
OVERVIEW

Efforts must be made to find families for older youth in care and to identify placement options that provide age-appropriate opportunities and responsibilities. Youth, ages 14-21, must be involved in placement decisions. Youth are a valuable resource in identifying individuals who might be available to serve as placements.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PREPARATION

Independent living preparation is required for all youth in foster care age 14 and older, regardless of their permanency planning goal. Once the youth is age 14, the Parent Agency Treatment Plan must describe the services provided and goals for future services, which will help the youth prepare for functional independence. The goal of independent living preparation is to assist youth in transitioning to self-sufficiency. Independent living preparation activities for youth aged 12-13 years are encouraged based upon availability of services and assessment of need.

Note: Provision of services does not equate to achievement of permanency. Reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan within a timely manner must still be provided; see [FOM 722-07, Permanency Planning - Overview](#), for all permanency planning goal requirements.

Casey Life Skills Assessment

The Casey Life Skills Assessment is a free, online youth-centered tool that assesses the life skills that youth need for their well-being, confidence, and safety, as they navigate high school, postsecondary education, employment, and other life milestones. The Casey Life Skills Assessment must be completed annually, starting at age 14. For youth who are 14 or older when they enter care, the assessment should be completed within 90 days of entering care. The Casey Life Skills Assessment can be accessed at the [Casey Life Skills](#) homepage.

The Parent Agency Treatment Plan for each youth age 14 or older must contain a written description of the programs and services which will help the youth take care of oneself physically, socially, economically and psychologically. Examples of age appropriate services include, but are not limited to:

- Daily living skills.
- Preventive health services.
- Educational support.
- Employment services.
- Housing education/assistance.
- Mentoring - a youth must be connected to an adult who will guide and support him/her as a parent would after his/her case is closed.

Independent living preparation skills are assessed for each youth as being adequate or inadequate on the Child Assessment of Needs and Strengths; see [FOM 722-08B, Foster Care - Child \(Re\) Assessment of Needs and Strengths](#).

Youth Involvement

To prepare for independent living, the youth should be offered the opportunity to participate in quarterly case planning meetings; see [FOM 722-06B, Family Team Meeting](#). Attempts must be made to involve the youth in the development of his/her case service plan. The level of involvement in the plan and the services provided are dependent upon the youth's preference and developmental abilities.

Case Plan Team Members

Beginning at age 14, youth may select one or more adults who are not the youth's foster parent/caregiver or caseworker, to be a part of his/her case planning team. The team members' role is to be the youth's advisor and advocate for his/her permanency, wellbeing, and normalcy through the application of the [Rights and Responsibilities of Children and Youth in Foster Care](#); see [FOM 722-6J, Rights of Children in Foster Care](#). The team member will assist the youth in developing his/her case plan by participating in semi-annual transition meetings, applicable family team meetings, and the 90-day discharge meeting; see [FOM 722-6B, Family Team Meeting](#).

If a youth is unavailable or declines to sign or be involved in the development of the case service plan, the caseworker must identify and document additional actions needed to secure the youth's participation in case service planning and implementation of the Parent Agency Treatment Plan.

Note: The individuals selected by the youth may be rejected at any time if there is good cause to believe that the individual would not act in the best interest of the child. The caseworker must document the reasons for rejecting an individual chosen by the youth, in the case service plan.

Caregiver's Role

The caregiver is an invaluable resource regarding independent living preparation, training in daily living skills, budgeting, and other customary parental duties, including providing a support system for youth as they transition out of the foster care system. The Parent Agency Treatment Plan must detail the activities that the caregiver will provide to assist the youth.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PLACEMENT

Placement in independent living is an acceptable living arrangement for certain youth, if they are 16 years or older. Prior to placement in independent living, the youth must be adequately assessed and prepared.

Assessment and Preparation of Youth

Assess independent living skills for each youth as being adequate or inadequate based on the Child Assessment of Needs and Strengths and the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. Provision of independent living services must be documented within the Parent-Agency Treatment Plan.

