

Independent Living Plan Guidance

A. EDUCATIONAL, VOCATIONAL, AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

Practice Recommendations:

- Stay in communication with the youths' school.
- Stay focused on school stability and continuity – it is critical for educational success.
- Provide support services to promote academic success.
- Monitor the educational progress and planning of each youth-attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan meetings and provide informed input to assure integration with the child welfare driven Independent Living Plan.
- Request that services such as rehabilitative services get involved early on.
- Identify one person in the school to take a special interest in the youth and to act as their advocate.
- Involve parents and caregivers – encourage them to develop relationships with school staff, know where to go when there are school problems, and provide homework support.
- Ensure the collection of all educational records for youth.
- Assure that the youth acquires reading and writing literacy, math and technology skills.
- Help youth attain aptitude and vocation interest assessments.
- Assure that youth benefit from career development, vocational and job training offered through their high school.
- Encourage extracurricular activities to help youth develop positive social skills and self-esteem.
- Encourage obtaining a high school diploma rather than a GED – youth with a GED tend to have lower post-secondary enrollment and earnings than those with a diploma.
- Arrange for post-secondary education planning and supports.
- See Appendix B for Post-Secondary Planning – 10 Steps for Youth.
- Be aware that youth under state guardianship (i.e. state wards) are eligible for tuition waivers at Minnesota state colleges and universities - see Appendix C
- Become familiar with Education and Training Vouchers that will help former youth in care pay for post-secondary education- see page 26. Information is also available online at: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_000553
- Familiarize yourself with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) –see Appendix D - Tips for Foster Youth Completing the FAFSA or at: <http://www.nasfaa.org/annualpubs/FosterYouthFAFSA.pdf>

Sample goals and objectives for independent living plan:

By June 2009, youth will complete an education plan that will include:

Skill\$/behaviors:

- Attend an educational program regularly
- Follow academic and behavioral expectations at school
- Demonstrate acceptable attendance
- Master studies by maintaining a 2.0 grade point average each quarter
- Complete homework and class work on time
- Ask for help when needed
- Become involved in an extracurricular activity at school
- Identify GED testing site
- Successfully master the GED assessment
- Use the Minnesota Career Information System to explore careers and post-secondary education
- Participate in school conferences

- Take the ACT test
- Identify and apply to three post-secondary institutions
- Complete financial aid paperwork.

See Appendix F for Education Information and Resources Online

B. EMPLOYMENT

Practice recommendations:

- Help youth identify natural skills and abilities
- Encourage career exploration
- Support development of job readiness skills and employment skills solutions
- Work with job placement agencies
- Develop employment-based collaborations between business, social services, education and employment agencies (i.e. internships, volunteerism and paid employment).

Sample Goals and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009 youth will obtain and maintain meaningful employment.

Skills/Behaviors:

- Identify career interests by completing interest inventories (e.g. Minnesota Career Information System)
- Establish long and short term employment goals
- Attend a job or career fair
- Identify and use many resources to locate employment, including newspapers, local employment agencies, yellow pages, etc.
- Complete a resume and cover letter
- Complete and return two job applications
- Learn about potential job interview questions by participating in a mock job interview
- Go to a job interview with appropriate dress, grooming and materials
- Spend one or more day's job shadowing a person who works in that area of interest
- Demonstrate good attendance at work
- Get to work on time for scheduled shifts
- Demonstrate good work attitude
- Demonstrate self-control, leadership skills, group cooperation, anger management, and ethical behavior at work
- Demonstrate appropriate appearance at work by following dress code and maintaining lean and professional work clothing.

See Appendix F for Employment Information and Resources Online.

C. HEALTH CARE-MEDICAL COVERAGE

Practice recommendations:

- Arrange comprehensive physical, dental, vision, hearing, mental health and substance abuse screenings before youth leave care. Integrate this information into the Independent Living Plan.
- Arrange home and relationship safety education for youth.
- Educate youth about their mental health issues, sexual decision-making, and constructive ways of dealing with stress.
- Help youth learn to understand how to apply for insurance, access health care, and keep appointments with health care providers.
- Identify individuals who can help youth maintain safety and wellness.
- Assist youth in consolidating and updating health records.

