flexible funding resource to support needs and responsibilities as established in the Independent Living or Transition Plan. The resources should be utilized in conjunction with available community resources. Refer to DCS Policy [**16.51, Independent Living and Transition Planning**](#).
2. The established menu of IL Wraparound Services and the eligibility guidelines associated with each are outlined in the IL Wraparound List (below). These guidelines may be adjusted based on the identification of overall needs over time, or diminished funds. Youth who exited state custody to permanence via adoption or subsidized permanent guardianship, or those who aged out of foster care otherwise eligible for EFCS but who did not receive this service, are eligible for a limited portion of these services, as outlined in the IL Wraparound List.
3. TFACTS provides automated functionality that assists with the establishment of eligibility and the specific IL services that are available to the youth based upon such eligibility (see the section of this manual entitled: *Establishing the IL Eligibility Record in TFACTS*). The FSW or designated staff are responsible for identifying the needed Independent Living Services supported by IL Wraparound funding, based on the needs and responsibilities outlined in the youth or young adult's Family Permanency Plan (refer to DCS Policy [**16.51, Independent Living and Transition Planning**](#)). The DCS TL, or applicable supervisor, is responsible for providing initial review and approval for services, as appropriate.
4. The Director of IL or designee is responsible for additional pre-approval to purchase the identified services.
5. The Regional Fiscal Director is responsible for managing the funds and assuring that all purchases are allowable under the established regulations.
6. Independent Living Program Specialists are available to provide training and technical assistance to Regional DCS staff to facilitate the following:
 - a) Identification of needed services based on Independent Living or Transition Plan information; and;

b) Accessing IL Wraparound Services as outlined in this section and DCS Policy [16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services](#), and identifying community resources.

How to Access Independent Living Wraparound Funding:

1. All IL Wraparound funds must be accessed through the Regional Fiscal Unit for youth in custody or young adults receiving EFCS. IL Wraparound services for youth who exited custody via Adoption or Subsidized Permanent Guardianship, or those who aged out of foster care otherwise eligible for EFCS but who did not receive this service, are administered by the Office of Independent Living (the Office of Independent Living can be substituted for “Fiscal Unit” in this section when this applies). The FSW or designated staff must use the approved fiscal process to request provision and payment of IL Wraparound services, goods or incentives. It is necessary for the FSW or designated staff to specify the services requested.
2. Eligible youth or young adults must have a “Completed” or “Approved” IL Eligibility record in TFACTS in order to make referrals for IL Wraparound services.
 - a) Youth and young adults receiving Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) assistance are not eligible to receive Chafee funded services associated with post-secondary educational cost of attendance. This includes services such as transportation grants, childcare assistance and others as outlined below.
 - b) Special provisions will be made available for eligible youth or young adults who achieved permanency through adoption or subsidized permanent guardianship still under an adoption or SPG contract, those who aged out of foster care otherwise eligible for EFCS but who did not receive this service, or any other youth or young adults receiving limited service provisions (Scholarship Services). In such cases, it is not required that recipients have an IL Plan or Transition Plan established.
3. Using the Independent Living Plan or Transition Plan and the service eligibility guidelines for reference, the TL or other designated supervisor must provide the initial review and approval of the services.
 - a) The IL Director or designee must provide additional pre-approval before fiscal authorization. No payments must be made unless prior approval has been obtained through the Director of IL or designee; the Fiscal Unit is responsible for:

- b) Obtaining the appropriate signatures on the [Authorization to Vendor-Terms and Conditions](#) form.
- c) Reviewing the applicable terms and obligations with the potential vendor, to include the possible tax status that may be associated with accepting the funds;
- d) Purchasing the service(s);
- e) Recording the date of purchase of the approved services; and
- f) Maintaining a record of the applicable requests, approvals, and purchases.

Wraparound Funds Available for Independent Living Services:

Refer to the [IL Wraparound Services Grid](#) for detailed information regarding Independent Living Wraparound Services, and the following:

Special Contracts and Partnerships

<u>Name</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>	<u>Verification Required with Referral</u>
Youth Villages Extension of Foster Care Services Case Management and LifeSet	Youth and young adults ages 16 up to 23, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young adults who are actively enrolled in extension of foster care (EFC) services; or • Young adults who are emancipated to adulthood from state custody at or after their eighteenth (18th) birthday, who were in foster care or congregate care placement at their eighteenth (18th) birthday; or • Young adults who have been adopted; • Young adults who are 16 or older currently or previously placed in a Youth 	The Office of Independent Living will verify eligibility status of youth served, and approve billing invoices.