Independent Living Program Statement

A copy of the supervising agency's independent living program statement must be given to the youth before placement in independent living.

Independent Living Agreement

The youth must sign and be involved in the development of the individualized independent living agreement. The agreement must be reviewed and updated quarterly. If no changes are required, the

youth and the caseworker must indicate that this review has occurred by re-signing and dating the agreement. If changes are required, a new agreement must be completed and approved.

Supervisory Approval

The foster care supervisor must review and approve, by signature, all initial and updated independent living agreements and all decisions to close payment.

Case Service Plan Documentation

When a youth is placed in an independent living placement, Child Placing Agency Rules 400.12504 and 400.12505 require that the case service plan contain documentation that:

- Describes the services provided and goals for future services that will help the youth maintain independent living successfully and prepare the youth for functional independence.
- Independent living is the most appropriate placement for the youth.
- The youth exhibits maturity in self-care and personal judgement.
- The caseworker has personally observed that the living situation provides suitable social, emotional and physical care.
- The youth has adequate financial support to meet his/her housing, clothing, food and miscellaneous needs.
- Outlines an evaluation of the youth's need for supervision. The caseworker must have face-to-face contact with the youth as described in [FOM 722-06H, Caseworker Contacts](#).
- The youth was provided with a phone number to contact the department on a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week basis.

Caseworker Responsibility

Caseworkers maintain responsibility for monitoring youth in independent living placements. The same policy requirements that apply to foster care cases apply to cases involving youth placed in independent living.

Independent Living Stipend

The caseworker is required to provide reasonable efforts to assist the youth in meeting the requirements of the independent living agreement. Documentation of these efforts must be included in the case service plan. If it becomes necessary to stop payment of the stipend as provided for in the agreement, the caseworker must evaluate the continued adequacy of the youth's living conditions. It may be necessary to explore other placement options.

PLACEMENT OF A MCI WARD WITH A PARENT

The caseworker must consult with the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) superintendent when considering re-establishing a relationship between a state (MCI) ward and his/her former legal parent.

The MCI superintendent may authorize placement of a MCI ward with a former legal parent whose parental rights to the child have been terminated. Placement does not reinstate parental rights. The following procedure is used to place a child with a former legal parent in appropriate cases.

Placement Prohibited in Certain Cases

If the former legal parent's rights were terminated due to one of the aggravated circumstances listed in MCL 722.638(1)(a) and MCL 712A.19a(2)(b), the MCI superintendent must not restore physical custody to the parent. Aggravated circumstances are:

- Abandonment of a young child (the child or a sibling).
- Criminal sexual conduct involving penetration, attempted penetration, or assault with intent to penetrate committed against the child or a sibling.
- Battering, torture or other severe physical abuse of the child or a sibling.
- Loss or serious impairment of an organ or limb of the child or a sibling.

- Life-threatening injury of the child or a sibling.
- Murder or attempted murder of a sibling.
- Voluntary manslaughter of a sibling.
- Aiding and abetting, conspiring to commit, soliciting murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child or a sibling.

Requests for Placement

An MCI ward's caseworker may submit a request for placement with the ward's former legal parent(s) if all of the following are true:

- The permanency goals of adoption and guardianship have been ruled out.
- The youth's current permanency goal is Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative (PPFWR).
- At least three years have passed since the date of termination of the parental rights (TPR) of the parent to whom restoration of physical custody is sought.

Requests for restoration of physical custody must be made on the [DHS-594, Parental Placement of a MCI Ward Request](#). The DHS-594 must be sent to the MCI office along with required documentation indicated on the form.