Sample Goals and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009, youth will live a healthy lifestyle

Skills/Behaviors:

- Demonstrate knowledge of health care insurance coverage options
- Identify name, telephone number and address of dentist, medical doctor and therapist, and demonstrate how to make an appointment
- Complete applications for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare.
- Demonstrates knowledge of mental/emotional health needs
- Identify reasons to seek therapy
- Participate in counseling with a therapist
- Takes prescribed medication as directed by physician
- Demonstrates knowledge of what to do if a mental health crisis occurs
- Recognizes and correctly use of over the counter drugs for pain, fever, etc.
- Demonstrate use of oral thermometer and how to deal with a cold or the flu
- Identify food groups that promote a healthy, balanced diet
- Maintain appropriate weight
- Demonstrate regular medical and dental care
- Identify negative effects of cigarette, alcohol and drug use
- Make healthy choices about cigarette, alcohol and drug use
- Knows how to prevent pregnancy the spread of sexually transmitted diseases

By June 2009, youth will practice good emergency and safety skills

Skills/Behaviors:

- Demonstrate knowledge of smoke detectors and how to change the batteries
- Demonstrate ability to access emergency telephone numbers and complete first aid training
- Complete CPR training
- Identify common fire hazards
- Identify household hazards that may cause injury
- Can determine when to go to an emergency room rather than a family doctor or clinic
- Demonstrate an understanding of domestic violence and how to seek help.

See Appendix F for Health/Medical Insurance Information and Resources Online

D. TRANSPORTATION

Practice Recommendations

- Arrange opportunities for youth to learn to use public transportation
- Provide the youth with bus cards
- Plan with the foster parents the steps necessary to become a licensed driver
- Arrange for youth to take driver's education and get their driver's license
- Provide opportunities for youth to practice driving
- When the youth receives a driver's license develop a plan with the foster parents regarding driving privileges and financial responsibilities
- If foster parents plan to include the youth in their car insurance policy ensure that the youth is added as a "named insured" or "additional insured."
- Help youth learn how to purchase auto insurance and a reliable vehicle
- Help youth learn basic auto maintenance
- Provide youth with a bicycle if they need it for transportation to work.

Sample Goal and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009, youth will be able to meet his/her transportation needs

Skills/Behaviors:

- Demonstrate ability to read a map and follow directional signs
- Locate a destination by following both written and verbal directions
- Identifies and can use public transportation in his/her region of the state
- Demonstrates ability to read public transportation schedules and maps
- Knows the privilege and responsibility associated with having a driver's license
- Obtains and studies Minnesota's driver's manual
- Participates in classroom driver's education classes
- Obtains a learner's permit and practices driving the foster parents' car twice per week
- Participates in behind-the-wheel driver's training
- Tests for and obtains a driver's license
- Visits an auto insurance agent to discuss coverage.
- Visits a used car lot with foster parent(s) to learn wise consumer skills
- Can estimate the cost of owning and operating a car for a month/year
- Demonstrates knowledge of auto loans and car payments
- Understands safety guidelines for auto drivers and passengers.

See Appendix F for Transportation Information and Resources Online

E. MONEY MANAGEMENT

Practice recommendations:

Surveys of youth who have completed life skills training reveals that money management was the most helpful thing they learned.

- Engage foster parents or other caretakers in teaching money management skills
- Help the youth create a monthly budget and open a savings account
- Involve youth in a life skills training group which includes money management in the curriculum
- Involve youth in learning money management skills on-line.

