

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs 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 Updates**

PURPOSE

This memo provides the following information regarding the state's Independent Living (IL) program:

- a summary of additional changes resulting from the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act;
- a summary of IL related eWiSACWIS changes and information about an upcoming training;
- an explanation of structural changes made to the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, including consolidation of the DCF Scholarship with ETV under the new "Brighter Star" program; and,
- a link to a resource for workers and youth regarding accessing funding to support the youth's post-secondary education.

BACKGROUND

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act lowered the age that youth were to receive a copy of their credit reports from 16 to 14. This required modifications to the Ongoing Standards, Permanency Plan, and the credit check process. In addition, a simplified way to complete credit remediation was developed by the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. After piloting the process with other willing counties, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has decided to implement the new process. The new process will save time for both DCF and county staff.

Regional Independent Living (IL) summits began in 2017 and produced feedback from county child welfare workers and Transition Resource Agency (TRA) staff regarding their experiences supporting youth and young adults as they transition to adulthood. Some of the feedback focused specifically on the ways eWiSACWIS enhances or inhibits that support. In order to respond to the feedback provided, DCF staff pursued several eWiSACWIS changes. All changes are meant to facilitate greater communication between county and regional staff, and support a continuum of service delivery to youth 14 and older.

Finally, the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transitions to Adulthood designates ETV funds to support youth eligible for IL services who are pursuing postsecondary education at an accredited institution. Youth are eligible to receive up to \$5000 per academic year until age 23 or a maximum of five years, whichever occurs first, if they meet the school type and academic requirements. In 2018, DCF partnered with stakeholders to examine the DCF Scholarship and ETV purpose. Based on recommendations from the workgroup, the ETV program has been restructured and rebranded.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Credit Check

County workers will notice the following changes for credit checks:

1. The Permanency Plan now states, "A youth is eligible for Independent Living Services when in Out-of-Home Care for six months after the age of 14." The age used to be 16.
2. Within the Placement tab in eWiSACWIS, the question pertaining to the annual credit report will also reflect the age change from 16 to 14 and state, "If 14 years or older, was the youth provided with a copy of his/her credit report?"
3. Workers will receive email communication from Maximus informing them that credit checks have been completed for children and youth in out-of-home care. This communication previously came from a DCF employee.
4. Workers will receive new guidance on how to remediate credit if activity has been found. This guidance will continue to be attached to the email received.
5. Credit reports will now be uploaded by Maximus staff into eWiSACWIS. The email sent to workers will explain how to locate the reports.

A training on the credit check process is being produced by the WCWPDS and DCF staff, with release intended prior to the fall 2019 credit check.

eWiSACWIS

The February eWiSACWIS release will include several changes pertaining to IL. A summary of the changes, "Changes to eWiSACWIS Independent Living Page", including details regarding why the changes were made, can be found on the Independent Living Worker Information web page (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/il>) under Resources and Training.

DCF staff will also provide an overview of the changes on **February 26 from 1:00-2:30pm**. Those interested in hearing more about the changes and/or having the opportunity to ask additional questions can participate via Skype for business by clicking on the following link at the time of the presentation: <https://meet.lync.com/wigov-wisconsin/kelseyr.hill/TJFF1BM9>. Those joining via Skype must also join the conference line for audio purposes. Those who do not have Skype technology can simply access the presentation via phone. The presentation will be recorded and the materials will subsequently be posted to the web for access in the future.

Conference Line: 1-877-820-7831 Passcode: 166446#

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

DCF in partnership with youth, Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs), and county staff, participated in a project to streamline a youth's access to and use of ETV funds. Historically, the funds were split amongst several allocations, including ETV funding to TRAs and a separate allocation designated for the DCF Scholarship. The group decided to maintain one funding source that all TRAs can access to support youth in post-secondary education. Moving forward, TRAs will be the point of contact for all ETV funding requests. All funds will continue to go towards expenses related to the youth's education and TRAs will document the youth's financial support in eWiSACWIS.

As a result of the change, a workgroup comprised of stakeholders from county and regional independent living programs, adoptions, Department of Juvenile Corrections, higher education, and youth currently in out-of-home care was convened to create resources explaining the new process and eligibility. Members of the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council were charged with rebranding the funds, which they renamed "Brighter Star". The document created to explain Brighter Star funding is located on the DCF website <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/brighterstar-etv.pdf> and the "Paying for College" web page has also been updated to reflect the changes. <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/college>

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MEMO WEB SITE:

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