

Independent Living

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Policy : 700.0200

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The Department of Children, Youth and Families, in compliance with federal law [42 U.S.C. 677§ (2)(d) (1-7)], is responsible to assist youth in out-of-home placement, ages 16 and above, to become self-sufficient as they prepare for adulthood. Youth are strongly encouraged to assume increasing levels of responsibility and join in partnerships with the Department in their preparation towards self-sufficiency. Independent living preparation is viewed as a mutual responsibility of the youth and his/her service team, which includes Department staff, family and/or primary caregivers and other individuals involved in the care and treatment of the youth. Youth are afforded assessment, instruction and preparation for eventual independence in a manner which respects their individual and cultural differences.

No youth should leave the Department's care to independence until reasonable efforts have been made to prepare the youth for the transition toward a self-sufficient and productive adult life. Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 14-1-6 also requires the Department to provide the Family Court with a discharge plan outlining transition services afforded to youth in placement or an explanation as to the reason why services were not offered prior to discharge or emancipation.

The Department has designed four tools to assess independent living skills and assist youth with the transition to adulthood. For all youth age 16 and above who are in out of home placement, the Family Services Caseworker must complete with the youth a Transitional Living Plan that is developed at the time of the Administrative Review and updated with the Case Plan. Youth who are in contracted placements will also have an Independent Living Assessment completed within six months of their sixteenth birthday by staff at the contracted placement. The Department also offers youth in out of home placement, age 16 or older, the opportunity to participate in a Life Skills Instruction curriculum. In addition, youth, age 16 or older, must have a Discharge Plan developed by the Family Services Caseworker with input from the youth at least six months prior to the anticipated date of discharge from the Department's care.

Related Procedure

[Independent Living Skills Assessment Tools](#)

1. A Discharge Plan is developed by the Family Services Caseworker, with input from the youth, for each youth, age 16 or older, in out-of-home placement six months prior to the anticipated discharge date from DCYF care. The Discharge Plan is located in RICHIST as a part of the Case Plan.
2. The Discharge Plan addresses minimal standards in areas essential to the youth's successful transition out of the Department's care including housing, financial support, health care, education/vocation planning, procurement of necessary documents, and personal community support systems.
3. A youth will only be discharged from the Department's care following documented efforts to meet the provisions specified in his/her Discharge Plan. A copy of the Discharge Plan is included in the case record.
4. The Family Court may request a copy of the Discharge Plan prior to a decision to terminate the Department's legal involvement with a youth.