Sample Goals and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009, youth will demonstrate money management skills

Skills/Behaviors:

- Develops realistic short and long-term budgets
- Obtains information about opening a checking and savings account
- Demonstrates understanding of the procedures for writing and cashing checks
- Reconciles and balances a mock checking account with sample bank statement
- Maintains positive balance in a savings account
- Demonstrates understanding of debit cards and can record debit card transactions
- Demonstrates an understanding of credit and loans, terms, interest and their advantages and disadvantages
- Demonstrates ability to make wise credit decisions and an understanding of the

- importance of a good credit record
- Demonstrates knowledge of identity theft
- Knows how to read a paycheck stub, e.g. gross and net pay, income taxes and other deductions
- Knows how to complete state and federal tax forms
- Understands and can calculate sales tax
- Has saved enough money for an apartment damage deposit and first month's rent
- Has a list, including costs, of what they will need, when they move out on their own.

See Appendix F for Money Management Information and Resources Online.

F. PLANNING FOR HOUSING

Practice recommendations:

- Provide life skills trainings that teach youth how to live independently
- Provide opportunities for youth to practice living on their own -housekeeping, grocery shopping, cooking meals, working out disputes with roommates
- Develop knowledge of housing issues and housing resources for youth aging out of care
- Create alliances with housing providers
- Ensure that youth have a safe, affordable place to live when they leave care – discharge to shelter care is not an acceptable plan

See Appendix E – Foster Care Benefits Up to Age 21

Sample Goals and Objectives Independent Living Plan

By June 2009 youth will locate and plan for appropriate housing

Skills/Behaviors:

- Demonstrates knowledge of different types of housing available, and is able to calculate costs related to each option
- Identifies community resources that assist in locating housing
- Demonstrates knowledge of a lease's vocabulary, rights, and responsibilities
- Demonstrates knowledge of tenant's rights and responsibilities
- Identifies supplies and furnishings needed for housing
- Identifies benefits and potential problems associated with having a roommate
- Develops a housing plan that includes a budget, furnishings needed, community supports, transportation and employment
- Develops a safety plan in the event of fire or gas leak.

By June 2009, youth will demonstrate housekeeping skills.

Skills/Behaviors:

- Demonstrates knowledge of cleaning products and their uses
- Demonstrates use of a washing machine and dryer
- Can sew on buttons and make minor clothing repairs
- Maintains a clean living space
- Knows how to use a plunger and prevent sinks and toilets from clogging
- Knows how to dispose of garbage
- Can change a fuse or reset a circuit breaker
- Can do minor household repairs

By June 2009, youth will demonstrate food management skills

Skills/Behaviors:

- Disposes of food that has passed the expiration date
- Stores food appropriately
- Demonstrates ability to follow recipes and cook meals for one
- Demonstrates ability to plan a menu for a week, develop a grocery list, and carry out the grocery shopping with a limited budget.

See Appendix F for Housing Information and Resources Online.

G. SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SKILLS

Practice recommendations:

- Train caregivers how to respond to "teachable moments" to assist youth in healthy identity formation
- Provide activities that support youth in developing a positive sense of self
- Acknowledge and support youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender and help them find information and resources
- Help youth develop their racial and ethnic identity
- Either provide a life skills training group or refer youth to one and ensure that transportation is provided
- Connect the youth with a mentor.

Sample Goals and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009, youth will demonstrate good personal appearance and hygiene.

Skills/Behaviors:

- Bathes regularly at appropriate intervals, including use of soap and shampoo
- Demonstrates proper care of skin, hair, nails and teeth
- Demonstrates regular use of deodorant and other appropriate toiletries
- Demonstrates compliance with school dress code
- Demonstrates compliance with work dress code
- Dresses in a culturally appropriate manner in free time.

By June 2009, youth will demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills

Skills/Behaviors:

- Identifies several characteristics of a positive relationship
- Appropriately meets and greets new people
- Compares and contrasts assertive and aggressive behavior.
- Demonstrates assertiveness when solving real-life problems
- Identifies and demonstrates strategies to resolve conflicts
- Demonstrates respect for people of a different race, culture, religion, class, political party affiliation, diverse belief systems, or sexual preference
- Identifies effects of peer pressure and practices how to say "no"
- Can develop a realistic plan with appropriate steps identified to achieve a goal
- Can anticipate and describe the consequences associated with different choices
- Identifies healthy boundaries and how to avoid exploitation.

