

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL		
	Chapter:	(13) Independent Living Program	Effective Date: November 2014
	Policy Title:	Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS)	
	Policy Number:	13.9	Previous Policy #: 1012.6 1012.13

CODES/REFERENCES

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169) as incorporated in the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C § 677 and amended in 45 CFR 1356)

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall allow youth to participate in the Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) program when the youth reaches 18 years of age while in foster care without achieving permanency, **and**:

1. The youth desires to continue to receive foster care assistance between the ages of 18-21 in order to accomplish specific goals related to their WTLP;
2. The youth is a citizen or permanent legal resident of the United States.

NOTE: If the youth obtain legal immigration status within six (6) months of turning 18 years old, they may become eligible for EYSS. (See policy [13.1 Independent Living Program: Eligibility and Enrollment](#) and policy [10.17 Foster Care: Service Needs of an Immigrant Child](#) for information regarding youth obtaining legal immigration status in applicable circumstances.)

NOTE: Youth may choose to opt out of EYSS upon turning 18 years of age or anytime during their EYSS participation.

DFCS shall allow youth to request to receive EYSS up to six (6) months after the youth's 18th birthday.

DFCS shall provide any youth participating in the EYSS program with a Notice to Opt Out of the Extended Youth Support Services Program form upon the youth's request to opt out of EYSS.

NOTE: The youth must provide at least a **30 calendar day** notice of their intent to opt out of the EYSS program and participate in a Foster Care Exit Meeting **within 90 days** prior to the youth's exit from EYSS. (See policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition From Foster Care](#))

DFCS shall **not** discharge a youth from the EYSS program without the youth's consent, or a thorough review of the circumstances and attempts to resolve any conflicts.

DFCS shall maintain case management activities, which includes but are not limited to quality monthly contacts similar to Every Child Every Month (ECEM) visits, sibling visits, and wellbeing services for youth that are participating in the EYSS program.

NOTE: Alternative face-to-face contact methods may be used for youth participating in the EYSS program; however, a minimum of one face-to-face contact per month with the youth is required. ([See EYSS Practice Guidance](#))

DFCS shall engage the youth and their identified support system when developing case management activities and contact standards for youth participating in the EYSS program.

DFCS shall require a waiver for youth to continue to receive Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) for up to six months beyond their 21st birthday. The waiver shall be requested in writing by the youth no later than 90 calendar days prior to the youth's 21st birthday and approved by the legal County Director for submission to the Division Director/Designee. Final approval of the waiver will be based upon:

1. The youth's individual needs;
2. Current circumstances;
3. Available supports;
4. Educational goals; and
5. Discharge plan.

NOTE: Funding support is based on financial need and funding availability.

PROCEDURES

Within 90 calendar days of a youth in foster care turning 17 years of age and **within 90 days** prior to the youth turning 18 years old, as part of the Initial Transition Planning Meeting(s) and the Foster Care Exit Meeting (See Policy [13.4 Transition From Foster Care](#)), the SSCM will:

1. Formally explain and present the youth with information regarding the opportunity to receive foster care assistance through age 21 as a participant in the Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) program;
2. Inform the youth that if they opt out of foster care upon reaching 18 years of age that they will remain eligible to request to receive foster care assistance as a participant in the EYSS program for up to six (6) months after their 18th birthday.

Participation in EYSS at Age 18

Within 72 hours of a youth in foster care turning 18 years old and is participating in the EYSS program, the SSCM will:

1. Initiate a staffing with the Social Services Supervisor (SSS), Independent Living Specialist (ILS), placement resource and/or Room Board Watchful Oversight (RBWO) provider to discuss:
 - a. The current needs of the youth;
 - b. Any factors that may impact the youth's ability to succeed while participating in the EYSS program, including but not limited to:
 - i. Interest in pursuing post-secondary educational goals;
 - ii. Stability in placement;
 - iii. Ongoing (chronic) behavioral issues;
 - iv. Delinquent behavior; and
 - v. Any mental or physical disabilities that may affect the youth's ability to care for themselves.
2. Provide the youth with the Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) Information & Overview and a copy of the Authorization for Release of Information, and:
 - a. Review the information with the youth and explain the supports available to youth as a participant in the EYSS program;
 - b. Discuss the voluntary nature of the EYSS program and that the youth has the right to

