


<b>Policy Number:</b>	SSA-CW #22-08
<b>Policy Title:</b>	Maryland Youth Transition Planning Process
<b>Release Date:</b>	May 18, 2022
<b>Effective Date:</b>	June 1, 2022
<b>Approved By:</b>	Denise Conway, LCSW-C  Executive Director Social Services Administration
<b>Revision Date(s):</b>	February 28, 2023 Technical enhancement for IV-E State Plan compliance
<b>Supersedes:</b>	SSA #19-04
<b>Originating Office:</b>	Tanisha Sanders, PhD Director of Permanency Social Services Administration
<b>Required Actions:</b>	A YTP is required to be completed at least once every 6 months for youth in foster care age 14 and older.
<b>Key Words:</b>	Maryland Youth Transition Plan, YTP, Emerging Adults, Transition-aged Youth, Transitional Services, Ready By 21
<b>Related Federal Law</b>	<a href="#">42 U.S.C. § 675(1)(B), (D), (H)</a>
<b>Related State Laws</b>	Md. Ann. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-802 et seq.; Fam. Law § 5-525
<b>COMAR</b>	<a href="#">07.02.10.08</a> , <a href="#">07.02.11.13</a>
<b>Title IV-E State Plan Implications?</b>	Yes



## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline Maryland's Youth Transition Planning (YTP) process and to provide procedural and best practice guidance for the completion of the Maryland Youth Transition Plan (YTP). The purpose of the Maryland YTP process is to ensure that all emerging adults, individuals 14 and older, establish an individualized, strength-based plan outlining their preparations for transitioning from foster care. The YTP is developed in collaboration with emerging adults, workers, and youth support teams within the YTP process 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**

According to the [Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#), all states are required to assist and support a youth in developing a transition plan as they age out of foster care. The State of Maryland has developed the Maryland YTP to comply with this federal mandate. This policy has also been updated to comply with the [Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018](#).

The Social Services Administration's intent for the YTP process is to:

1. Build stronger worker/youth relationships in order to solicit greater youth involvement in the development and implementation of their transition plan and foster an in-depth conversation about goals and the necessary preparations for success after foster care.
2. Identify areas for skill-building and opportunities to demonstrate and develop those skills in order to foster successful outcomes for emerging adults as they transition out of care.

## **Definitions**

**Emerging Adult(s):** Transition-aged youth between the ages of 14 and 21.

**Youth Transition Plan (YTP):** A tool for creating individualized plans used to help guide emerging adults to personal goal achievement surrounding successful transition into independence.

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

**Ready By 21:** An initiative created to address the individual needs of youth in care and effectively prepare emerging adults for independent living by the time they reach age 21.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to transition-aged youth in care beginning 120 days before their 14th birthday until they leave care.

## **Policy**

To successfully engage emerging adults in planning for their future and ensure that they have the skills and resources needed to be self-sufficient, local departments of social services (LDSSs) will begin transition planning with youth 120 days before their 14th birthday or upon entry to care if older than 14 years old. Plans must be individualized and incorporate youth voice, goals, and strengths. Plans should also continuously be updated based on a youth's progress in order to provide the youth with a comprehensive plan to use upon exiting foster care.

## **Procedures and Timeframes**

Through the use of facilitated YTP meetings, each emerging adult, in collaboration and partnership with their worker and team, will plan for their transition out of foster care. The following steps are required:

- A. Every youth in care who is 14-years-old or older shall have a YTP that is developed collaboratively with youth-driven goals. The worker will encourage the youth to select additional team members who can play a role in supporting the plan. Workers will partner with youth to build a strong transition planning team in order to ensure that emerging adults are properly supported in their plan development and objectives.
- B. The LDSS worker must initiate the YTP process with the youth 120 days prior to the youth's 14th birthday or upon the youth's entry into care if the youth is within four months of turning 14 or older. This planning process should be focused on the youth identifying goals and priorities and selecting a team to support them.
- C. Working toward youth-identified goals in the plan should be an on-going collaborative effort between the youth and worker, requiring YTP meetings at least every 6 months beginning on or within a week of the youth's 14th birthday. Emerging adults entering care after the age of 13 and 8 months should immediately receive transitional services in preparation for a YTP meeting, which should be held within 60 days of the youth entering care and at least every 6 months thereafter, aligned with the youth's birthday.
- D. The YTP that the team will develop will focus on the 5 core areas of service identified as the Ready By 21 Benchmarks: Education & Employment, Financial Empowerment, Permanent & Supportive Connections, Safe & Stable Housing, and Well-Being & Civic Engagement.
- E. The case plan for any youth in care who has attained 14 years of age must contain:
  - a. A document that describes the rights of the child with respect to education, health visitation, and court participation, the right to receive the documents specified in section 475(5)(l) in accordance with that section, and the right to stay safe and avoid exploitation; and
  - b. A signed acknowledgement by the child that the child has been provided with a copy of the document describing the child's rights and that the rights contained in the document have been explained to the child in an age-appropriate way.
- F. The transition plan shall be finalized within the 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday. For youth 18 to 21 years old, a transition plan shall be updated at least every 180 days, and shall be finalized within the 90 days prior to the youth attaining the age of 21 or exiting care.

### **Alignment with Practice Model and Desired Outcomes**

Maryland's YTP process supports the goal of the Integrated Practice Model (IPM) for timely and lasting permanency, specifically for our older youth population. The process operationalizes IPM values through empowerment, advocacy, respect, and collaboration. Workers will collaborate with [Emerging Adults](#) through:

1. [Engagement](#)
2. [Collaborative Assessments](#)
3. [Individual Planning](#)
4. [Intervention](#)
5. [Monitoring and Adapting](#)
6. [Teaming](#)
7. [Transitioning](#)

### **Documentation**

Local Departments will use the state-administered assessment tools and the Ready by 21 Benchmarks as a guide in developing the YTP, and all required official documents<sup>1</sup> provided to the youth will be documented within the plan. Health and education records will be provided to the youth at no cost when the child leaves foster care.

All active planning and support provided to emerging adults toward the accomplishment of their goals as outlined in their YTP should be represented in CJAMS. A hard copy with signatures should be kept in the youth's record, as well as a hard and/or electronic copy provided to the youth each time an update is made. Note: the YTP is not developed at a single YTP meeting but is constantly updated and evolving through interaction and communication with the youth. Workers shall document the type of contact (i.e., face-to-face) and reason for the meeting (i.e., YTP meeting), which should reflect constant contact and evolution of the individual YTP development for each emerging adult.

Upon completion of the emerging adult's last YTP meeting, which should occur within 90 days of the child exiting care, the LDSS worker should provide the youth with the [Foster Care Verification Letter](#). This letter provides youth with the means to verify their participation in foster care services, as many state and federal programs have [former] foster care participation as a qualifying factor. For any youth who choose to move out of Maryland and into another state, this letter can be used as proof of their previous involvement with Maryland Foster Care to enable them to receive Medicaid benefits in another state.

### **Forms**

The Youth Transition Plan form ([Attachment A](#)- revised 6/28/21) and is located on the [MyLife Website](#), under *Initiatives>Maryland Youth Transitional Plan*

Foster Care Verification Letter ([Attachment B](#)- must be downloaded and completed)

Youth Matter Handbook (Attachment C - Revised 2/28/23)

Youth Acknowledgement Form ([Attachment D](#)- must be downloaded and completed)

[Youth Matters - Out-of-Home Program Handbook for Foster Youth](#)

### **Related Information**

For a youth-friendly outline of the YTP and its purpose, DHS has created an [Animated Overview of the YTP](#). Please also see the [IPM Youth Transition Planning Crosswalk](#) and [SSA/CW 21-02 Family Teaming](#).

For additional guidance on CJAMS procedures, please see the [CJAMS Child Welfare How-To-Guides](#).

For additional information on Older Youth, please see [SSA/CW 18-18 Maryland Tuition Waiver and ETV](#), [SSA/CW 15-14 Annual Notice of Resources](#), and [SSA/CW 14-07 Identity Theft, Credit Report, and Repair](#).

For additional information on working with LGBTQIA+ youth, please see [SSA/CW 18-13 Working with LGBTQ Youth](#).

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#)