By June 2009 youth will have successfully participated in three new social/recreational activities.

Skills/Behaviors:

- Attend YMCA summer camp
- Attend a youth group retreat, including the group initiatives course
- Attend guitar lessons once per week.

See Appendix F for Social and Recreational Information and Resources On-line.

See Appendix G for the Forgotten Children's Fund

H. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Practice recommendations:

- Provide assessments, services and activities that address cultural needs (There is a version of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills assessment for Native American youth)
- Connect youth with opportunities to select well-screened mentors who can act as role models and teach youth specific skills
- Make sure the youth knows why they are in placement
- Help youth get the information they need to create a Life Book
- Refer youth to a Life Book planning group
- Help youth identify and connect with birth family members with whom they can maintain a safe and appropriate relationship
- Make sure someone is teaching youth how to find the community resources they will need when they age out of care.

Sample Goals and Objectives for Independent Living Plan

By June 2009, youth will access community resources.

Skills/Behaviors:

- Obtains a Birth Certificate, picture I.D. and Social Security card
- Identifies names, addresses and telephone numbers of community agencies such as health clinics, employment agencies, public assistance/housing agencies, motor vehicle division
- Knows who to contact if lost, frightened, depressed, anxious, sick, injured, out of food and money, utilities disconnected, or heat goes out
- Demonstrates knowledge of community emergency medical response system
- Locates resources in the telephone book yellow pages, at the library and online
- Knows the location of the post office and how to use it
- Knows where and how to register for selective service
- Knows how to register to vote, how and where to go to vote
- Knows the location of the nearest parks, banks, and laundromats
- Uses newspaper ads to locate employment, housing or services
- Identifies public transportation options
- Demonstrates knowledge of community legal services
- Knows how to contact a local church of their religious affiliation
- Knows how to contact siblings and other birth relatives.

See Appendix F for Family and Community Connections Information and Resources

I. GATHERING ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

These Web sites describe how to get the documents youth will need in order to apply for employment and obtain housing. Some documents, such as immunization records or Birth Certificates can be difficult to obtain, so youth will often need help in writing to request documents or paying fees. Check out these websites for help:

Federal Identity and employment eligibility requirements:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=31b3ab0a43b5d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=db029c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>

Birth Certificate:

http://doh.dc.gov/doh/cwp/view,a.1371,q.581955,dohNav_GID,1787,dohNav,%7C33120%7C.asp

Social Security Card: <http://www.ssa.gov/> and click on Your Social Security Card Number

Photo Identification or driver's license: <http://www.dmv.org/>

High school or post-secondary academic transcripts: <http://www.ordertranscripts.com>

Immunization record: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/immuniz-records.htm>

Temporary work visa, if not a US citizen: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

Work permit, if needed: <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/labor/>

J. TEACHING YOUTH INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

1. Group Work

Teaching life skills to groups of youth has been a very successful approach in Minnesota and is highly recommended.

- Group work is an efficient use of a youth worker's time, and provides an excellent way for youth to learn and practice social skills.
- Youth enjoy being with their peers, particularly those who share the experience of out-of-home care.
- A successful group provides a safe environment in which youth can share their feelings without fearing that they will be laughed at or ignored.
- As trust is developed in a group, youth can try new things and perhaps not succeed, but know the group will be there for support.
- A group allows youth to share their viewpoints and learn from the experiences of others, and fosters an environment where they can talk openly about their feelings.
- Youth learn to work as part of a group, better appreciating what s/he can contribute.
- A group can provide attainable challenges where all participants win, work together, share accomplishments, overcome risks, and learn problem solving techniques.
- Groups also offer a fun way to learn independent living skills. When youth are having fun, they are involved, motivated, focused and more likely to remember what they learn.

DHS SELF staff offer an annual two-day workshop on how to teach adolescents life skills in a group. Notices of the training are sent to all counties.