- opt out of the EYSS program at any time;
- c. Explain to the youth how the EYSS program can assist with their independent living goals and that the WTLP will continue to be a part of the program requirements to help them meet their goals. Also explain that they will be able to have freedoms based on their Graduated Independence Plan developed with their caregiver.
 - d. Discuss with the youth the required consent to obtain medical and education records in order for DFCS and the provider to assist and coordinate services. Present the youth with an Authorization for Release of Information, if applicable, for signature and provide the youth with a signed copy of the Authorization for Release of Information.
NOTE: If a youth does not consent to share medical information with DFCS upon turning 18, inform the youth of the need for them to coordinate their medical services directly with the applicable Care Management Organization (CMO).
 - e. Develop case management activities and contact standards in collaboration with the youth and their support system; ([See procedures for monitoring youth participating in the EYSS Program](#))
 - f. Engage the youth regarding the benefits of proactively participating in the EYSS program and cooperating with ongoing monitoring of their participation through monthly face-to-face visits that will focus on their WTLP goals and progress toward independence;
NOTE: For youth participating in EYSS, face-to-face contacts may be completed utilizing available technology such as Skype or FaceTime based on individual circumstances and should be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - g. Inform the youth that if they choose to opt out of the EYSS program they will remain eligible to request to return within six (6) months of turning 18 years old.
NOTE: If the youth is not capable of making decisions on their own due to physical, mental, or emotional disabilities ensure that the DFCS System of Care Unit, Division of Aging/Adult Protective Services, and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) are included in all meetings, staffings or discussions concerning the youth participating in the EYSS program. See policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#)) for information regarding transition planning for such youth.

Within **30 calendar days** of a youth beginning their participation in the EYSS program the SSCM will:

1. Update the youth's legal status page in Georgia SHINES;
2. Complete a Notice of Change (NOC) in Georgia SHINES in order to notify the Revenue Maximization Unit (RevMax); ([See policy 13.10 Independent Living Program: Medical Insurance for Youth 18 Years of Age and Older](#))
3. Update and review with the youth their WTLP and Graduated Independence Plan.

Once participating, if a youth decides to opt out of the EYSS program, the SSCM will:

1. Convene a meeting including the Social Services Supervisor, Independent Living Specialist, the placement resource and/or RBWO provider, the youth and the youth's identified support system to attempt to resolve the issue(s) that may be influencing the youth's decision to opt out of EYSS;
2. If the issues cannot be resolved, and he/she still wishes to no longer participate in the EYSS program, the County Department will submit notice to the State ILP Manager/Designee of the youth's intent to opt out of the EYSS program along with the

specific reasons and resolutions attempted with the youth within **five (5) calendar days** of the meeting;

3. Remind the youth that he or she will remain eligible to request to participate in the EYSS program up to six (6) months after they turn 18 years old.
4. The County Department will inform the youth of his/her responsibilities of opting out of the EYSS program during the meeting with the youth, which include:
 - a. Providing a 30-day written notice to DFCS informing of the intent to discontinue participation in the EYSS program;
 - b. Signing the Notice to Opt Out of Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) Program;
 - c. Informing them about Post Foster Care services.
5. Participation in a Foster Care Exit Meeting in order to assist the youth with transition planning prior to exiting EYSS.
6. Initiate the Foster Care Exit Meeting if the youth decides to opt out of EYSS despite efforts to resolve issues. (See policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition from Foster Care](#))

Youth Who Opt Out of Foster Care at Age 18 or Thereafter

If a youth informs DFCS of their decision to opt out of EYSS prior to and at age 18 despite efforts to engage youth in the benefits of EYSS, the SSCM will:

1. Inform the youth that if they choose to opt out of continued foster care assistance by not participating the EYSS program at that time that they will remain eligible to request to participate in the EYSS program up to six (6) months after turning 18 years old;
 2. Present the youth with the Notice to Opt Out of Extended Youth Services (EYSS) Program on their 18th birthday;
 2. Request the youth provide at minimum the following information:
 - a. Where they will be living (address, household members etc.)
 - b. A valid contact method such as cell phone number, email address, etc.;
 - c. Emergency contacts including name, addresses and telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.;
 - d. Plans for Education, Medical, and Health needs to be met ongoing.
 4. Document the youth's transition plans in the log of contacts in Georgia SHINES;
 5. Have the Notice to Opt Out of Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) Program form signed by the youth and upload the form into Georgia SHINES external documentation;
- NOTE:** If the youth opts out of EYSS, participation a Foster Care Exit Meeting must be conducted **within 90 days prior** to the youth's eventual exit from EYSS. (See policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition From Foster Care](#))
6. Inform the youth about Post Foster Care services.

Youth Who Have Previously Opted Out Request to Participate in the EYSS Program Within Six Months of Turning 18 Years Old

Within **5 calendar days** of the youth's request, the SSCM or ILS will:

1. Assess the youth's request to participate in the EYSS program with the SSS and County Director/Designee to determine if the EYSS program is appropriate for the youth based on:
 - a. The youth's current living situation;
 - b. Employment/Income;
 - c. Behavioral or mental health issues;
 - d. Legal issues;

- e. Available appropriate support system;
 - f. Permanency status; and
 - g. Any other relevant factors noted based on the youth's individual status.
2. Inform the youth verbally **within 24 hours** of the decision (approval or denial) and request a face-to-face meeting with the youth;
 3. Complete a letter **within 5 calendar days** of the determination to inform them of the decision (approval or denial);
 4. If approved, discuss with the youth face-to-face the Extended Youth Support Services Information & Overview and request they sign the Authorization for Release Information for access to their Education and Health Records; Provide them with a copy of the ROI;
- NOTE:** If a youth does not consent to share medical information with DFCS, inform the youth of the need for them to coordinate their medical services directly.
5. If approved, contact the Data Integrity Specialist (DIS) and request the youth's most recent Foster Care Child (FCC) stage be re-opened in Georgia SHINES;
 6. Notify the Independent Living Specialist that the youth's request to return to participation in the EYSS program has been approved.

If the County Department determines that the youth is not appropriate to participate in the EYSS program, the County Director/Designee will:

1. Submit a written request to the State ILP Manager/Designee to review the circumstances of the youth's request to participate in the EYSS program within **5 calendar days** of the County Department's decision to deny the youth's request;
2. Inform the youth that their request to participate in the EYSS program has been denied pending a final decision from the State ILP Manager/Designee **within 5 calendar days** of the County Department's initial decision.

The State ILP Manager/Designee will:

1. Review the youth's case record in Georgia SHINES and any other supporting documentation that was used by the County Department in making the initial decision to deny the youth's request;
2. Contact the County Department as needed for additional information;
3. Contact the youth to request any supporting documentation that may validate their request to participate in the EYSS program;
4. Notify the youth and County Department **within 15 calendar** days of the receipt of the County Department's written request of the final decision to allow or not allow the youth to participate in the EYSS program.

Involuntarily Discharging a Youth from Participation in EYSS

If the County Department determines to involuntarily discharge a youth from EYSS, the SSCM will:

1. Schedule a meeting with the youth, the youth's identified support system, Independent Living Specialist, Social Services Supervisor and County Director to discuss the issues that are having a negative impact on the youth continuing to be eligible to participate in the EYSS program.
 - a. If the group is unable to reach a resolution to the issues affecting the youth's EYSS participation, the County Director will submit a request to discharge the youth from participation in the EYSS program to the State ILP Manager/Designee as soon as possible but no later than **five (5) business days** of meeting with the youth.

