


Policy Number:	SSA/CW #25-10
Policy Title:	Maryland Youth Transition Planning
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Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Approved By:	Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr.  Executive Director Social Services Administration
Revision Date(s):	September 6, 2024
Supersedes:	SSA/CW #24-04
Originating Office:	Out-of-Home Care
Summary of Change:	This policy updates the documentation of rights and acknowledgments, case plan requirements, and Real ID requirements.
Required Actions:	A Youth Transitional Plan (YTP) is required to be completed at least once every 6 months for youth in out-of-home care age 14 and older.
Key Words:	Maryland Youth Transition Plan, YTP, Transition-aged Youth, Transitional Services, Ready By 21
Related Federal Law	Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 42 U.S.C. §§ 1305-677 (2008) The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 , which includes Division E: Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 , 42 U.S.C. §§ 1305-475 and 477 (2018) Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 , 42 U.S.C. §§ 675-475(1)(B)(D) and (5)(H)(I) Real ID Act of 2005 , 49 U.S.C. § 30301 (2005)
Related State	Md. Ann. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-802 et seq.

Laws	(2024); Md. Ann. Code, Md. Ann. Code, Fam. Law Art § 5-525 (2024)
COMAR	COMAR 07.02.10.08 , 07.02.11.13
State Plan Implications?	Yes

Purpose And Summary

The purpose of this policy is to outline [Maryland's Youth Transition Plan](#) (YTP) process and to provide procedural and best practice guidance for the completion of the YTP plan. The purpose of the Maryland YTP process is to ensure that all youth aged 14 and older, establish an individualized, strength-based plan outlining their preparations for transitioning from out-of-home care. The YTP is developed in collaboration with youth, workers, and youth support teams and is designed to guide a detailed discussion about the youth's needs and goals in the areas outlined by the [Ready By 21 Benchmarks](#): Education & Employment, Financial Empowerment, Permanent & Supportive Connections, Safe & Stable Housing, and Well-Being & Civic Engagement.

Related Laws And Regulations

The [Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#) requires all states to assist and support youth in developing a transition plan as they prepare to exit out-of-home care. The Social Services Administration has developed the YTP to comply with this federal mandate. This policy is in compliance with the [Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018](#).

Definitions

Youth – Transition-aged youth between the ages of 14 and 20.

[Ready By 21](#) – An initiative created to address the individual needs of youth in care and prepare youth for independent living by age 20.

[Youth Acknowledgement Form](#) – A signed acknowledgement by the youth that they have been provided with a copy of the handbook and that the rights contained in the document have been explained to them in an age-appropriate manner.

[Youth Matter Handbook](#) – A document that describes the rights of the youth with respect to education, health, visitation, and court participation, and the right to stay safe and avoid exploitation.

[Maryland Youth Transition Plan \(YTP\)](#) – A tool for creating individualized plans

used to help guide youth to personal goal achievement surrounding successful transition into independence.

Youth Transition Planning Meeting – A meeting designed to discuss and continue the development of the YTP.

Procedures And Timeframes

Youth and LDSS workers are expected to partner to develop a plan for a youth's transition out of out-of-home care. Facilitated youth transition planning meetings are an integral part of this process. The following steps are required:

1. Every youth in care aged 14 years or older shall have a youth transition plan that is developed collaboratively, includes youth-driven goals, and has youth-selected team members supporting the plan.
2. Preparation for the initial YTP shall begin 120 days prior to the youth's 14th birthday or when a youth enters care at age 13 ³/₄ or older. This process should be focused on the youth selecting and planning goals, priorities, and team participants.
3. Developing the plan with youth-identified goals should be an on-going collaborative effort between the youth and the LDSS worker. A youth transition planning meeting, to review, assess, and revise (if needed), shall be held prior to the YTP being completed in the electronic system of record. The Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) worker will collaborate with the youth and invite youth-selected team members to the meeting.
4. The LDSS worker must document the YTP in the electronic system of record during the case planning and within 60 days of entering out-of-home care. The case plan and YTP shall be reassessed and completed within 120 days after the initial plan and every 180 days thereafter.
5. The YTP plan focuses on the [Ready by 21](#) five core areas of Education & Employment, Financial Empowerment, Permanent & Supportive Connections, Safe & Stable Housing, and Well-Being & Civic Engagement.
6. The case plan for any youth in care who has attained 14 years of age must contain:
 - 6.1. A document that describes the rights of the youth with respect to:
 - 6.1.1. education, health, visitation, and court participation,
 - 6.1.2. the right to receive the documents specified in accordance

- with section [42 U.S.C. § 475\(5\)\(I\)](#)
- 6.1.3. the right to stay safe and avoid exploitation; and
- 6.2. A signed acknowledgement by the youth that the youth has been provided with:
 - 6.2.1. a copy of the document describing the youth's rights and
 - 6.2.2. The rights contained in the document have been explained to the youth in an age-appropriate way.
- 7. The YTP shall be finalized within 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. For youth 18 to 21 years old, the YTP shall be updated at least every 180 days, and shall be finalized within the 90 days prior to the youth turning 21 or exiting care.
 - 7.1. The final YTP must include:
 - 7.1.1. personalized youth-specific options on housing, health insurance information and card, education, local opportunities for mentors, and
 - 7.1.2. continuing support services, workforce supports, and employment services,
 - 7.1.3. information about the importance of designating another individual to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of the youth if the youth becomes unable to participate in such decisions and the youth does not have, or does not want, a relative who would otherwise be authorized under Maryland law to make such decisions, and provides the youth with the option to execute a health care power of attorney, health care proxy, or other similar document recognized under Maryland law.

DOCUMENTATION

The LDSS will use the state-administered assessment tools and the [Ready by 21 Benchmarks](#) as a guide in developing the YTP. All active planning and support provided to youth toward the accomplishment of their goals as outlined in their YTP should be documented in the electronic system of record. A hard and/or electronic copy should be provided to the youth each time the YTP is updated. The YTP is not developed at a single YTP meeting but is consistently updated and evolving through interaction and communication with the youth.

Each youth leaving out-of-home care by attaining 18 to 21 years of age, must be discharged from care with their official (or certified copy) birth certificate, social security card issued by the Commissioner of Social Security, and a driver's license or State-issued identification card that complies with the requirements of the

[REAL ID Act of 2005](#).¹ The documents will be provided to the youth and documented within the plan. Health and education records will be provided to the youth at no cost when the youth leaves out-of-home care.

Upon completion of the youth's last YTP meeting, the LDSS worker should provide the youth with the [Foster Care Verification Letter](#). This letter provides youth with the means to verify their involvement in out-of-home care, as many state and federal programs have out-of-home care involvement as a qualifying factor. For any youth who moves from Maryland to another state, this letter can be proof of previous involvement with Maryland's out-of-home care system to enable them to receive Medicaid benefits in another state.

FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

[Youth Transition Plan](#)
[Foster Care Verification Letter](#)
[Youth Matter Handbook](#)
[Youth Acknowledgement Form](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

[Animated Overview of the YTP](#)
[CJAMS Child Welfare How-To-Guides](#)

¹ Official documents meet the requirements of the Federal REAL ID Act. Licenses can be verified as meeting these requirements by visiting the [Real ID Lookup Tool Website](#).