The following Web sites offer independent living skills curriculum to use with youth in groups:

- Casey Life Skills: www.caseylifeskills.org
- The National Resource Center for Youth Services: www.nrcys.ou.edu
- Youth Communication: www.youthcomm.org
- Daniel Memorial Institute: www.danielkids.org
- Project Adventure: <http://www.pa.org>
- Social Learning: www.SocialLearning.com/
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.: <http://www.independentlivingresources.com>
- Northwest Media: www.northwestmedia.com/
- Relationship Skills for Teens: <http://www.buildingrelationshipskills.org>
- 4Girls: <http://childrencomefirst.com/4girlsdotcom.shtml>
- Project Butterfly (for girls and young women of African descent): <http://www.projectbutterfly.com/>
- Expanding the Circle (for Native American youth): <http://etc.umn.edu/default.html>

2. One-to-One

Foster parents and other caretakers of youth are the perfect one-to-one life skills instructors for youth because their home can be a learning laboratory to practice skills, and the community is a rich resource of field trips for learning. (See Page 20-22)

Some counties use in-home family service aides or volunteer mentors to work with youth one-to-one.

The Web sites listed above offer curricula that can also be used with individuals. Youth can also be guided through the on-line learning sites listed below.

3. On-Line Learning for Youth

Youth can learn life skills on the computer.

The V Street: Web site is interactive and requires a \$24.00 annual subscription.
<http://www.vstreet.com/login/index.jsp>

Foster Club: <http://fyi3.com> provides a national network, resources and encouragement for youth in foster care to be involved, informed and independent.

Teen Central: <http://teencentral.com> is an anonymous helpline Web site developed by experts in teen counseling and psychology.

Youthhood.org: <http://youthhood.org> has information for youth regarding health, education, social situations and self-advocacy.

Teen Voices: <http://teenvoices.com> is a website for teen and young adult women.

Out Proud: <http://www.oasisjournals.com/> offers information and resources for queer and questioning youth.

Mapping Your Future: <http://mappingyourfuture.org/> has information on planning a career, selecting and paying for school.

Career Voyages: <http://www.careeronestop.org/> includes online videos for various careers.

Next Steps: <http://www.nextsteps.org/nextsteps>

Kids Health: <http://kidshealth.org/teen/> includes information on body, mind, sexual health, food, fitness, drugs, alcohol, diseases, infections, medical conditions, relationships, emotions and staying safe.

4Girls: <http://childrencomefirst.com/4girlsdotcom.shtml> is for girls addressing body, nutrition, mind, relationships, drugs, alcohol, smoking, bullying, safety and their future.

Driver's license: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/Pages/default.aspx> has information on how to get a driver's license, costs, driver's manuals and more.

Buying a car: <http://www.ag.state.nm.us/consumer/cars/CarHandbook/Default.htm> (link does not work)

Metro Transit: <http://www.metrotransit.org/> shows how to use the bus and rail systems in the metro area.

Banking on Our Future: <http://www.bankingonourfuture.org> is a computer game that teaches financial literacy. The middle school level curriculum is appropriate for high school youth as well.

Easy recipes for youth: <http://kidshealth.org/teen/recipes/>

Register to vote online: <https://ssl.capwiz.com/congressorg/e4/nvra>

Project C3: <http://www.c3online.org/> is a searchable database containing resources for youth in central Minnesota and metro area.

K. THE SELF PROGRAM

FEDERAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT LIVING PLANS

The Minnesota Department of Human Services administers the Support for Emancipation and Living Functionally (SELF) program. Federal funds for the program are available through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. Beginning in 2007, SELF funds are available to counties and tribes on a competitive basis. Counties and tribes will be asked to describe a plan for teaching youth the life skills necessary for a successful transition to adulthood.

1. Eligible Youth

Funds may be used to provide services to adolescents ages 14-21 who have the potential to become self-sufficient adults and:

- Are currently in out-of-home placement
- Have been in out-of-home placement any time after age 14.

