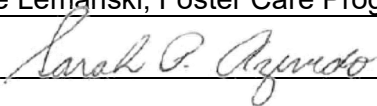


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Authorized Signature: Sarah Azevedo, DFS Director 	

Policy 1018 Foster Care Board Extension

A. POLICY

The Division is dedicated to supporting youth in their transition from foster care to independence. When appropriate, the Division may provide an opportunity for youth to remain in a stable foster care placement beyond their 18th birthday for the purpose of completing their high school education.

The youth's caseworker and team will use the case planning process to ensure every effort is made to assist youth in completing their high school education prior to their 18th birthday. Some youth may require alternative educational pathways, such as vocational training, adult education, credit recovery, or special education certificate tracks. These alternative paths do not exclude a youth from eligibility for a board extension.

A board extension provides continued financial support, case management services for foster placement, and Medicaid eligibility. Youth will remain covered while in foster care and are required to apply for Medicaid within 30 days of exiting placement. The financial support provided through the board extension should be considered when reviewing or completing ASSIST applications, as the youth's financial needs are covered under the board extension during this period.

In the event that a board extension disrupts, the Division will make every effort to prevent immediate homelessness and will work collaboratively with the youth and team to identify appropriate adult housing or an alternative foster placement. It is the expectation that no youth will be immediately removed from a foster placement without a transition plan in place.

B. PROCEDURES

1. ELIGIBILITY:

- a. Youth is 18 years old.
- b. Youth must reside in a traditional paid family foster placement that is willing and able to agree to an extension. Specialized placements, such as treatment centers or other high-level care facilities or homes, are **not** considered eligible settings. The Division will make every effort to transition a youth who will require a board extension into an eligible foster

- care placement prior to their 18th birthday. Specialized rates will convert to traditional rates effective on the youth's 18th birthday.
- c. Youth must be willing to abide by house and community rules (no criminal activity).
 - d. Youth must demonstrate satisfactory educational progress toward completing their high school level education. Eligibility for this provision is limited to one year to allow the youth to complete their high school requirements.
 - High School Diploma: Youth who are on track to earn a high school diploma are eligible for one complete school year after their 18th birthday to complete their high school education. Verification of enrollment and anticipated graduation must be provided through a signed letter from the school.
 - GED program: Youth pursuing a GED are eligible for up to one year beyond their 18th birthday to complete the program. Verification of GED program enrollment is required. The GED program must provide a statement confirming that the youth is making satisfactory educational progress and is expected to complete the program within one year following their eighteenth birthday. Review and approval to continue under a foster care board extension must occur every three months after the youth turns 18, not to exceed one year. These reviews ensure the youth continues to make satisfactory educational progress.
 - Special Education: Youth enrolled in a special education program and participating in a certificate track for high school completion are eligible for one full school year after their 18th birthday to complete their program. Youth must be referred to the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) immediately upon receiving a diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability. DDDS involvement is critical to supporting adult housing transitions and planning to prevent gaps in services for youth.
 - e. Youth must be actively involved with an independent living provider to assist with planning for youth's transition to adulthood.
2. REQUESTING APPROVAL:
- a. Discussion regarding board extension should begin early and be documented in the STEPS plan when a youth is 17 years old. Board extension should be revisited and documented again during the exit conference, which occurs approximately three months prior to the youth's 18th birthday.

- b. Once the team, including the youth, determines the youth is eligible for a board extension, all parties must review and sign the Board Extension Agreement.
 - c. The caseworker shall submit the complete Board Extension Request packet to the Regional Administrator at least 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday. The complete packet includes:
 - Request memorandum
 - Signed Board Extension Agreement
 - Educational documentation verifying good standing.
 - d. Upon approval, the Regional Administrator shall forward the approval via email to the identified eligibility worker, the SSI Eligibility Specialist, Foster Home Coordinator, both Foster Care Program Managers, and the Independent Living Program Manager.
 - e. When the youth turns 18, they are added to the foster home as an adult household member and must complete a fingerprint-based background check, in accordance with licensing requirements.
 - f. If the youth plans to attend post-secondary education that includes housing, the team may include this in the approval request to cover the period between high school graduation and the youth's move to post-secondary housing.
3. TERMINATION OF EXTENSION:
- a. Youth must comply with the Board Extension Agreement between the foster family, DFS/agency, and the youth. Compliance includes following all household rules, maintaining satisfactory educational progress, and remaining free of criminal activity.
 - b. If the placement disrupts due to the youth's behavior after the youth's 18th birthday, the Division is not legally responsible for re-placement. However, the Division will make every effort to prevent homelessness and will not immediately terminate a board extension. The youth should be advised that their behavior resulted in a loss of eligibility to continue in care, and they must secure alternative housing. The team may allow the board extension to remain active for up to 14 calendar days following disruption to allow for planning or stabilization.
 - c. If the youth voluntarily withdraws from or leaves the placement, the caseworker may keep the placement open for up to 14 calendar days to allow the youth an opportunity to return. If the youth does not return within this period, the board extension is void, and the placement will be ended.
 - d. The status of the board extension must be reviewed by the caseworker and supervisor every three months to ensure continued compliance and

appropriateness. A board extension may not extend beyond a youth's 19th birthday, or close of the school term following the 19th birthday, whichever occurs longer.

- e. Board extension end dates should align with the last day of the graduation or completion month to allow transition time between graduation and adult responsibilities. If the youth is transitioning directly to post-secondary education housing, the end date should correspond with the move-in date.

4. **EXTENSIONS FOR YOUTH RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY:**

- a. Youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will be enrolled with SSI Medicaid. The Social Security Administration (SSA) begins reviewing clients for continued eligibility at age 17½. When a youth enters a board extension, the DSCYF SSA liaison will conduct the review to continue SSI Medicaid.
- b. If it is determined that the youth doesn't qualify as an adult for SSI, the team shall assist the youth in applying for Medicaid in the community.
- c. When the board extension is ending, work with the SSA liaison to transfer payee to the youth upon exit from care.

c. FOCUS

- 1. To maintain continued eligibility and service delivery, the youth must remain in an open placement and have an active custody episode.
- 2. After the youth's 18th birthday, no additional court hearings or orders will be entered.
- 3. An open placement requires an open custody episode. Although custody legally ends when a youth turns 18, DFS will delay entering the age of majority court order until the board extension concludes. Once the board extension ends, an order of age of majority must be entered, using the youth's 18th birthday as the end date.

d. FORMS Use the DFS policy website to access any forms:

<https://kids.delaware.gov/policies/dfs-policies>

- 1. School Verification Letter
- 2. Board Extension Agreement
- 3. Request Memorandum