


To: DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Services Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: Independent Living Program Restructure

PURPOSE

The intent of this memo is to notify affected child welfare agencies of the regional Transition Resource Agencies that have been awarded the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) contracts to serve eligible youth in CFCIP regions 2 and 6 beginning January 1, 2016. This memo also serves to clarify the role CW Transition Resource Agencies (TRA) will play in transitioning youth to independence, the case transition process and a detailed timeline for implementation.

BACKGROUND

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) was created in 1999 with passage of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (section 477 (b)(3)(A) of the Social Security Act), referred to as the Chafee Act. The intent of the legislation is to ensure that youth likely to remain in out of home care until 18 years of age and those who age out are identified, assessed and assisted in making a successful transition to self-sufficiency.

While life-skills development occurs at all ages and stages of care, formalized plans to address life skills development and future planning are required as part of the permanency planning process beginning at 14 years of age (under new federal law). Plans are developed by the child welfare (CW) agency with the active participation of the youth and supportive adults. The plan must describe the youth's goals along with services, activities and individuals who will assist the youth in gaining developmentally appropriate life skill experiences to reach their goals. For youth who are in care at age 17 ½, the CW agency is responsible for creating an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan with the youth and supportive adults to address specific transition needs such as housing, health care, education, and income, which then becomes part of the Permanency Plan at that time, and must be implemented in the 90 days prior to youth leaving OHC (Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act).

CFCIP allocations are currently provided to 71 counties, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW), and three tribes to provide IL services to all eligible youth placed in OHC and those that age out of care up to age 21 as part of the annual child welfare contract. Inconsistent application of the program requirements across the state for aged out youth, poor outcomes, inadequate youth engagement and inefficient use of funds necessitated a review of policies and practice for services under the Chafee Act ultimately leading to the new regional model for IL services for aged out youth. As a result, DCF is

shifting the focus of funding to the aged out population. Funding will focus on building and providing broader support through contracting CFCIP funds to regional Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) responsible for local/region-wide resource development, linkages and direct services to eligible youth ages 18-21 no longer in care, as well as support CW agencies in their efforts to serve youth still in care, providing expertise and linkages to resources when needed.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

The first phase of the roll-out to the regional model will take place January 1, 2016 in regions 2 and 6 (see Attachment A for regional boundaries). The contracts to serve as lead agency for the regions have been awarded to Bay Area Workforce Development Board for region 2 and Family and Children's Center for region 6.

To meet the targeted outcomes of: increased youth with sustainable income, housing, health, employment, education and connections to caring adults, the TRAs are charged with the following:

- A. **Creation of a regional network** for youth through developing a system of expertise and local partnerships with service agencies, educational institutions, CW agencies, tribes and employers to address needs related to employment, education, housing, health, mentoring, finances, and other areas of self-sufficiency. TRAs will support a regional Youth Advisory Council and incorporate meaningful youth input into program design.
- B. **Resource development and linkages to assist counties and tribes** serving youth in out-of-home care placements ages 14 – 21 (including extended care youth) which includes connecting youth to appropriate services and providing technical assistance such as connections to employment opportunities. Partner with CW agencies and/or tribes on transition planning and action items on the Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan. Upon request from a county or tribal agency, provide individual-specific job development and consultation to facilitate employment for youth 15 and older.
- C. **Direct services for eligible youth age 18 to 21 (23 for ETV recipients)** related to housing, employment, mentoring, youth engagement, positive youth development and health care services as needed and directed by each youth and administer Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds for youth pursuing postsecondary education.

As a result, Transition Resource Agencies (TRA) will:

- Develop community resources responsive to youth needs;
- Be involved in creation of the ILTD; working with the CW team and tribe to complete the needed tasks;
- Assist youth in attaining their independent living goals, particularly those related to life-long connections, housing, education, employment and health by matching them to services and facilitate linkages;
- Connect youth to Adult Services providers;
- Engage youth, including eligible youth not previously served;
- Provide financial assistance; and
- Undertake other responsibilities as outlined in the Chafee Act and CFCIP for the eligible and aged out population related to transition support.

CW agencies will continue to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for youth while placed in OHC through creating opportunities for youth to gain the life skills needed to prepare them for the transition to adulthood when the time comes (Attachment B and C).

Both CW agencies and TRA should identify a designated contact person for DCF to provide communication related to older youth.