Placement is defined as one approved by a county social services agency, juvenile or tribal court. This may include relative or kinship placement, foster care, residential treatment, group homes or shelter care.

Services may begin any time after a youth is identified as SELF eligible and may continue up to age 21, regardless of placement status or living situation. Youth who are adopted after age 14 may continue receiving SELF funded services up to age 21. **Youth who will remain in placement until age 18 or completion of high school are the highest priority for SELF funded services.**

2. Use of Funds

Flexibility is the hallmark of the SELF program. Creative use of funds is encouraged so individual needs can be met. While restrictions are minimal, services must promote development of life skills and a successful transition to adulthood. SELF funds should support the implementation of Independent Living Plans.

SELF funds may be used to cover room and board costs only for youth who age out of placement at age 18 or older. These costs may include rent, damage deposits, utilities and telephone installation. The residence must be approved by the agency serving the youth before SELF funds may be used. Agencies serving youth may:

- Make case-by-case decisions about the type, duration and amount of room and board assistance each youth needs
- Require youth receiving room and board assistance to participate in or graduate from a life skills training program
- Determine on a case-by-case basis the level of supervision and case management needed for youth receiving room and board assistance.

See Appendix F for a list of ways SELF funds and community resources have been used successfully by social services staff statewide.

3. Reporting

Counties must enter individual client data into the Social Service Information System (SSIS) for each youth served. A youth is considered served if they have an Independent Living Plan and at least a part of that plan has been carried out. **The client data is entered by opening an Adolescent Living Services (ALS) workgroup in SSIS and completing the SELF Client Report Information screen.** The reporting year for services is September 1 to August 31.

In addition, counties and tribes need to complete a paper SELF Client Data form and send it to DHS for youth served who do not have an open county social services case.

Minnesota Statute (Juvenile Court Act 260C.212 subd.1) requires an Independent Living Plan for a child age 16 or older who is in placement because of a permanency disposition. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following objectives:

- Educational, vocational, or employment planning

- Health care planning and medical coverage
- Transportation including, where appropriate, assisting in obtaining a driver's license
- Money management
- Planning for housing
- Social and recreational skills
- Establishing and maintaining connections with the child's family and community.

The Independent Living Plan form that includes these objectives is in the Social Services Information System (SSIS) as an attachment to the Out-of-Home Placement Plan.

It is also best practice to develop an Independent Living Plan for youth on caseloads who have been reunited with their families. The plan form can also be found in the Adolescent Life Skills (ALS) workgroup in SSIS.

L. EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV'S) FOR POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION

Federal funds for post-secondary education are available for young people who have been in an out-of-home placement. Each year the Department of Human Services will issue Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) to as many as 200 youth formerly in out-of- home placements.

1. Eligible Youth

Youth must be accepted into a post-secondary school or program before applying for an ETV, and must be age 18 to 21 at the time they begin the school or program. In addition, to meet eligibility criteria, they must have:

- Been in a county or tribal, court approved out-of-home placement after age 14, or
- Been adopted at age 16 or older

Youth do not currently need to be working with a county social worker to apply.

2. Deadline

The annual deadline for ETV applications is June 1st. Awards are made for a full academic year, beginning with the fall semester.

3. Use of ETV Funds

ETVs can fund higher education programs that include accredited universities, colleges, community colleges, vocational technical colleges and other programs that prepare students for employment in a recognized occupation. Youth may use ETVs to pay for tuition, books and fees. If the youth is a full-time student, they may also use ETVs for other expenses including:

- On-campus and off-campus room and board
- Transportation
- Child care
- Purchase of a computer.

An ETV cannot exceed \$5,000 per academic year, and youth must also apply for federal and state financial aid. Students can re-apply for each academic year.

Students who are awarded an ETV will be expected to stay in communication with an assigned mentor, submit transcripts each semester, submit documentation of expenses and maintain a 2.0 or higher grade point average.

Detailed information about Education and Training Vouchers and an application form are available at:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_000553 For more information call the Department of Human Services, (651) 296-4471.