MCI Superintendent Approval or Denial

The MCI superintendent will review the DHS-594, Parental Placement of a MCI Ward Request, along with the attached case documents. If the MCI superintendent concludes, based on the criteria listed above that placement with a former legal parent is in the child's best interest, the superintendent will send written approval to the requesting caseworker. The caseworker may then place the youth with the former parent. The caseworker must comply with [FOM 722-03, Placement Selection and Standards](#), when placing the child with the former parent. Agency responsibility for supervision continues until discharge is achieved.

If the request is denied, the superintendent will send a written denial to the requesting caseworker.

**MiSACWIS and
Payments*****Parental Home Placements***

If the MCI superintendent approves placement with a former legal parent, the caseworker must select *parental home* as a service type and *parental rights terminated* as the living arrangement.

Independent Living

In some cases, the youth may be eligible for an independent living allowance if s/he meets the guidelines for independent living. If approved for an independent living allowance while placed with the formal legal parent, the caseworker must select *independent living* as a service type and *independent living allowance* as a service description.

**PLACEMENT IN AN
ADULT CARE
FACILITY**

Placement in an adult care facility may be considered for a youth under the age of 18 if it will be the most appropriate, least restrictive setting. The Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL) may authorize, through an exception process, placement in a licensed adult foster care family home or in a licensed adult foster care small or medium group home. This would be allowable if the youth has a developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap that limits him/her to such a degree as to require complete physical assistance with mobility and the activities of daily life.

The supervising agency retains supervisory responsibility for any youth placed in an adult facility.

Placement Criteria

The placement must meet the following criteria:

- Is in the best interests of the youth.
- Has the concurrence of the youth's parent or guardian (temporary wards only).
- Has the capacity to meet the identified needs of the youth.
- The youth's psycho/social and clinical needs must be compatible with those of other residents.

- The youth's level of cognitive functioning is consistent with that of other residents.

If approved, the child placing agency or the Adult Foster Care and Homes for the Aged Licensing Division will periodically reevaluate the placement to determine that these criteria continue to be met.

Request for Authorization

A request for authorization to place a youth who is less than 18 years old in adult foster care must be submitted in writing to DCWL. The request must be signed by a supervisor from the supervising agency. The request must contain the following information:

- Identification of the specific adult foster care facility in which the agency wishes to place the youth. The name of the provider, the name of the facility and the license number must be included. The license number must begin with the prefix AF, AS, or AM.
- Information about the youth including:
 - Name, date of birth and gender.
 - A description of the youth's psycho/social and clinical needs.
 - The prescribed clinical treatment for the youth's condition.
 - A description of the youth's cognitive level.
 - A description of the youth's developmental disability, mental illness or physical disability, and medical documentation that the youth is physically limited to such a degree as to require complete physical assistance with mobility and activities of daily living.
 - Any history of known trauma.
 - An assessment of the youth's immediate and long term need for foster care.
- Verification that the above placement criteria has been met.

Review of Request

The Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL) and the Adult Foster Care and Home for the Aged Licensing Division will review the request and make a decision. The DCWL decision is final. A letter will be sent to the supervising agency and the adult foster home indicating approval or denial of the request. Placement in the adult foster home is not to occur without written approval from DCWL.

SERVICES TO OLDER YOUTH

Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care

Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care offers eligible foster youth ages 18, 19, and 20 who were in state-supervised foster care at the age of 18 or older to extend foster care maintenance payments, until age 21; see [FOM 722-16, Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care](#).

Services to MCI Wards until Age 20

Youth committed to MCI who chose not to participate in Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care may remain in foster care and continue to receive payments until age 20, either in family foster care or independent living; see [FOM 901-8, Fund Sources](#).

Note: Determination of care (DOC) rates cannot be paid to a foster parent and administrative rates cannot be paid to a Private Agency Foster Care Agency.

To use limited term and emergency foster care funding for former MCI wards, the following steps must be taken:

The youth must agree to services and sign all of the following documents:

- Permanent Ward Updated Service Plan.
- Independent Living Agreement.

