

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**  
**Workforce Policy and Service Delivery Branch**  
**Technical Assistance Bulletin 237**

**Program:** All Programs

**Subject:** Coordination of Services to Foster Youth

**Date:** April 19, 2011

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This Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with information on working with foster youth, specifically:

- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Transitional Living Services Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program collaboration;
- foster youth transition center (transition center) collaboration;
- colocation opportunities; and
- Workforce Solutions Office services.

Texas Family Code §264.121 requires DFPS and Boards to jointly develop and adopt a memorandum of understanding (MOU) addressing the unique challenges facing former foster youth and foster youth under DFPS conservatorship when they transition to independent living. The purpose of the MOU is to define the responsibilities of Boards and DFPS in:

- furthering the objectives of the DFPS PAL program;
- ensuring that services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of foster and former foster youth; and
- making referrals, where feasible and necessary, for short-term housing.

WD Letter 31-06, issued April 27, 2006, and entitled “Local Memoranda of Understanding with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to Serve Foster Youth,” provides Boards with an MOU template and guidance on the required elements for collaboration with DFPS. The MOU sets forth the cooperative actions to be taken by Boards and DFPS to formalize processes, prioritize employment and training efforts, provide access to current labor market information, and other collaborative components designed to yield positive outcomes for current and former foster youth transitioning to independent living. The WD Letter also gives Boards local flexibility to amend the MOU with regional DFPS offices in writing and by mutual consent of both parties at any time.

WD Letter 04-09, Change 3, issued January 20, 2010, and entitled “Priority of Service for Eligible Veterans and Eligible Foster Youth: *Update*,” provides Boards with information and guidance on applying priority of service to eligible foster youth for all new and existing qualified job training programs.

Boards are encouraged to familiarize themselves with programs designed to help foster youth and determine how they can best collaborate with those programs, including the following.

## **DFPS Transitional Living Services**

DFPS Transitional Living Services provide a systemic and integrated approach to transition planning, services, and benefits that affect both older youth in foster care and those who have aged out of foster care. Transitional Living Services are multipurpose, available to youth ages 14 to 23, and include independent life skills training, medical services and benefits, higher education benefits, transition planning, Circles of Support, and programs to extend foster care or for youth to return to foster care.

PAL—part of the DFPS Transitional Living Services program—assists older youth in foster care to prepare for departure and transition from DFPS care and support. Support services and benefits are provided to eligible youth up to age 21 to help them become self-sufficient, productive adults.

PAL staff provides expert knowledge of DFPS Transitional Living Services and other resources for transitioning youth. PAL staff (i.e., PAL contract providers or DFPS PAL staff members) coordinates and provides PAL services to eligible youth in each local workforce development area (workforce area).

PAL services include the following:

- Independent Living Skills Assessment
  - Assesses strengths and needs in life skills attainment
  - Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment ([www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org))
  - Provided to youth starting at age 16 and prior to PAL life skills training classes
  - Assessed strengths and needs are incorporated into the DFPS Child's Plan of Service and transition planning
  
- Life Skills Training Classes—Five hours of training in six core areas to include recommended homework activities in:
  - Health and Safety
  - Housing and Transportation
  - Job Readiness
  - Financial Management
  - Life Decisions/Responsibility
  - Personal/Social Decisions
  
- Life Skills Independent Study Guide
  - Provided in lieu of PAL life skills training classes when:
    - ◆ youth is a danger to self or others;
    - ◆ youth's medical condition precludes formal class attendance; or
    - ◆ no formal classes can be provided before a youth's planned discharge from foster care.
  - Must be preapproved by DFPS PAL staff

- Transitional Living Allowance
  - Up to \$1,000 distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month
  - For youth who complete PAL life skills training
  - Used for initial start-up costs associated with living as an adult
  
- Optional Services—when regional funds are available, covers items such as:
  - driver’s education
  - high school expenses
  - obtainment of GED
  
- Aftercare Room and Board
  - Based on need and eligibility
  - Youth must have aged out of DFPS foster care between 18–21
  - Up to \$500 per month, but not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per youth up to age 21
  - Can cover rent, utilities, rent deposits, utility deposits, and food
  
- Aftercare Case Management Services
  - Helps youth with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination
  - Required for provision of Aftercare Room and Board assistance

Boards are encouraged to coordinate services with DFPS PAL staff and to find out more information about services provided in their workforce areas. An overlay map showing workforce areas and DFPS service regions is provided in Attachment 1.