M. HOW CAREGIVERS CAN HELP YOUTH PREPARE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Caregivers should be involved in four critical areas as youth transition to adulthood:

- Complete the caretaker section of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment
- Participate in the development and updating of the youth's Independent Living Plan
- Transport youth to independent living skills groups
- Help youth learn the skills they need to complete their Independent Living Plan by teaching them in the home and community.

Caregivers are uniquely situated to teach youth skills in the home on a daily basis. Examples include:

- Meal planning, grocery shopping, dining etiquette
- Cleaning, laundry, home safety.
- Housing expenses and planning for a move
- Using public transportation
- What's involved in getting a driver's license, car and insurance
- Car repairs
- Keeping track of important documents
- Creating a community resource directory
- Banking, credit cards and loans, saving money – planning for large purchases
- Budgeting, spending, comparison shopping
- Personal hygiene
- Relationships and sexuality
- Decision making, setting short and long term goals
- Communication skills
- Finding, getting and keeping a job
- Study skills.

Ready, Set, Fly! - A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills was developed by foster/adoptive parents and teens. It suggests activities and teachable moments for caregivers to use in the home to build the independent living skills of youth on a one-to-one basis. Ready, Set, Fly! is free and can be printed from the following Web site: <http://www.caseylifeskills.org> Click on resources.

Training for Foster Parents.

Call the Child Welfare Training System Area Manager to arrange for 12 hours of training in the community. The curriculum is entitled "Leaving Home Again: A Foster Parent Guide to Helping Youth in Care Transition to a Healthy Adulthood."

Reproduce for Caregivers

For Youth Workers and Caregivers: Self-Sufficiency Preparation Check List

When working with a youth who is 16 years old or older, this checklist can be a good place to start in helping them become more self-sufficient. Answer each question with a "Y;" for yes and an "N" for no for each task. The "no" answers will provide a list of specific tasks or areas of training that need to be addressed.

Youth's Name _____ Date _____

50 Things You Can Do to Help Someone Get Ready for Independent Living!

(Adapted from New Life Youth Services, Cincinnati, Ohio)

1. Help them get a certified copy of their Birth Certificate.
2. Help them get a Social Security card.
3. Enroll them in an education program in which they can succeed.
4. Explore any medical insurance benefits a youth is eligible for.
5. Help them get a state issued photo identification card.
6. Help get copies of medical and dental records.
7. Help youth put together a life book.
8. Start a Records Book that will contain the youth's important records.
9. Help them open a bank account.
10. Teach them how to write and cash a check.
11. Take the youth for a dental check-up. Develop a relationship with a dentist who would be willing to see the youth when they are on their own.
12. Take the youth for a physical. Develop a relationship with a doctor who would be willing to see the youth when they are on their own.
13. Help them renew contact with family members.
14. Help them develop at least one friendship.
15. Line them up with a good counselor.
16. Show them some new ways to have fun.
17. Take them to join a local recreation center.
18. Connect them with a church group, 4-H, Scouting, extracurricular activities in school.
19. Help them find a job or a better paying job.
20. Make sure they really understand birth control.
21. Show them the best place to shop for food, clothing, furniture, etc.
22. Help them learn how to look up possible resources in the phone book and Internet.
23. Help them through an independent living skills workbook.
24. Teach them how to read a map. Give the youth a map of the community.
25. Take them on a tour of the community.
26. Teach them how to use the public transportation and read schedules.
27. Buy the youth an alarm clock and teach them how to use it.
28. Help the youth get a library card and show them how to use it.
29. Help them get a driver's license and price insurance.
30. Role-play contacts with police, bank tellers, doctors, property owners, etc.
31. Role-play job interviews.
32. Help them put together a resume and a fact sheet with information needed for filling out applications.