**Services to Title
IV-E Youth after
Age 18**

Temporary court and state wards who chose not to participate in Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care **and** are receiving title IV-E funding may remain in foster care and title IV-E funding may continue if the youth meets the following criteria:

- A full-time student in high school or in the equivalent of vocational or technical training.
- Can be reasonably expected to complete high school or vocational or technical training before age 19.

Eligibility continues as long as the youth stays in school/training and ends the last day of the month in which the youth completes the graduation or certificate requirements. If the youth is expected to complete the graduation requirements after age 19, title IV-E eligibility ends at age 18; see [FOM 902, Funding Determinations and Title IV-E Eligibility](#).

**Education and
Training Voucher**

The Chafee Education and Training Vouchers Program (ETV) provides resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. This program provides vouchers of up to \$5,000 per fiscal year (amount to be determined by available federal and state funds) to eligible youth attending post-secondary education and vocational programs; see [FOM 960, Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\) Program](#).

**Consumer Credit
Reports**

Building and maintaining credit is vital to a successful transition from foster care. Information on credit reports is used to evaluate applications for credit, employment, insurance, and renting a home. To ensure youth have accurate and up-to-date credit history, credit reports must be requested annually for all youth ages 14-21; see [FOM 722-06E, Consumer Credit Reports](#).

**OLDER YOUTH
EXITING THE
FOSTER CARE
SYSTEM**

Older youth exiting the foster care system encounter additional obstacles and many are not prepared to meet financial, health, social, and educational challenges. Youth can benefit from additional time in foster care to improve proficiency and receive maximum benefit in these areas. **Age alone must not be used as a reason for closure.**

**Assessment
Factors for Case
Closing Decisions
for Older Youth**

Youth request case closure for a variety of reasons, however, they need to be actively involved in the assessment of these criteria to better understand caseworker decisions. Decisions to close cases prior to age 21 must be based on an assessment of the following criteria:

Permanent Connections

- Does the youth have an identified adult who can assist the youth as a parent would?
- Is the identified adult willing to make a commitment to assume this role for the youth?

Housing

- Has the youth obtained suitable housing that can be maintained with the youth's available resources?
- Has a referral for housing assistance been made?

Education

- Does the youth have a GED or high school diploma?
- Is the youth aware of opportunities for post-secondary education or training?
- Does the youth plan to attend college?

- Is a funding plan in place?

Employment

- Has the youth participated in job training or exploration?
- Has the youth been referred to agencies to assist with employment, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) at the local Michigan Works Agency?
- Does the youth have the training and education necessary to pursue desired employment?
- Is the youth employed?

Financial Literacy

- Does the youth have sufficient income to support him/herself?
- Does the youth have an established bank account, either checking or savings?
- Does the youth know how to write a check, pay bills, budget and save money, and shop for bargains?

Daily Living Skills

- Does the youth possess basic living skills such as cooking, cleaning, personal care, laundry, time management, community resources?
- Can the youth access transportation?
- If youth is disabled, has a referral for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) determination been made?

Healthy Behaviors

- Does the youth make responsible choices in the areas of relationships, substance abuse, and/or medical care?

Requests for Case Closure against Recommendation

If the youth requests case closure prior to the age of 21, against caseworker recommendation, the caseworker must document the concerns in the case service plan. The youth's signature is required

on the [DHS-69, Foster Care/Juvenile Justice Action Summary](#), as acknowledgement that the youth participated in the evaluation of the Assessment Factors for Case Closing Decisions for Older Youth, located in the beginning of this item, and is still requesting closure despite the caseworker's recommendation.

Foster Care Case Closure without Permanency

All children under the supervision of the Department of Health and Human Services must reach one of the five federal goals before the case can be closed:

- Reunification.
- Adoption.
- Guardianship.
- Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative (PPFWR).
- Another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA).

In extraordinary circumstances, when there are challenges with older youth, permanency may not be achieved. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- Youth AWOLP for more than 6 months who have had no contact with the supervising agency.
- Youth who refuse to cooperate with the caseworker.
- Youth incarcerated for an extended time period.