	<p>Development Center (YDC); or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young adults who are currently or were previously in state custody and in a foster care or congregate care placement at ages sixteen or older (16); or • Young adults who meet one or more of the eligibility criteria above and have previously received YVLifeSet and/or EFC services. 	
Resource Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth and young adults ages 16 up to 26. • Youth and young adults must be in state custody and in a foster care placement OR emancipated to adulthood while in state custody and in a foster care placement. 	The Office of Independent Living will verify eligibility status of youth served.
Pandemic Stimulus Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Adults between the ages of 18 up to 23. • Young Adults must have been in state custody and in a foster care placement at or after the age of 14. 	The Office of Independent Living will verify eligibility status of youth served.
Youth Villages Pandemic Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young adults between the ages of 18 up to 23. • Young Adults must have been in state custody and in a foster care placement at or after the age of 14. 	The Office of Independent Living will verify eligibility status of youth served and approve billing invoices.

Maintenance or Establishment of Traditional Placement Support:

1. Young adults eligible for Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care per DCS Policy [**16.52 Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care for Young Adults**](#) remain eligible for traditional DCS funded Placement Support, as follows:
 - a) The young adult may maintain a supported placement to the extent that they maintain eligibility for Foster Care Services per DCS Policy [**16.52 Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care for Young Adults**](#), Sections A and B, or until attainment of his or her 21st birthday.
 - b) The supported placement must be in the least restrictive environment possible, and the young adult must agree to the placement arrangement.
 - c) It is expected that provider agency contracts will be adjusted to the lowest level of payment possible. Supervised Independent Living settings, to include the Independent Living Residential placement service, are acceptable for this purpose. If clinical concerns warrant the possible continuation of a higher level of care and reimbursement, such justification must be submitted in writing for review by the Regional Administrator (RA) or Juvenile Justice Coordinator (as applicable) and Independent Living (IL) Director for approval. The written justification must be drafted and signed by a licensed clinician, and include a reasonable plan for the reduction of the level of care or for the young adult's transition to adult residential services.
2. The standards outlined in DCS Policy [**16.46, Child/Youth Referral and Placement**](#) Section F apply when maintaining or considering placement for young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services, as applicable to the young adult's circumstances and based on the recommendations of the young adult and Child and Family Team. However, a Placement Exception Request is not required to place a young adult under such circumstances.

Placement Characteristics for Young Adults Receiving Extension of Foster Care Services are addressed as follows:

1. The guidelines for young adults remaining in a foster care placement setting as a result of transitioning directly from DCS custody to Extension of Foster Care Services are set forth in DCS Policy [**16.4, Foster Home Selection and Approval**](#).

- ◆ Concerns regarding placement adjustments for youth still in state custody as they transition to adulthood or who are receiving Extension of Foster Care Services, as outlined above, are subject to review according to DCS Policy [**31.7, Child and Family Team Meeting Process**](#). The CFT is the mechanism by which such placement decisions are reviewed.
2. When circumstances exist that warrant placement change or if a traditional placement is identified as the best housing service option by the young adult and his or her Child and Family Team when eligible young adults return from a break in service:
- a) A Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS, of the type; Extension of Foster Care) is completed and approved prior to a placement Stability CFTM or within 10 days of approval of the Re-Establishment of Extension of Foster Care and prior to the initial CFTM.
 - ◆ The assessment results and other information pertinent to making a decision about the best housing option are reviewed at the Placement Stability or initial CFTM.
 - b) The young adult completes and signs DCS form [**CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO and FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release**](#), authorizing the Department to engage in full disclosure of information with resource parents and/or provider agencies.
 - c) Additionally, the young adult:
 - ◆ Completes and signs DCS form [**CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO and FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release**](#), to authorize the following:
 - i) A criminal history check, to include a local criminal records check from local law enforcement records within the immediate six (6) months preceding placement. All criminal charges listed in the local criminal history check for which there is no final disposition identified must be clarified by obtaining additional, official documentation from the local court with jurisdiction, within 24 hours or one business day of the placement.
 - ii) A DCS Records Check that includes a check of CPS records in TFACTS and a Social Service Management System (SSMS) check. This must be completed by the appropriate designated DCS staff member on DCS form [**CS-0741, Database Search Results**](#). This is to determine if there is a past Child Protective Service (CPS)

indication identifying the applicant as an indicated perpetrator of child abuse or neglect.

