

## **Title: Foster Care Discharge Plan**

**Date: February 2007**

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Policy: The foster care agency, in consultation with any other state agency as appropriate, shall develop and implement an institutional discharge plan to youth exiting from state-operated or supervised institutions foster care programs.

Procedure:

- A. The Foster Care Discharge Planning Process includes the following components:
1. All youth will receive an Individual Needs Assessment prior to transition to include his/her medical, employment, housing, and family or support network.
  2. The Social Worker will coordinate Pre-Release Skill Training to overcome needs or problems identified for the individual including topics such as goal setting, control of one's emotions, pre-employment skills, money management, and educational attainment.
  3. The Social Worker will coordinate Pre-Release Qualification for Benefits possessed at the time of entrance to care or for which the person qualifies, to include, as appropriate, restoration of civil rights, identification and supporting documentation, and mainstream human services programs such as food stamps, SSI, Medicaid, and welfare cash assistance.
  4. The Discharge Plan will be developed and reviewed with the individual prior to the scheduled transition date.
  5. Each plan will iterate appropriate referrals to community based providers for transition services to assure the individual has appointments or action plan to obtain and continue follow up services, treatment, and care without interruption.
  6. At Discharge, provision of essential resources to include such items as medications, medical supplies, clothing, transportation or other basic resources needed and in quantity to enable the individual to transition into the community are provided.

7. At Discharge, a notice to the planned housing provider will be sent to confirm that the youth to be released is expected to arrive and occupy the available housing.
8. The Social Worker will provide post-release monitoring and evaluation to track whether the individual was able to transition into the community, remain self-sufficient, and avoid becoming homeless.

#### B. DCF Responsibility

1. No child may be discharged from a Foster Home or facility without a viable discharge plan.
2. The child's Social Worker shall develop the discharge plan in collaboration with the Social Work Supervisor, Foster and Adoption Services Unit, regional liaison and the foster care provider.
3. Discharge planning shall include the following tasks:
  - timely pursuit of relatives and special study options such as teachers, coaches and friends of the child
  - determination of the appropriate discharge plan
  - identification of the placement at discharge
  - arranging pre-placement visits, if the child is not returning home
  - identification of, and referral for, appropriate services for the child and family.
  - preservation and maintenance of visiting resources developed during the child's foster home placement that are in the best interest of the child. These resources shall be formalized through established programs such as foster care, respite care or mentor programs.
4. A discharge plan is not viable if it cannot be achieved within the 30-45 day foster care placement period; e.g., a discharge plan of therapeutic/specialized foster care is not a viable plan if such a home is not identified or available to work with the foster care within such time. In such cases where it appears likely that the initial discharge plan cannot be implemented within a maximum of 45 days, the Social Worker and involved others, as identified above, shall develop an alternative discharge plan which can be achieved within this time frame.

5. Upon discharge from the foster home, a copy of the treatment plan and multidisciplinary evaluation must be provided to the next caregiver.
6. The Social Worker shall ensure that the parent, foster parent, or other caregiver complies with the discharge plan and after care services provided by the foster home. If necessary, the Social Worker should obtain compliance through appropriate Court orders.

C. Social Worker's Responsibility to Child

1. The Social Worker shall:
  - a. develop a relationship with the child through visits, telephone calls and private conversations, as age appropriate
  - b. explain the purpose of the Service Plan and planned activities to the child, as appropriate for the child's level of understanding
  - c. help the child understand the reasons for and the realities of placement without violating the positive aspects of the child's feelings about his/her parents
  - d. keep the child informed about the his/her case planning, family situation and siblings
  - e. ensure the child's visitation with parents, siblings and significant persons according to the Service Plan
  - f. ensure that family photographs and other mementos of the child's life are gathered and preserved.
  - g. ensure that arrangements are made for the child to attend church and receive religious instruction in his/her own faith
  - h. allow the child the opportunity to express his/her anxieties, fears and other feelings, including conflicted loyalties
  - i. ensure through observation and direct inquiry that all the child's basic needs are met
  - j. arrange for any special services the child may require including health, mental health and educational
  - k. aid in preparing the child for any life transitions, adoption, reunification, adulthood
  - l. ensure that a full array of adolescent services are provided to all youth over the age of sixteen.

D. Foster Home Responsibility

1. The Foster Home provider shall collaborate with DCF in implementing the discharge plan for the child, including:
  - ◆ communication with the prospective provider,
  - ◆ coordination of appropriate services, and
  - ◆ assistance in pre-placement visits.