In these rare instances, active and extraordinary efforts to achieve permanency must be documented in the case service plan, before a case may be closed. In addition to active and extraordinary efforts, approval from the second line supervisor must be obtained, in conjunction with a documented discussion with a, before closing a case without permanency.

Permanency resource monitors are available to review permanency paperwork for accuracy. Permanency resource monitors can provide consultation and technical assistance on cases to determine the most appropriate permanency goal for a case. Permanency resource monitors can also provide training on all permanency goals, check on the status of pending approvals, and work with caseworkers to ensure that extraordinary efforts were made on a case that is unable to achieve permanency.

**Discharge Criteria
for State Wards
(Act 220 or Act
296)**

Although a youth can remain in care until the age of 20, a youth committed to the state per Act 220 or Act 296 remains a ward of the state until age 19 or until the youth is discharged sooner by the superintendent of the Michigan Children's Institute. Reasons for early discharge include:

- Adoption.
- Marriage (applicable only if the youth is under age 18).
- Emancipation, or release of the rights of custody over a ward under age 18, occurs by court order pursuant to a petition filed by the minor with the Family Division of Circuit Court and includes a declaration by the minor of self-sufficiency with respect to their financial, social, and personal affairs. Requirements for emancipation are:
 - The petition for emancipation.
 - An affidavit to accompany the petition declaring that an individual (the caseworker in this instance) has personal knowledge of the minor's circumstances, is convinced of the minor's ability to be self-sufficient, and believes that emancipation is in the best interests of the minor.
 - An approved [DHS-1476, Early Discharge of MCI Ward](#).

Requesting MCI Superintendent's Written Consent

Discharge for a ward prior to age 19 requires only the MCI superintendent's written consent. Prior to requesting consent from the MCI superintendent, caseworkers are required to review the Assessment Factors for Case Closing Decisions for Older Youth, located in the beginning of this item and document the outcome in the case service plan.

To request consent, caseworkers must complete the DHS-1476, Early Discharge of MCI Ward, and submit the form to:

Michigan Children's Institute
235 S. Grand Ave, Suite 514
Lansing, MI 48909

FAX: 517-335-6177

The MCI Superintendent will make a decision regarding the request and return the DHS-1476, Early Discharge of MCI Ward, to the caseworker.

90-Day Discharge Planning Meeting

Foster youth transitioning out of foster care at the age of 16 or older must have a 90-day discharge plan in place; see [FOM 722-06B, Family Team Meetings](#).

AFTERCARE SERVICES

In addition to the items below, caseworkers must inform youth of the services that are available after foster care case closure until the age of 21; such as:

- Youth in Transition; see [FOM 950, Youth in Transition](#).
- Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care; see [FOM 722-16, YAVFC](#).

Housing Resource Referral

All youth age 18 and older without an identified housing situation at the time of foster care case closure must be referred to a housing resource. Housing resources include homeless youth/runaway contractors and other local housing resources.

Homeless Youth/Runaway Contractors-Transitional Living Program

Homeless youth/runaway contractors are required to serve both homeless and runaway youth. Former foster youth are a specified population for homeless youth services through their transitional living program. Contractors are required to ensure 25 percent of their clients are youth that have transitioned from foster care.

A [Homeless Youth and Runaway Contractors list](#) can be found at the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services \(MDHHS\) Foster Youth in Transition - Housing](#) homepage.

Referral Process

The caseworker must complete the [DHS-956, Foster Youth Housing Referral](#). The original must be sent to the local homeless

youth/runaway contractor and a copy must be sent to the Homeless Youth and Runaway Analyst at the following address:

Homeless Youth and Runaway Analyst
Education and Youth Services
235 S. Grand Ave., Suite 514
Lansing, MI 48909
Fax: 517-335-7789

The homeless youth/runaway contractor is required to contact the youth within 72 hours of receiving the referral..

