

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 32-13
	DATE May 28, 2014

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Supporting Successful Transition to Adulthood for Current and Former Youth in Foster Care Through Coordination with the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

1. **Purpose.** To inform states and local areas about how Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula-funded youth programs can assist youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care to complete post-secondary education and training by coordinating with state and local Independent Living coordinators to ensure youth have knowledge and access to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee program) Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs), and State Tuition Waivers.

2. **References.**

- The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee program) Section 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677).
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), as amended (29 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.).

3. **Background.** WIA enacted a formula-funded youth program that serves eligible low-income individuals, including youth, ages 14-21, who face barriers to employment. The WIA formula-funded youth program serves youth in foster care in partnership with State and local child welfare agencies. Service strategies, developed by WIA providers, help prepare youth in foster care for employment and/or post-secondary education through strong linkages between academic and occupational learning. In Program Year 2012, 3.7% of all youth who exited the WIA formula-funded youth program self-reported as having been in foster care, down from 4.2% in PY 2011 and 5.8% in PY 2010.

On September 30, 2012, approximately 116,829 youth ages 14-21 in foster care were eligible for WIA services and support.¹ Educational and employment outcomes for youth in foster care continue to be of critical concern. One study of three States (*The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth*) found that almost half of the youth in the study (47 percent) had earned a high school degree by age 23 or 24, but only 6 percent had

¹ Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2012 data

completed an Associate's Degree (or more) by the same age. Only 48 percent reported being currently employed at age 23 or 24.²

The Chafee program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides formula grants to states to provide Independent Living services that assist current and former youth in foster care to achieve self-sufficiency through a successful transition to adulthood. Funds, activities, and programs focus on youth in foster care who are likely to age out of care, as well as older youth ages 18 – 21, who have aged out of the foster care system. States may also use funds to provide services and supports to youth who left foster care for adoption or kinship guardianship at age 16 or older. The purposes of the Chafee program are to:

- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 transition to self-sufficiency by providing services such as obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, training in budgeting and financial management skills, substance abuse prevention and preventive health activities;
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment;
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions;
- Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults;
- Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition into adulthood;
- Make available vouchers for education and training, including post-secondary education, to youth who have aged out of foster care; and
- Provide services to youth who, after attaining 16 years of age, have left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption.

4. Critical Strategies to Support Youth in Foster Care. While many opportunities for collaboration exist between WIA programs and state Chafee independent living programs, the focus of this advisory is on the Chafee ETV and on state tuition waivers, both of which are critical strategies to support youth in foster care during their transition to adulthood.

² Courtney, M.E., Hook, J.L., & Lee, J.S. (2010). Distinct Subgroups of Former Foster Youth during Young Adulthood: Implications for Policy and Practice. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

Education and Training Vouchers. ETVs provide resources specifically to meet the post-secondary education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. The ETV program allows states to provide vouchers to assist youth to attend an institution of higher education (as defined by the Higher Education Act, sections 101, 102). States can provide vouchers worth \$5,000 per year or the total “cost of attendance” (as defined by the Higher Education Act, section 472), whichever is less. This includes payment for tuition and fees; room and board; rental or purchase of required equipment; materials or supplies (including a computer); tutoring; books; transportation; required residential training; special study projects; and child care.

Students in good standing who are participating in the ETV program at age 21 may continue to receive vouchers until the age of 23, which more closely aligns with the age at which respondents to a nationwide telephone survey indicate that most average young people are expected to be completely on their own.³ The program issues between 16,000 and 17,000 vouchers each year.

State Tuition Waivers. In addition to the ETV program, 22 states⁴ offer a tuition waiver program for young people who are in or have been in foster care. Some youth who may not qualify for an ETV may qualify for a state’s tuition waiver program. Tuition waiver programs are state-initiated programs that allow students to attend publicly funded higher education institutions by "waiving" tuition and fees under certain criteria. State tuition waiver programs can vary in a number of ways. Variations can include eligibility (e.g. age, number of years in foster care), number of waivers offered (limited, unlimited), program administration (by the state or by individual colleges), funding (annual appropriation, unfunded mandate), and institution type (community college only, all public colleges). You can find additional information on State Tuition Waivers by contacting the state ETV coordinator; contact information is located here:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id=38&rate_chno=W-00143.

5. Coordinating Chafee Resources for Youth in Foster Care in WIA Youth Programs.

ETA is committed to identifying potential partnerships that can help educate, support, and train youth and young adults served by both the workforce investment system and the child welfare system. Creating partnerships in a time of limited resources is critical to providing the most effective, targeted, and appropriate services that can help youth identify and successfully progress along a career pathway. Numerous benefits exist to developing strong partnerships. These include the ability for workforce investment areas to leverage resources, and improve services such as recruitment, referral, and case management.