Additionally, an updated roster of lead PAL staff covering individual workforce areas can be found at:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/PAL\\_coordinators.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp)

### **Foster Youth Transition Centers**

Transition centers provide an array of comprehensive services through a one-stop approach that includes access and referrals to community partners and resources. Serving the diverse needs of older youth, ages 15½ to 25, in the process of aging out or who have aged out of foster care, transition centers provide a central clearinghouse where all services needed by foster youth are available to help them make a successful transition from foster care to independence.

Services at transition centers can include, but are not limited to:

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|--|--|
| • Case management                        | • Access to technology including Internet and phone services |
| • PAL                                    | • Food   |
| • Employment readiness                   | • Hygiene products   |
| • Job search classes and assistance      | • Personal needs   |
| • Career exploration                     | • Skill building   |
| • Mentoring                              | • Legal assistance   |
| • Housing assistance                     | • A sense of community                                       |
| • GED classes, test prep, and FAFSA help |  |
| • Foster care alumni social activities   |  |

## **Colocation Opportunities**

Boards are encouraged to:

- collaborate with transition center directors to ensure that opportunities exist to colocate staff in Workforce Solutions Offices to provide the best possible service to foster youth; and
- remind Workforce Solutions Offices staff of the services, referrals, and training opportunities available to foster youth.

Additionally, Boards can determine the most appropriate staff to colocate at transition centers. Services provided by colocated staff can include Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth and basic labor exchange services, and youth services provided by other community partners. Attachment 2 provides information on the 10 transition centers currently operating in Texas.

## **Workforce Solutions Office Services**

Foster youth are eligible to receive certain job search services through Workforce Solutions Offices. These services can include, but are not limited to:

- job search assistance;
- résumé preparation;
- access to information, tools, and room resources; and
- access to WorkInTexas.com.

Workforce Solutions Office staff determines if foster youth are eligible for WIA resources. WIA-funded activities for youth encourage the establishment of educational and career goals and facilitate progress toward those goals. Activities youth can receive through WIA include, but are not limited to:

- tutoring;
- study skills training;
- summer employment; and
- paid and unpaid work experience.

Under most circumstances, foster youth are automatically eligible for these WIA activities, as required by WD Letter 31-04, issued August 25, 2004, and entitled “Serving Foster Care Youth.” However, all individuals are required to provide documentation of eligibility before receiving WIA services. In an effort to help foster youth navigate the documentation process, a Foster Youth WIA Eligibility Documentation Log is included as Attachment 3.

Basic WIA foster youth eligibility requirements are that participants:

- be authorized to work in the United States;
- meet military Selective Service registration requirements (males only);\*
- be between ages 14–21; and
- qualify as low-income individuals.\*\*

\* A male youth who turns 18 while enrolled in WIA must complete his military Selective Service registration 30 days prior to or 30 days after his 18th birthday to continue receiving WIA services.

\*\* A foster youth meets the low-income requirement so long as a court order exists and the state or local government makes payments on the youth's behalf. A foster youth is defined as an individual who is under 22 years of age for whom the state or local government has been appointed managing conservator prior to his or her 18th birthday according to Texas Family Code §264.101(a-1) and §264.101(d).

### **Helpful Links**

PAL information:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp)

PAL policy:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_6550.jsp#CPS\\_6550](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6550.jsp#CPS_6550)

Youth resources:

<http://www.texasyouthconnection.org>

Direct inquiries regarding this TA Bulletin to [wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us).