- b. Document the meeting in Georgia SHINES within 72 hours.
- c. The State ILP Manager will determine and provide the County Department a response in writing regarding the youth's participation in EYSS based on the information submitted by the County Director within **30 calendar days** of receipt of the County Department request to discharge the youth from the EYSS program.

NOTE: EYSS placement and services will continue until a final decision is made by the State Office ILP Manager.

2. If the State ILP Manager disagrees with the County Department's involuntary discharge request, a written response to the County will be provided by the State ILP Manager/Designee of the decision for the youth to continue to participate in EYSS

NOTE: The State ILP Manager's decision is final.

3. If the State ILP Manager agrees with the County Department's decision, upon receipt of the written response from the State ILP Manager, the County Department will:
 - a. Provide the youth with **a 30-day written notice** of the intent to discharge the youth from the EYSS program, including:
 - i. A description of the action being taken;
 - ii. The reasons the youth is being discharged involuntarily from participation in the EYSS program.
 - b. Schedule a Foster Care Exit Meeting to assist the youth with transition planning. (See policy [13.4 Independent Living Program: Transition From Foster Care](#))

Youth Requesting EYSS Beyond Age 21

A youth may continue receiving EYSS services for up to six (6) months beyond his or her 21st birthday **only** with an approved waiver by the legal County Director and the DFCS Division Director/Designee. In order to request EYSS services beyond age 21 the youth must submit a written request to the County Department **at least 90 calendar days** prior to the youth's 21st birthday. The request from the youth should include:

1. Individuals that are a part of the youth's support system;
2. Specific reasons why he or she is requesting to continue EYSS; and
3. The goals the youth hopes to achieve within the extended six months of EYSS.

Within 5 business days of receipt of the request from the youth the County Director/Designee will:

1. Review the waiver request and forward to the Division Director/Designee;
2. Provide the youth with a written acknowledgement of his or her request to continue to participate in the EYSS program beyond 21; and
3. Begin coordinating the youth's identified support system to develop a timeline for the youth to discontinue participation in the EYSS program and transition to independence.

Within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the waiver request, the Division Director/Designee will:

1. Review the waiver request;
2. Contact the youth and/or request any other supporting documentation (as needed);
3. Provide the County Department with a written response approving or denying the waiver request.

NOTE: Funding support is based on financial need and funding availability.

Monitoring Youth Participating in the EYSS Program

In order to monitor a youth while participating in the EYSS program the SSCM will:

1. Develop case management activities and contact standards **within 30 calendar days** of the youth consenting to participate in the EYSS program in collaboration with the youth and his or her identified support system. Standards and activities should be based on:
 - a. Written Transitional Living Plan (WTLP) goals;
 - b. Graduated Independence Plan goals and activities;
 - c. Needs of the youth;
 - d. Services provided;
 - e. Geographic location and placement of the youth;
 - f. Support system; and
 - g. Resources and technology available to the youth.
2. Contact the youth face-to-face monthly to discuss the youth's participation in the EYSS program, WTLP progress, and Graduated Independence Plan progress; ILP activities etc. ([See Practice Guidance Concerning Face-To Face Visits with EYSS Youth](#))
3. Update the youth's WTLP and Graduated Independence Plan (GIP) every 6 months or sooner if the youth is progressing satisfactorily toward meeting identified goals;
4. Contact individuals identified by the youth as a part of their support system monthly to discuss the youth's behavior, progress toward meeting WTLP and GIP goals, independent living activities, etc.;
5. Conduct a meeting with the youth and the youth's identified support system to resolve any issues concerning the youth's behavior, participation in the EYSS program, or adherence to rules and regulations.