Through their Chafee programs, state child welfare agencies provide a range of education, financial, housing and other support services to youth in foster care which can also benefit

³ Lake Snell Perry & Associates (2002). Public Opinion about Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood and the Opportunity Passport™, <http://www.lakeresearch.com>.

⁴ States that have implemented tuition waivers, as of April, 2014, include: Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

these youth enrolled in WIA youth programs. Additionally, both youth in foster care and those formerly in foster care have access to an Independent Living Coordinator in the public child welfare agency to assist youth in making a successful transition to adulthood. Workforce Investment Boards should ensure that these services are made available to youth in foster care through their service providers. The Department encourages workforce system professionals to coordinate with the youth's Independent Living Coordinators to help the youth who are currently in foster care and those aging out of foster care to access Chafee ETVs or other educational assistance. As discussed earlier, examples of assistance include tuition waivers, to assist these youth in completing post-secondary educational programs and training, obtaining essential job skills, and preparing to become economically self-sufficient.

- 6. Models of Collaboration.** Local workforce areas nationwide have developed collaborative efforts linking youth in foster care and Chafee-sponsored services through their local Departments of Social Services (DSS). WIA youth formula-funded programs are able to provide youth in foster care with wrap-around services needed to help them make a successful transition to adulthood. The following WIA programs are collaborating with local DSS and utilizing Chafee funds to assist youth in foster care.

Mayor's Office of Employment Development – Baltimore, Maryland.

The Mayor's Office of Employment Development collaborates with Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) to support YouthWorks, Baltimore City's annual summer jobs program. YouthWorks connects young people ages 14 to 21 to a 6-week summer work experiences with private sector, nonprofit, and city and state government employers throughout Baltimore. Through a \$1 million grant from BCDSS, the YouthWorks program is able to prioritize summer employment for youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who are involved with the foster care system. Youth in foster care benefit from a more streamlined pre-registration process, and receive an array of services to help them obtain and maintain continued employment and self-sufficiency.

San Diego Workforce Partnership – San Diego, California.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) and the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) jointly support ACCESS, Inc. and South Bay Community Services to provide a joint Independent Living Skills/WIA program (ILS Works), including case management services and workforce preparation, to current and former youth in foster care between the ages of 16 and 21. ILS Works provides services in two tiers: (a) Tier 1 provides case management and supportive services in the areas of housing, employment and education; and (b) Tier 2 provides intensive work readiness classes and workshops, career exploration and job shadowing experiences, internships and job placement services, and assistance with vocational and post-secondary preparation. In addition, SDWP in partnership with HHSA, San Diego County Office of Education, and New Alternatives, Inc., invests WIA youth funding in San Pasqual Academy, a residential education campus designed specifically for teens in foster care in grades 9 through 12.

Texas Workforce Commission – Dallas, Texas.

The Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) executed an agreement that addresses the unique challenges facing current

and former foster youth transitioning to independent living. The Texas model of serving transition-age youth is to bundle services into “one-stop” resource centers, called Transition Centers. These centers provide Chafee services through a three-pronged system: the Transition Centers have Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the local workforce boards; DFPS’ Child Protective Services has MOUs with the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce boards; and the Transition Centers have contracts with Child Protective Services. Youth have access to supportive services, housing assistance, employment training and placement, and case management all at one location. In addition, some centers, like the Transition Resource Action Center, operated by CitySquare, a Dallas-based, non-profit, social justice organization, provide other services including housing for homeless youth, mentoring, and life skills training.

7. **Additional Resources.** To learn more about your state’s Chafee-sponsored services, please visit the *National Resource Center for Youth Development* at www.nrcyd.ou.edu or the *Child Welfare Information Gateway* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/> and search on “state foster care program managers.” For a list of state and local Workforce Investment Board contacts, please visit *America’s Service Locator* at <http://www.servicelocator.org/wibcontacts/>.

Job Corps, through a nationwide network of campuses, offers a comprehensive array of services to eligible at-risk youth, ages 16 to 24, to prepare them for careers. Most Job Corps students live full time on campus where they receive training and education, housing, basic medical care, and other support services needed for success. Job Corps engages with the foster care community and continues to seek new ways to strengthen its existing outreach as related to youth aging out of foster care. For more information about Job Corps, please visit https://secure.sitemason.com/www.mpf.com/jcmaterials/PDF/Foster_Care_OnePager_Profesional.pdf and <http://www.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx>

For information on programs and resources to support youth in foster care and those aging out of the foster care system, that are being implemented and provided by national organizations, please visit:

- *Foster Care to Success:* <http://www.fc2success.org>
- *National Network for Young People in Foster Care (FosterClub):* <http://www.fosterclub.com>

8. **Action Requested.** The Department requests that states share this Training and Employment Notice with local areas, and encourages contact with their state and local child welfare agencies to learn more about resources available to youth in foster care.
9. **Inquiries.** Please direct questions to the appropriate regional office or to youth.services@dol.gov.