Note: The Child Abuse Hotline number is 1-877-237-0004 for after hours and weekends only. The Worker will be responsible for these checks during regular business hours.

iii) An Internet Records Clearance. This search must be conducted taking into account maiden and any other previous legal names. This documentation must include the following:

- ◆ A [**National Sexual Offender Registry Clearance**](#)
- ◆ A [**Tennessee Department of Health Abuse Registry Clearance**](#)

Note: Central Intake Performs the internet records clearance after-hours and weekends only. The local field staff will be responsible for this clearance during business hours.

iv) The young adult is scheduled for fingerprinting immediately after the placement is made. Fingerprinting must be completed within 15 days. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in removal from the placement.

v) Assessment results and other information gathered from the young adult and from members of the Child and Family Team are used to recommend medical and other evaluations, as applicable and appropriate to the young adults needs.

Note: Refer to DCS Policy [**16.46 Child/Youth Referral and Placement**](#), Section I, for additional guidance on Information Disclosure.

d) The following placement referral process is utilized:

- ◆ Upon determination that a young adult may need traditional placement services, the Worker must immediately contact the PSD for assistance locating an appropriate placement. The PSD staff completes form [**CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement and Well-Being Information and History**](#) in TFACTS. In case of an emergency or if TFACTS is unavailable, form CS-0727 will be maintained as a “print, fill-in” form on the DCS Forms web page. The PSD staff will begin gathering any known information about the young adult and identify the range of potential placement options.

- ◆ The PSD placement specialist or appropriate designed staff person will participate in the CFTM (if possible) and be prepared to provide the team with available options if the team determines placement is necessary. If the PSD placement specialist or appropriate designated staff person is unable to participate in the CFTM, they must provide the Worker assigned to the young adult the information about potential placements.
- ◆ The PSD staff will document efforts toward placement in the young adult's TFACTS record.
- ◆ Placement Matching-The PSD staff will match a young adult's placement using the following criterion: Potential risk to children or to the community.
- ◆ When making a referral for placement, the following items will be submitted to the provider by PSD staff as available and applicable:

Referral: (All referral documents are available in TFACTS)

- Cover Letter (Not Available in TFACTS, but will be maintained in case of emergencies);
- Critical medical information. Examples: Known medical concerns, the need for medical treatment, current prescription medication, etc.;
- Any "zero tolerance" issues that may exist;
- Any known criminal charges or convictions;
- Psychological assessment, if appropriate;
- Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS);
- Permanency Plan Packet including revisions, if available, at the time the placement is needed includes Permanency Plan/Transition Plan), and DCS form **[CS-0158, Notification of Equal Access to Programs and Services and Grievance Procedures](#)**;
- Rights and Responsibilities Agreement;
- **[CS-0968, Voluntary Placement Agreement for Transitioning Youth](#)** (if applicable); and

In addition to the placement referral information, the following information is forwarded to the private provider agency as soon as possible:

Admission:

- Additional Court Order(s) if available and applicable;
- School records;
- Immunization records;
- Birth Certificate;
- Social Security Card.

Insurance Information:

- Managed Care Organization(MCO) Behavioral Health organization (BHO); or
- Copy of TennCare application

Establishment and Administration of the Independent Living Allowance

Establishing the Independent Living Allowance (ILA) Contract and Payment Arrangement:

1. Following completion of a training course coordinated by an Independent Living Program Specialist, the young adult must complete and provide a W-9 form and utilize form [**CS-0812, Independent Living Budget**](#) to develop a budget. The Independent Living Program Specialist (ILPS) following the training must make these forms available to the young adult. The training will be documented as a Case Service in TFACTS and in Care Coordination Notes.

Note: The address for the youth should reflect their permanent living address because this is where all of the financial information will be mailed. It is incumbent upon the youth to notify program staff of any change in address. Changes in address can take extended periods of time to update in the system; fast notice will help avoid service interruption.