33. Make a list of important telephone numbers.
34. Teach them how to cook five good meals.
35. Teach them how to store food.
36. Teach them how to use coupons and comparison shop.
37. Teach them how to read a paycheck stub.
38. Teach them how to use an oven and microwave.
39. Teach them how to clean a kitchen and bathroom thoroughly
40. Take them to a session of adult court, e.g. traffic, criminal
41. Teach them how to find and retain a lawyer and when one is needed.
42. Help them to understand a lease or rental agreement.
43. Teach them how to do, or at least get help with, yearly tax return forms.
44. Teach them how to write a letter and use the post office.
45. Help them develop good telephone communication skills.
46. Explain to them tenant and property owner rights.
47. Teach them how to find a safe, affordable place to live.
48. Work with them on how to budget and manage finances.
49. Work with them on how to find and get along with a roommate.
50. Talk to them often about their feelings, and about what it might be like to live on their own.

HOW CAREGIVERS CAN HELP ADOLESCENTS MEET THEIR NEEDS

Youth need to feel a sense of safety and structure-How caregivers can help:

- Be emotionally, physically and sexually safe for the youth in your home.
- Compliance with rules and structure is important, but is not the *purpose* of placement.
- Tell youth directly that they are safe --that adults do not engage in sexual behavior with youth in their home. Literally, have the conversation.
- Be honest with youth regarding decisions being made about them.
- Include them in decisions.
- Help youth talk about how they perceive the system and adults' ability to keep them safe.
- Help youth learn how to advocate for themselves.
- Remember that consistent and rigid are not the same thing.

Youth need to experience active participation, group membership and belonging -- How caregivers can help:

- Help youth to articulate the types of relationships they want with various significant people in their lives (family of origin, foster family or extended family/friends).
- Encourage youth to get involved in cultural events in the community.
- Offer to help youth create a Life Book if they don't have one.
- Support participation in clubs/organizations/teams-even if there are concerns about the youth's behavior. Find ways to make it possible to participate.

Youth need to develop self-worth through meaningful contributions -- How caregivers can help:

- Find opportunities for youth to give back in ways that are of interest to them.
- Look for opportunities for youth to participate in community action/organizing around issues of interest to youth.
- Discuss the purpose of give back -- help youth connect it to feeling of value to others
- Explicitly verbalize times they make a contribution.
- Non-stop, over-the-top enthusiasm about youths' capacity to contribute in meaningful ways.

Youth need to discover self, gain independence, and gain control over their life -- How caregivers can help:

- Do not use the threat of kicking a youth out of the home as a means of enforcing compliance
- Share power
- Talk with youth, not about them or at them
- Don't over-react to experimentation
- Remember that weird hair or funky clothes are not a reflection on the caregiver or the quality of parenting
- Talk with youth about what control over one's life looks like in the adult world.

Youth need to develop significant, quality relationships with peers and at least one adult -- How caregivers can help:

- Let youth see a variety of people.
- Talk honestly with youth about the pros and cons of their various friends.
- Encourage involvement of other adults besides your elf in the lives of youth.
- Talk with youth about what real friendships look like.
- Seek creative ways to let youth be in contact with kids who are viewed as a bad influence. Chances are that those youth are also looking for some structure and an interested, available adult.
- Connect youth with a mentor.

Youth need to discuss conflicting values and form their own -- How caregivers can help:

- Talk openly with youth, especially in cross-cultural placements, about different world views.
- Make a point to ask youth how they feel about areas where values seem to be different – encourage them to explain how they arrived at their thinking and share personal values or beliefs with them.
- Help youth to learn how to think critically about issues outside themselves.
- Help them to see that there are many ways to walk through the world, and that their world view is shaped by their own, unique experiences.
- Become educated about sexuality and gender so that information can be conveyed to youth.

Youth need to feel pride of competence and mastery -- How caregivers can help:

- Encourage, encourage, encourage
- Provide rides
- Teach basic life skills in the home
- Expose youth to music and the arts.

Youth need to expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible -- How caregivers can help:

- Role model how to have fun
- Engage in a variety of activities
- Discuss the idea of positive views of the future
- Help them tell their stories from a point of view of resiliency
- Help them understand the idea of HOPE.