

Fostering Futures:

Finding the “Sweet Spot” between Enabling
and Abandoning

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Presentation Outline

Overview of Program

The First Year

Identified issues

Changes and Additions to Guidance

Case Scenarios

KinGAP (special preview only available here!)

Program Overview

Foster care services, including placement, are available to youth aging out of foster care until they turn 21

Eligible population includes youth between the ages of 18 and 21:

- Who turn 18 in foster care, or
- Who were in foster care immediately before being committed to DJJ and who turn 18 while committed

Adoption Assistance and Kinship Guardianship Assistance recipients are also eligible for the extension of assistance

Participants sign a Voluntary Continuing Services and Support Agreement which is an entrustment agreement and is approved by the court

Participants can exit program and re-enter repeatedly until they turn 21

Continuing Eligibility Criteria

Participants must meet at least one of these five criteria to continue to be eligible for the program:

1. Completing secondary education or in a GED program
2. Enrolled in college or a vocational program
3. Attending classes to promote employment or remove barriers to employment
4. Working at least 80 hours per month, or
5. Unable to meet one of the four conditions above due to a documented medical reason

Continuing Eligibility Criteria

Completing secondary education or in a GED program

Includes enrollment in a secondary school, e.g. public high school, alternative high school, private school, adult education classes, program leading to GED, or special education activities described in the IEP

Enrolled in college or a vocational program

May include remedial courses, coursework without formal admission to the institution, attendance at multiple institutions, or correspondence or on-line courses affiliated with a licensed institution

Continuing Eligibility Criteria

Attending classes to promote employment or remove barriers to employment

May include, but is not limited to internships, volunteering, vocational rehabilitation, counseling, driver's education, less than half-time secondary education, or participation in a substance abuse program

Working at least 80 hours per month

May include paid employment full or part time, including paid internships, apprenticeships, or work study programs

Continuing Eligibility Criteria

Unable to meet one of the four conditions above due to a documented medical reason

A medical condition is a short-term or long-term physical health impairment or a mental/emotional or behavioral health, developmental or cognitive disability or impairment.

The youth does not have to be currently receiving or seeking treatment or remediation for the condition.

The condition must be verified by a medical professional as preventing the participant from meeting another criterion.

The First Year +

| Description | # Fostering Futures** | # Eligible** | % Enrolled |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|
| 2017 Cohort | 343 | 529 | 65% |
| 2018 Cohort*** | 192 | 392 | 49% |
| Total | 535 | 921 | 58% |

**Unduplicated Count of FF legal basis that year

***YTD / Jul 2017 - Feb 2018

****Eligible = any client in care at least 1 day during the SFY Cohort Year & whose 18th birthday occurred on or after 7/1 of that SFY & who was still in care on 6/30/2017 OR discharged to emancipation during the year

Trends

The number of placements for youth in Fostering Futures has increased noticeably. There are a lot more of them getting 5+ placements now than before. The longer they are in Fostering Futures, the more moves they have.

Most youth are coming in only once (~95% are 1st entries).

The majority of youth (58%) are still signing up for Fostering Futures within 7 days of their 18th birthday.

Issues Identified

VDSS hosted a Fostering Futures Policy Workday last fall.

Participants identified problems which generally fell into 6 categories:

- Funding
- Court/ Administrative Panel Reviews
- Compliance
- Transitioning High Needs youth to adult serving agencies
- IL arrangements/placements
- Re-Entry

Funding Issues

Inability to hold payment/redirect payment

SS payments and maintenance payments

Service and benefits need to all be on the same page as far as policy and what the youth is eligible for

No cost placements

When to close cases

Compliance Issues

Flexibility is good but makes it difficult to know when to close

SA issues

Defining compliance

Are FF participants “youth in FC” or “young adults” and are they treated as such?

At what point do you close the case?

IL arrangements/placements

“Allowing” youth to live in unsafe situations

Youth choosing not to stay in their Foster homes

Youth living far away and finding time to do the visits

Youth moving around a lot and having to see them

Youth living out of state and being able to provide case mgmt.

Lack of affordable housing

Re-Entry Issues

When, How, Under what conditions?

Special issues re: Participants with children, criminal records, mental illness, etc.

Options Considered

IV-E vs. CSA: switching cases back and forth?