2. Young adults are encouraged to complete form [**FA-0825, Automated Clearinghouse Credits \(ACH\)**](#) . This form must be made available to the young adult by the Independent Living Program Specialist following the training, and must be submitted directly by the young adult to the address on the form with a VOIDED check or a VOIDED savings deposit slip. The ACH provides direct deposit information and will allow DCS to directly deposit the ILA into the youth's bank account. The ACH requires an American Bankers Association (ABA) number that

is the same as the routing number (the first set of numbers found on the bottom of personal checks).

Note: If the youth banks with a Credit Union, the Credit Union will need to fill out the ABA number. Anticipated changes in banking partners will be forwarded to program staff as soon as practical to avoid service interruption.

3. Young adults eligible to receive the ILA must review and sign form [***CS-0762, Independent Living Allowance Agreement***](#), prior to establishment of the service. Independent Living Program Specialists must ensure that the eligible young adults review and sign the applicable IL Allowance Agreement and forward the form for processing.
4. The direct deposit will usually begin approximately thirty (30) days after the [***W-9***](#) form; [***Automated Clearinghouse Credits \(ACH\)***](#) form and collateral information are submitted.
5. All documents associated with establishment of the Independent Living Allowance must be uploaded to, or maintained in, TFACTS.

Updating the Independent Living Allowance (ILA) Contract and Payment Arrangement:

1. Independent Living Program Specialists must ensure that eligible young adults review and sign an updated and applicable IL Allowance Agreement whenever a change is warranted. Such a change may be due to an updated rate or version of the agreement.
2. Young adults must complete and submit a [***W-9***](#) when he/she moves to a residence different from that initially identified when the ILA contract was established.
3. Young adults are encouraged to submit form [***FA-0825, Automated Clearinghouse Credits \(ACH\)***](#), and submit a voided check or savings deposit slip, whenever he/she closes the bank account that receives the ILA direct deposit, and opens another account that will receive the ILA direct deposit.
4. The young adult must immediately supply notification under the following circumstances:
 - a) He/she closes the bank account that receives the ILA direct deposit;

- b) He/she experiences overdraft charges on the bank account that receives the ILA direct deposit; or
 - c) The bank closes the account that receives the ILA direct deposit for any reason.
5. The young adult must contact the Independent Living Program Specialist monitoring his/her ILA eligibility to provide all of the above information and documents, as applicable.

Establishment and Delivery of the DCS Administered Scholarships

Identifying Post-Secondary Educational Options:

1. It is recommended that youth and young adults receive assistance from supportive adults in preparation for submitting applications for ETV's and/or the Bright Futures Scholarship. Supportive adults include, but are not limited to, resource parents, birth parents, relatives, mentors, teachers, and DCS staff. FSWs, or other designated staff, must provide this assistance for youth and young adults in state custody or receiving Extension of Foster Care Services status. Assistance must be rendered to help youth and young adults:
 - a) Receive recommendations regarding the youth's post-secondary educational options from high school guidance counselors, when applicable, to ensure the appropriateness and feasibility of program choices;
 - b) Obtain information about specific post-secondary educational institutions that the youth may be interested in, and review such information with the youth to facilitate an informed decision;
 - c) Visit the post-secondary programs in advance of enrollment;
 - d) Apply for federal and state financial aid awards by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually. Also, to identify and apply for privately endowed grants and scholarship; and to
 - e) Determine the youth's eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation services and the related post-secondary assistance.
2. Regional Independent Living (IL) Program Specialists and Education Specialists are available to provide technical assistance to FSWs, other designated staff and other supportive adults, and to support the completion of the tasks as outlined.