Eligibility

Youth are not eligible for services under the homeless youth/runaway contract while the foster care case is open. However, the contractor may meet with the youth, the caseworker, and other identified service providers, for up to two months prior to case closure to ensure a successful transition from foster care to the transitional living program.

Note: The housing plan and the youth's consent must be documented in the final case service plan.

Youth who are absent without legal permission (AWOLP) are not eligible for services under the homeless youth/runaway contract, as their foster care case is still open. Once the foster care case is closed, the youth may be eligible at that time.

Documentation

Before foster care case closure, caseworkers must document in the service plan that referrals were made and the following actions were completed:

- Diligently pursued multiple living arrangements and housing options.
- Assessed the reasons independent living with case management services was not an option.
- Contacted the homeless youth/runaway contractor and verified an opening for the youth upon foster care case closure.

**Foster Care
Transitional
Medicaid (FCTMA)**

Most youth who age out of foster care are eligible for Foster Care Transitional Medicaid. For eligibility criteria, enrollment procedures, youth notification of eligibility, and system actions; see [FOM 803, Medicaid - Foster Care](#).

**SSI and Older
Youth Exiting
Foster Care**

Youth with disabilities receiving title IV-E foster care benefits usually cannot become eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) until foster care payments have ended. The Social Security Administration (SSA) recognizes and acknowledges that SSI financial support and health benefits help ease the transition from foster care. To help with this transition, SSA will accept an SSI application from a youth in foster care up to 90 days before foster care payments are expected to end. .

Caseworkers must ensure a timely transition by facilitating the SSI application process at SSA with the youth; see [FOM 902-10, SSI Benefits Application and Determination](#).

**Durable Power of
Attorney**

A durable power of attorney for health care allows youth to be in control of their health in the absence of being able to make decisions about their health care treatment. Youth have the ability to choose someone they trust to make such decisions on their behalf. All youth age 18 and older who are still under the care and supervision of the Michigan Department of Human Services and are aging out of care can establish a durable power of attorney for health care; see [FOM 722-06C, Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care](#).

**DISCHARGE
DOCUMENTS**

Youth 18 years old or older, or youth who are independently leaving foster care must be given the following documents:

- [DHS Pub-858, Important Information for Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care](#).

- Information on Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care (YAVFC) if the youth is not currently in the program.
- A copy of his/her medical passport (retain copy in case record).
- A certified copy of the birth certificate (retain copy in case record).
- Social Security card (retain copy in the case record).

Note: In cases where the Social Security number has been verified and documented per policy, the caseworker must make efforts to obtain an actual Social Security card.

- Information on Foster Care Transitional Medicaid; see [FOM 803, Foster Care Transitional Medicaid](#).
- MiHealth card and if in a health plan, his/her MHP member ID card.
- [DHS Publication 161, A Foster Youth's Guide to Preparing for Health Care Emergencies, Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care](#).
- A completed DHS-945, Foster Care Youth Financial Aid Verification.

Note: This form must be completed by a MDHHS caseworker. PAFC caseworkers must request a completed DHS-945, Foster Care Youth Financial Aid Verification, from the MDHHS monitoring caseworker.

- A driver's license or a state issued identification card.
- Educational Documents.

LEGAL BASE**Federal Law**

Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 675(1)(D)

Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 675(1)(B)

Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(D)

Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(I)

45 CFR 1356.21(o)

State Law

*The Child Care Organizations Act, 1973 PA 116, as amended,
MCL 722.111(e)*

*The Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act, 1979 PA 218,
MCL 400.701*

Michigan Children's Institute, 1935 PA 220, MCL 400.203

Probate Code, 1939 PA 288, MCL 712A.2a

Probate Code, 1939 PA 288, MCL 722.954c

Child Placing Agency Rules 400.12501 - 400.12509

POLICY CONTACT

Questions about this policy item may be directed to the [Child Welfare Policy Mailbox](#).