




DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

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| <b>Policy Number:</b>           | SSA-CW #24-04   |
| <b>Policy Title:</b>            | Maryland Youth Transition Planning Process  |
| <b>Release Date:</b>            | September 6, 2024   |
| <b>Effective Date:</b>          | September 17, 2024  |
| <b>Approved By:</b>             | Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr. <br>Executive Director<br>Social Services Administration |
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| <b>Supersedes:</b>              | SSA #22-08  |
| <b>Originating Office:</b>      | Permanency  |
| <b>Summary of Change:</b>       | This change reflects an alignment with the case planning process.   |
| <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>State Plan Implications?</b> | Yes   |

## PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

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 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:

- A. 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.
- B. 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 20.

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 20.

Youth Acknowledgement Form – A signed acknowledgement by the youth

that they have been provided with a copy of the documentation and that the rights contained in the document have been explained to them in an age-appropriate way.

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

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.

## **PROCEDURES AND TIMEFRAMES**

It is the expectation that each youth and the caseworker will partner to plan for a youth's transition out of foster care. The use of facilitated youth transition planning meetings are an expectation of this process. The following steps are required:

A. Every youth in care who is 14 years old or older shall have a youth transition plan that is developed collaboratively with youth-driven goals and youth-selected team members supporting the plan,

B. Preparation for the initial Youth Transition Plan shall begin 120 days prior to the youth's 14th birthday or when a youth enters care if they are age 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  or older. This process should be focused on the youth selecting and planning goals, priorities, and team participants,

C. Working towards youth-identified goals in the plan should be an on-going collaborative effort between the youth and 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 LDSS worker will collaborate with the youth and invite team members to the meeting,

D. The LDSS worker must document the YTP in the electronic system of record during the case plan cadence, and within 60 days of entering an out of home placement. Subsequently, the case plan shall be reassessed and completed within 120 days of the initial plan, and completed every 180 days thereafter,

E. The plan focuses on the 5 core areas of Education & Employment,

Financial Empowerment, Permanent & Supportive Connections, Safe & Stable Housing, and Well-Being & Civic Engagement,

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:

- A. [Engagement](#),
- B. [Collaborative Assessments](#),
- C. [Individual Planning](#),
- D. [Intervention](#),
- E. [Monitoring and Adapting](#),
- F. [Teaming](#),
- G. [Transitioning](#) .

### **DOCUMENTATION**

Local Departments will use the state-administered assessment tools and the Ready by 21 Benchmarks as a guide in developing the YTP. Each child leaving foster care by reason of having attained 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 all required official documents<sup>1</sup>. A copy of their medical records, health insurance information and education records will also be provided to the youth at no cost when they leave 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

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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](#)

interaction and communication with the youth.

Upon completion of the emerging adult'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 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 AND ATTACHMENTS**

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)

### **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 Identity Theft, Credit Report, and Repair.

For additional information on working with LGBTQIA+ youth, please see [SSA/CW 23-05 Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Allied, and Two-Spirit \(LGBTQIA2S+\) Youth and Families](#)