DCS Administered Scholarship Service Provisions:

The DCS Office of Independent Living maintains oversight of the DCS administered scholarships. The following services are available to eligible young adults who are pursuing their post-secondary education:

1. ETV assistance is available to assist young adults with the cost of attendance as specified by the post-secondary education programs they attend and in accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1965 and DCS Policy [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#). Bright Futures Scholarship awards are based on the needs of the student and in accordance with DCS Policy [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#).
2. All ETV and Scholarship Bright Futures awards are subject to variance based on the number of young adults who are eligible and apply, and the amount of assistance available.
3. Other costs associated with educational program enrollment, or for assessed needs related to attendance at such programs, may be accessible for eligible youth through regional IL Wraparound Funds as outlined in DCS Policy [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#), as applicable.
4. ETV and/or Bright Futures Scholarship funds may be used to assist young adults with payment for room and board. Room and Board is defined as:
 - a) **Room**: Housing resources (such as campus housing) that can be funded by the financial aid structure established for educational institutions.
 - b) **Board**: Resources that support basic needs (other than housing, such as a meal plan) that can be funded by the financial aid structure established for educational institutions.

Application Procedures for ETVs and/or the Bright Futures Scholarships:

1. Applications for ETVs and Bright Futures Scholarships are accepted at the beginning of each academic year, and for subsequent semesters or terms of enrollment. Applications for technical programs, others that may have variable enrollment periods, or for students starting an academic program at the second semester or during a summer semester must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
2. All youth or young adults who wish to apply for these funds must meet eligibility criteria as outlined in DCS Policy [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#), and must:
 - a) Complete an application, form [**CS-0599, Application for Post-Secondary Funding**](#); and

- b) Complete and sign at least one (1) copy of form [CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Information TO and FROM the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release](#), which will enable the FSW or other designated staff, IL Program Specialist, and/or the Scholarship Coordinator to obtain financial information from the school's financial aid office as well as schedules, attendance records and grades. This will enable the amount of the grant award to be determined and provide some oversight and support to the youth or young adult during transition and adjustment to the post-secondary educational experience. Additional requests for information may require the submission of additional release forms.
3. In addition to the forms listed above, the following must be included with initial applications:
 - a) Acceptance letter from the post-secondary educational or vocational training program;
 - b) Copy of a High School Diploma, GED or HiSET;
 - c) Copy of ACT or SAT scores, if applying to a program that requires them; and
 - d) Copy of the FAFSA Student Aid Report applicable to the financial aid year.
4. Returning students must include the following with each application:
 - a) Copy of the FAFSA Student Aid Report applicable to the financial aid year or other verification of financial aid application; and
 - b) Grade or progress report for the previous semester or term.
5. Any application that does not have completed information regarding financial resources and need must be held until the additional information is obtained. No award letter can be sent to the educational program until this information is received.
6. It is recommended that applications for ETVs and Bright Futures Scholarships, and all supporting documents, be submitted to the Scholarship Coordinator no later than July 15th of the calendar year the youth plans to attend school.
7. Subsequent applications should be submitted as follows:
 - a) Application deadline for spring semester is December 15.
 - b) Application deadline for summer school is May 15.
 - c) At least forty-five (45) calendar days before the applicable term begins for vocational or technical programs that have variable start dates.
 - d) In special circumstances, applications may be accepted at a later date at the discretion of the Director of Independent Living. The circumstances related to late application must be explained in the designated area of the application.

Administration of funding to the educational programs in a timely manner, or at all, cannot be assured if applications are submitted late.

8. Independent Living Program Specialists may assist eligible DCS custodial youth, eligible youth and young adults who aged out of foster care, exited custody to Adoption or Subsidized Permanent Guardianship and young adults receiving DCS Extension of Foster Care Services, with the application process. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application is completed in its entirety, includes all applicable signatures and additional items, and is submitted by the applicable deadline.

ETVs and Bright Futures Scholarship Award Procedures:

Once the DCS Scholarship Coordinator receives the application and all necessary verifications outlined in DCS Policy [*16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services*](#):

1. A letter that contains the award amounts and billing instructions must be sent to the post-secondary institution and a copy sent to the student and if applicable, the FSW or other designated staff.
2. The DCS Scholarship Coordinator will work with the post-secondary program to establish the final grant award.
3. The DCS Office of Independent Living must verify the eligibility of the youth or young adult for the service and establish the service record in TFACTS.
4. Improper withdrawal from educational programs by youth and young adults that results in costs incurred with no concurrent educational progress achieved may result in rescinding of the awarded scholarship.
5. The Central Office Finance Division, in conjunction with the IL Director/designee and the Scholarship Coordinator, will ensure that appropriate funding approvals are made in the system and that invoices are properly processed.