Case Transition Process

CW agencies in the two TRA regions will be involved in the transitioning of services to the TRA and will be kept informed of program developments. TRAs will have a start-up period from September – December 2015 and will begin direct services in January, 2016.

Transitioning Cases: There are two populations of youth affected that must be transitioned to the TRAs:
 1) Eligible youth no longer in care ages 18-21 (or 23 if receiving ETV or Scholarship funding).
 2) All youth aged 17 ½ or older who are likely to age out of care or are eligible for extended out-of-home care placement.

The transition of both groups will follow the case transition policy as outlined in Attachment: D and follow the timeline set forth in this memo.

Implementation Timeline

Date	Activity
September 8, 2015	Estimated TRA contract begin date
September – December 2015	TRAs attend DCF Convening and Training meetings.
November 3, 2015	Region 2 counties, tribes and TRA participate in DCF sponsored convening and planning meeting. (Detailed information to follow.)
November 10, 2015	Region 6 counties, tribes and TRA participate in DCF sponsored convening and planning meeting (Detailed information to follow.)
December 1, 2015 - January 31, 2016	CW agencies facilitate Case Transition Staffing for eligible youth not in OHC through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing identifying information to TRA; - Ensuring all contact and other information is updated on the youth’s IL page (in eWiSACWIS) with an end date for services; - At least one staffing with TRA and youth completed.
January 2016	CW agencies collaborate with TRAs on development of ILTD with youth beginning at age 17 ½ by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing identifying information to TRA and determine a mutually agreed upon team meeting date; - TRA participation in ILTD team meetings and activities. When a case has been completely transitioned to TRA, the TRA will indicate that it is now the provider of services on the youth’s IL page in eWiSACWIS.
April 2016	TRA and DCF Status Meeting

eWiSACWIS DOCUMENTATION

CW agencies, are responsible for making sure that contact information for youth in OHC is documented accurately in the eWiSACWIS system including address, phone and email updated every six months. Up to date contact information and independent living plans (closing out old goals and services, adding new ones as applicable on youth's IL page/services tab) in the system will make for a smooth transition for youth to the TRAs.

For those youth in OHC, when the youth turns 17 ½ the primary caseworker, the Independent Living Coordinator and TRA will receive a message stating that the youth is about to age out and a meeting should be set up to involve the regional agency in development of the ILTD. As part of the ILTD team, TRAs will have a role in identified activities which will be documented on the ILTD. Once the youth is discharged from care, and the appropriate case transition activities have occurred, the TRA begins providing services. The TRA will check the corresponding box on the youth's IL page, triggering messages related to services to be sent to the TRA. See the Quick Reference Guide, <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/quick-reference-guides/planning/independent-living.pdf> for details.

Allocations

CW agencies in TRA regions 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 will continue to receive CFCIP and ETV funding in CY 2016 to serve all eligible youth in their jurisdictions. Additional regional competitions will be as follows. TRA regions 1, 4, 5 and 7 will be under contract in September 2016 for a January 2017 start date. TRA 3 will be under contract in September 2017 for a January 2018 start date.

Tribal agencies maintain the ability to apply for CFCIP and ETV funds directly through DCF or the Administration for Children and Families annually.

ACTION SUMMARY

Beginning January 1, 2016 CFCIP and ETV services will be restructured to a regional service delivery system beginning in two regions. Consequently, program funding will be shifted, from CW agencies in regions 2 and 6 to the Transition Resource Agency (TRA) for development of transition resources and facilitating linkages for CW agencies, while providing an array of supports, services and linkages for youth aging out of care.

County CW agencies in TRA regions 2 and 6 (Attachment A) will be responsible for ensuring case transition activities are completed as directed in Attachment C.

Central office contacts for region-specific technical assistance:

Region 2, Youth Services Section Manager 608-422-6993

Region 6: Prevention and Intervention Policy Coordinator, Bureau of Youth Services 608-422-6991.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Youth Services Section Manager
Division of Safety and Permanence
Bureau of Youth Services
608-422-6993
ILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal>

Attachments:

Region map

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/independentliving>

Independent Living Roles and Responsibilities

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/il/pdf/il-roles.pdf>

Independent Living Services Flow Chart

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/il/pdf/il-flowchart.pdf>

Independent Living Case Transition Process

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/il/pdf/il-casetransition.pdf>

eWiSACWIS Quick Reference Guide

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/il-service-categories>