180 days for court order

Legislation

IV-E Funding Determination

The Continuing Support and Supervision Agreement (VCSSA) starts a new foster care episode.

IV-E determination application completed. Determination made within 30 days.

Court order with “best interest” language required.

IV-E eligibility also triggers administrative dollars for staff.

IV-E admin dollars and case closure

Federal guidance is clear that when the youth is not eligible for a IV-E payments, IV-E administrative dollars cannot be drawn down.

Therefore, it is necessary to close the Fostering Futures case when a payment cannot be made.

What this means:

- 30 days notice must be given before payment is stopped.
- When the 30 days has elapsed, if payment is stopped, the case must be immediately closed.
- This applies to CSA cases as well.
- Re-entry continues to be an option, so while the case is closed, the worker may still need to be in contact with the youth.

New guidance re: Re-Entry

VDSS has received clarifying federal guidance regarding re-entry.

Because cases must be closed when the youth is not eligible for a maintenance payment, re-entry is a new foster care episode.

What this means:

- A new VCSSA must be developed/signed.
- IV-E eligibility must be determined (again) at this point.
- The VCSSA must be approved by the court.

Options Considered

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Legislation

When a Participant is Struggling

Youth has difficulty maintaining employment, is frequently between jobs

Youth starts a college program, but drops out because the academic work is too hard

Youth says they will work on their GED, but doesn't attend classes regularly

Youth does not manage their funds appropriately and can't get to work/school/therapy because they can't pay for gas/bus/uber etc.

Enhanced guidance (14B.5.5)

Use of an Admin Panel Review, Team Meetings, or FPM to facilitate:

- Re-evaluation of the participant's plan
- Identification of additional supports needed
- Development of firm commitments by the youth
- Issuance of Notification of Intent to Terminate
- Scheduling of another meeting towards the end of the 30 days

In the event that youth will not participate in a meeting, the Notification of Intent to Terminate can be issued.

Enhanced guidance (14B.8.1)

Procedures for Re-Entry:

Youth must complete an application

A team meeting is required to:

- Discuss factors which lead to the previous termination/choice not to enter
- Support the youth to develop short and long term goals
- Determine how the youth will meet the criteria for continued participation
- Identification of supports needed, including placement as necessary
- Facilitate the youth's signing of the VCSSA and IL arrangement agreement or placement agreement

Defining the “Sweet Spot”

How can we enable Fostering Futures participants?

How can we abandon Fostering Futures participants?

Case Scenario One

After finishing High School, Shayla decided she wanted to leave her foster home and live with a friend in an apartment. She was enrolled in Community College and working part time, but did not have a license or a car. She was dependent on her friends or family members for rides to and from work and school. Within 3 months, she has lost her job and has withdrawn from all her classes in order to avoid failing them.

Case Scenario Two

Damion left his group home upon turning 18. He went to live with his mother and younger siblings. His mother works two jobs and, while willing to have Damion move in, she expressed that he would have to contribute to household expenses and help take care of his siblings while she's working. Damion's plan was to continue to work on his GED and to get a job. After 3 months, he has barely attended any GED classes, he still hasn't found a job, and his mother is frustrated with him because he's not helping with his siblings and he's not giving her money.

Case Scenario Three

Jasmine, now 19, approaches the agency because she wants to re-enter Fostering Futures. She has two young children; one she had while in foster care and one that she delivered recently. Jasmine left Fostering Futures because she was angry with her foster parents who she felt were treating her like a child. She has been living with her fiancé (the father of her second child.) Jasmine has a High School diploma, but would like to get her driver's license and go to college to become a nurse.

Resources

Youth Brochure

Adult Flyer

Foster My Future webpage <https://dss.virginia.gov/fmf/>

SPEAKOUT: Youth Advisory Board

KinGAP

The Kinship Guardian Assistance Program will make another permanency option available to youth in foster care. (Not an option for CPS or Prevention cases.)

As of July 1, 2018, Virginia legislation enacts this portion of the federal Fostering Connections Act. This permits IV-E funding to be made available to continue to provide a maintenance payment to a relative who takes custody of a child from foster care.

Requirements:

- The relative must be approved as a foster parent.
- The youth must reside with the relative foster parent for 6 months before custody transfer occurs.
- Return home and adoption must be ruled out. (Adoption cannot meaningfully be ruled out for young children, which will limit the KinGAP option primarily to older children/youth.)