Monitoring ETVs and Bright Futures Scholarships:

1. The DCS Scholarship Coordinator is responsible for reviewing the ETVs and Bright Futures Scholarship applications, and monitoring the initial and on-going eligibility of scholarship applicants. The DCS Scholarship Coordinator must also coordinate with Central Office Finance Staff to ensure appropriate entry and processing of payments in the designated system.
2. The DCS Scholarship Coordinator must monitor the initial and on-going eligibility of scholarship applicants, with assistance from Independent Living Program Specialists and assigned FSWs or Workers (when applicable).

3. All documents and verifications associated with the DCS scholarship application process must be uploaded to TFACTS. The following file index outlines items required, and must be completed and included with the uploaded Post-Secondary Application packet.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) and Bright Futures Scholarship File Index

File Index

DCS Involvement Confirmation

- Verification of Identity and Citizenship/Immigration Status (as applicable)

Grades and Class Schedule

- Grades /Transcripts (if applicable)

Financial

- Billing from School (Provided to Finance/Edison)

DCS Scholarship

- DCS Financial Aid Award Letter

Application and Verification

- Post-Secondary Application
- Other Waivers, Releases and Verifications
- Post-Secondary Acceptance Letter
- Financial Aid Award Issued by school
- School Cost Information
- Secondary Diploma, GED, or HiSET
- FAFSA Student Aid Report
- Other Verification of Financial Aid (as applicable)

Refer to DCS Policy: [**16.53, Eligibility for Independent Living Services**](#) for more information.

Provision of Case Management Services to Young Adults Receiving Foster Care Services:

1. Young adults receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care will receive case management services, and such services will be provided by the assigned Worker.
2. Case management services will be provided by the assigned DCS worker for young adults receiving EFCS temporarily while awaiting a transition to Employment and Community First (ECF) Choices or Adult Behavior Health Supportive Services.
3. Independent Living Program Specialists will serve the function of supportive advisors, relaying pertinent skill and content information. It is appropriate for the Independent Living Program Specialists to serve in a centralized monitoring function for young adults receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care who are attending post-secondary educational programs, and for such young adults receiving the ILA.
4. The assigned Worker will assist young adults in assessing strengths and needs, identifying resources, navigating educational systems, accessing health care, budgeting and developing healthy relationships.
5. The assigned Worker will assist young adults in developing the capacity to financially self-support. The Worker will also assist the young adults in accessing financial support via the appropriate DCS and community resources when needed. Additionally, it is appropriate to assist young adults in accessing IL Wraparound funding through the Regional Funding Units to support needs and responsibilities established in the young adult's Transition Plan.
5. Young adults receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services must have face-to-face contact monthly. Contact is also required as follows:
 - ◆ The Worker will make at least one home visit to the young adult's residence upon receipt of the case. The assigned Worker will also make at least one home visit to the young adult's residence whenever the young adult establishes a different residence. Contact may need to increase if the young adult exhibits difficulty following the responsibilities outlined in the Transition Plan. Additionally, it may be necessary for contact to increase when a young adult enters a new job, job-training program, college etc., until the young adult is established. Provider agencies continuing to provide services to such young adults must render them on the basis of their contracts, as applicable.
6. Verification of the young adult's eligibility status must be obtained on-going. This verification will be completed, signed, and obtained by/from the educational programs or employer on their letterhead, program sanctioned document format or pay stub; monthly when the young

