

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**  
**Workforce Policy and Service Delivery Branch**  
**Technical Assistance Bulletin 274**

**Program:** All Programs

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

**Date:** March 28, 2016

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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 MOU's purpose 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 38-11, Change 1, issued December 20, 2011, and entitled "Local Memoranda of Understanding with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to Serve Foster Youth—Update," provides Boards with an updated 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 43-11, issued November 3, 2011, and entitled "Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth," 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 PAL, Medicaid, higher education benefits, transition planning, Circles of Support, programs to extend foster care or for youth to return to foster care, and a Supervised Independent Living program for young adults ages 18 to 21. The Texas Youth Connection, a website designed with input from youth, is a resource for current and former foster youth, stakeholders, and others seeking general tips and information.

PAL assists youth in foster care to transition into adulthood successfully. 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 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
  - Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (Casey Life Skills)
  
- 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
  
- Transitional Living Allowance
  - Up to \$1,000 distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month
  - For youth who complete PAL life skills training
  
- Aftercare Room and Board
  - 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. A map showing DFPS service regions is located at [DFPS Service Regions Map](#).

### **Foster Youth Transition Centers**

Transition centers are independently operated and provide a clearinghouse of one-stop services that include access and referrals to community partners and resources.

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

- Case management
- PAL services
- Employment assistance and job readiness
- Job search classes
- Career exploration
- Mentoring
- Housing assistance
- 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 Office 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 Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth, basic labor exchange services, and youth services provided by other community partners.

### **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.

The Texas Workforce Commission's WIOA Guidelines ([WIOA Guidelines](#)) provide information for Workforce Solutions Office staff to determine if foster youth are eligible for the WIOA Youth program.

WIOA funded activities for youth encourage the establishment of educational and employment goals and facilitate progress toward those goals. Youth can use services available through WIOA, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies
- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate

- Paid and unpaid work experiences:
  - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year
  - Pre-apprenticeship programs
  - Internships and job shadowing
  - On-the-job training opportunities, as defined in WIOA §3(44)
- Occupational skills training, if the Board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA §123
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster
- Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors
- Support services, as defined in WIOA §3(59)
- Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation
- Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth
- Financial literacy education
- Entrepreneurial skills training
- Services that include labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

Boards have the discretion to determine what specific program services a youth participant receives based on each participant's objective assessment and individual service strategy. Boards are not required to provide every program service to all youth participants.

### **Helpful Links**

[PAL Coordinator List](#)

[PAL Program](#)

[PAL Policy](#)

[Youth Resources and Transition Centers](#)

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

### **RESCISSIONS:**

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