NOTE: The youth must be seen in his or her placement setting at least once per quarter.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Extended Youth Support Services

Participation in the EYSS program begins with a voluntary agreement between the youth and DFCS that allows the youth to continue to receive foster care assistance between the ages of 18-21. While these youth are legally adults, the Extended Youth Support Services program (EYSS) is available to provide youth with additional assistance as they transition to independence. The opportunities and benefits of the EYSS program affords participants with the opportunity to practice the independent living skills they have learned while still having support services available if/when mistakes occur. The goal of the EYSS program is that youth who transition from EYSS are able to support themselves, have an adequate community support system, and possess the skills necessary to maintain their independence long after they reach the age of 21. It is especially important to discuss the benefits and supports available through participation in the EYSS with youth whose permanency plan is another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA) to help them with decision making regarding what to do when they turn age 18.

Contact standards for youth participating in the EYSS program should be developed in collaboration with the youth and the youth's identified support system. Contacts with youth should involve discussions around the youth's WTLP and Graduated Independence Plan (GIP) as well as any independent living events they may have attended and any opportunities they may have had to practice the independent living skills learned. While these visits are not technically Every Child Every Month (ECEM) visits, the quality of the contact and the documentation should mirror ECEM contacts with a similar focus on the youth's safety, permanency, and well-being. Monthly contact is required for youth participating in the EYSS

program. As the youth is legally an adult however, based on an assessment of the youth's maturity, placement location, technology available, WTLP progress, GIP status, and support system, technology may be used to meet monthly contact standards via Skype, FaceTime etc. At least once per quarter the youth must be seen face to face in their placement or independent living setting (dorm, apartment, etc.). During the visit, a meaningful discussion should occur with the youth concerning WTLP progress, GIP goals, and any other ILP services that are being provided. The decision to utilize technology to conduct face-to-face visits with a youth participating in the EYSS program should be made based on the individual, on a case-by-case basis, and may be modified at any time.

Transition Planning

The Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, Public Law (P.L.) 110-351, includes requirements for a transition plan for youth age 18 or older exiting foster care. Transition planning should begin on day one of a child's placement into foster care and occur over the life of the case. Transition plans will help older adolescents in foster care make a successful transition to self-sufficiency. Successful transition planning must consider the youth's age, skills and abilities. It is also important to consider the different needs of older youth versus their younger adolescent counterparts. Therefore, the youth must be actively involved in development and implementation of their transition plan to ensure its success. The transition plan must include specific options on housing, health insurance, education, work force supports, employment services, local opportunities for mentors, and continuing support services. The transition plan must be as detailed as the youth wishes it to be. All identified needs must be resolved or near resolution by the 90th day prior to the youth's eventual exit from care. Successful transition planning for youth receiving Extended Youth Support Services (EYSS) requires early identification of needs, skills and resources; and, implementation of a plan to ensure that all areas of need identified are being addressed in a timely manner.

Youth Deemed Incapable of Making a Decision to participate in EYSS

Some youth exiting foster care after reaching the age of majority have special needs that prevent them from being able to live independently. Such youth may never be able to live on their own, and will need long-term assistance performing activities of daily living. In these situations, DFCS case management staff must collaborate with the DFCS System of Care Unit, the Division of Aging Services (DAS)/Adult Protective Services Section (APS), and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to ensure the needs of this population are met.

A significant amount of advance planning is required to ensure that an individual with special needs is able to transition to an adult legal status without a gap or break in services. Applications for Medicaid waivers or long term adult placements must be discussed well before a youth with special needs reaches the age of 18. DFCS should facilitate multidisciplinary meetings with all stakeholders that could provide assistance to the youth, as well as other service agencies like DAS and DBHDD to develop a plan to ensure the needs of the youth are met after they exit foster care regardless of the youth's participation in the EYSS program. Participation in these meetings should include case managers and supervisors, as well as upper management (e.g., Administrators, Program Directors, etc.). If upper management is not in attendance, it is critical that they be consulted concerning any decisions regarding the youth's future, and apprised of any recommendations made during the meeting(s).

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Authorization for Release of Information](#)

[Extended Youth Support Services \(EYSS\) Information & Overview](#)

[HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices](#)

[Notice to Opt Out of Extended Youth Support Services \(EYSS\) Program](#)