- adult is enrolled in a GED or HiSET program, employed or engaged in activities to remove barriers to employment, and per applicable grade period or semester when the young adult is in high school, college or other post-secondary program. Verification must be obtained annually from an applicable clinician when eligibility is established on the basis of disability. It is the responsibility of the primary Worker to procure verifications and to monitor progress.
7. Young adults will have the opportunity to attend the scheduled court or Specialized Foster Care Review Board review of their case, as applicable. The FSW or other designated staff will ensure that the young adults receive written notification of the review date and location within 14 days of the review.
 8. Young adults should also have an adult resource that can serve as support in emergency and non-emergency situations. The Worker will monitor such mentoring relationships, and provide advisement to young adults should concerns arise.
 9. All interactions with young adults, to include the required face-to-face contacts, must be documented as TFACTS case recordings.
 10. DCS will continue to assist the young adult receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care by coordinating access to health care and dental services through public health insurance, employment, or college health insurance options as available. Young adults should be counseled to continue to use the custodial guidelines for dental screens and regular medical check-ups to monitor their health and well-being. It is the responsibility of DCS to assist a young adult with any necessary healthcare advocacy.
 11. The assigned Worker is responsible for development and revision of the young adult's Transition Plan. Services provided to young adults must support the needs and responsibilities outlined in their Transition Plan (refer to DCS Policy [**16.51, Independent Living and Transition Planning**](#) and the [**Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide**](#)).
 12. The assigned Worker must assist young adults with family concerns and facilitate contact with siblings still in state custody (as applicable and appropriate).
 13. The Worker is responsible for filing necessary forms and collateral documents in the young adult's case file (Refer to the [**Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide**](#)).
 14. DCS may provide limited services to non-custodial youth or young adults not receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services. This includes Independent Living Wraparound Services and/or the DCS Administered Scholarships to eligible youth who exited custody to Adoption or Subsidized Permanent Guardianship, or eligible young adults 21 years of age or older. Youth and young adults who receive such limited service provision will not require the case management schedule outlined above. Oversight will be rendered by IL Office staff on the basis of the specific service provisions established. The cases of youth

who attain 21 years of age, who were receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care at that point, are transferred to the applicable staff with the Office of IL; all procedures to properly terminate Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care are followed. The Office of Independent Living maintains a case file following the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Bright Futures Scholarship File Index (see page 21 of this manual).

Termination or Denial of Independent Living Services and the Program Review Request Process

1. The youth or young adult must be notified in writing that DCS plans on denying, changing or terminating an Independent Living Service by using form **CS-0760, Notice of Denial, Termination or Change in Independent Living Services**.
 - a) The specific reasons are clearly outlined in this correspondence.
 - b) The notification is made via certified letter with a response requested within ten (10) calendar days of the denial, change, or termination.
 - c) Form **CS-0761, Independent Living Program Review Request**, is included with this correspondence.
 - d) This notification is also documented in a case recording.
2. The youth or young adult must have the opportunity to participate in a CFTM, when the IL Service to be changed or terminated is an on-going service (primarily scholarships, ILA, and transportation services). This CFTM is convened within ten (10) calendar days of the change/termination notification. The assigned Worker helps the young adult develop a plan that identifies supports and services available in the young adult's community that may be accessed following change or termination of the IL Service.
3. Youth or young Adults have the right to appeal decisions made by DCS related to the denial, change, or termination of an Independent Living Service. The following procedure is followed:
 - a) The youth or young adult develops a written statement utilizing form **CS-0761, Independent Living Program Review Request**, which outlines the specific reasons they are not in agreement with the decisions made by DCS related to the provision of service. The young adult's request is submitted to the Worker within ten (10) calendar days of receiving notice of the decision.

- b) The Worker completes and signs the applicable portion of the form and submits it to the Regional Administrator and the Director of Independent Living (the form can be uploaded to the Program Review record in TFACTS).
- c) Staff with the Office of Independent Living establishes the Program Review record in TFACTS.
- d) The form, **[CS-0761, Independent Living Program Review Request](#)**, is reviewed jointly by the applicable Regional Administrator, Juvenile Justice Coordinator or provider agency leadership (if a provider is administering the case management services) and the Director of Independent Living. This decision is binding, with the final authority held by the Director of IL.
- e) The decision is recorded in TFACTS, and a copy of the completed form with the decision and all signatures is returned to the youth or young adult.

Forms:

[CS-0599, Application for Post-Secondary Funding](#)

[CS-0762, Independent Living Allowance Agreement](#)

[CS-0812, Independent Living Budget](#)

[W-9](#)

[FA-0825, Automated Clearinghouse Credits \(ACH\)](#)

[CS-0760, Notice of Denial, Termination, or Change in Independent Living Services](#)

[CS-0761, Independent Living Program Review Request](#)

[CS-0968, Voluntary Placement Agreement for Transitioning Young Adults](#)

[CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Information and HIPAA Protected Health Inform TO and From the Department of Children's Services and Notification of Release](#)

[CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement and Well-Being Information and History](#)

[CS-0158, Notice of Equal Access to Programs, Appeal Rights](#)