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POLICY 1201 – Eligibility and Initiation of Independent Living Services

A. POLICY

Older youth in foster care require focused, structured assistance to make the transition to living independently as young adults. Services are designed to promote self-sufficiency and responsible living as well as to help youth reach and maintain their maximum potential, and live in a safe and healthy environment.

B. PROCEDURES

1. Independent Living (IL) case management services are provided to all eligible youth. Eligible youth include:
 - a) Youth in Division of Family Services (DFS) custody and in a foster care placement setting, age fourteen (14) and older.
 - b) Foster youth who aged out of foster care at age eighteen (18) and have not reached age twenty-three (23).
 - c) Foster youth adopted or placed under a guardianship order at age sixteen (16) or older and are less than age twenty-three (23).
 - d) Foster youth active with a contracted IL service provider who returned home on trial reunification are eligible for IL services for 60 days.
2. The caseworker shall open an IL case in FOCUS for eligible youth age sixteen (16) or older no later than (14) fourteen days after their 16th birthday. After opening an IL case, the caseworker shall complete a FOCUS IL referral event to the appropriate service provider.
3. Subsequent referrals will be completed in the existing IL case. Examples of subsequent referrals may include a change in provider, or change in county residence, or return to Delaware from out of state placement.
4. When a youth enters foster care at age sixteen (16) or older, the caseworker shall make a referral for IL services within (14) fourteen days of the placement.
5. For eligible youth in DFS placement, the caseworker shall refer to a provider in the county where the youth is placed.
6. For eligible youth in Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services residential facilities the caseworker shall refer to the county where the DFS caseworker is located.
7. Youth committed to Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services facilities are not eligible for IL services while serving their commitment.

8. Youth must agree to participate directly in designing and fully participating in program activities in preparation for independent living.
9. For some youth, structured life skills assessment and independent living case planning may not be possible. The reason(s) why an assessment and case planning could not be completed shall be documented in the FOCUS (For Our Children's Ultimate Success – automated information system) IL Case.
10. The caseworker shall be responsible for coordinating IL services for youth in foster care ages 14 and 15. No referral needed to IL contractor for this age group.
11. The caseworker shall complete a referral for eligible youth returning to Delaware from an out-of-state placement as soon as possible but no later than fourteen (14) calendar days of return.
12. Following the referral submission in FOCUS, the caseworker shall submit all available copies of the following documents to the IL provider within two (2) business days. The documents could be uploaded to the IL case in FOCUS or emailed to the contracted IL provider.
 - Birth Certificate
 - Social Security Card
 - DE Identification Card
 - Level of Care
 - Placement History
 - Education History
13. The caseworker shall document services for youth younger than age 16 in the Child's Strengths and Needs Guide or in the Child Service Plan and Child Service Plan Review.

C. FOCUS

Caseworkers complete an Independent Living Case and subsequent referral in FOCUS

D. FORMS

None