



Youth Independence: A Collaborative Approach

Presented by:

Karen Carpenter, DCFS Transitioning Youth Program Manager

Shameka Alexander, DCFS CWC, Transitioning Youth

Angie Thomas, Director of Life Skills LA Methodist Children's Home

Fred Payne, Transitions Manager Goodwill of Northeast Louisiana

Kayana Bradley, President of the Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force

Roshine Allen, Vice President of the Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force



Today's Goals

- Gain knowledge about the different programs and how to access them.
- Gain an understanding of the importance of Life Skills education for older youth in foster care.
- Understand the roles of all involved in preparing youth for independence and increase partnerships between all stakeholders involved with these youth.

DCFS TRANSITIONING YOUTH UNIT

WHAT DO WE DO?



Department of
Children & Family Services

Building a Stronger Louisiana

FOCUS OF TY YOUTH UNIT

- The Transitioning Youth Unit is a part of the DCFS Foster Care Unit that specializes in working with foster youth ages 13-17.
- Transitioning Youth staff focus on:
 - securing permanent connections for youth
 - achieving permanency.
 - preparing the youth to live independently after exiting foster care.

TY UNIT AREAS OF WORK

- Support to field level staff working with youth ages 13-17
- Consultations with Specialized Youth Workers focused on achieving permanency for youth.
- Monitoring of Statewide Independent Living Programs
- Monitoring of Statewide Transitional Living Programs
- Collaboration with Youth Advisory Board (LEAF)
- Credit Clearances for youth
- NYTD (National Youth in Transition Database) surveys

SPECIALIZED YOUTH WORKERS

- Specialized Youth Workers (SYW)— SYW's are DCFS foster care specialists who are assigned a caseload of older youth in order to focus on securing connections for the youth, working towards permanency prior to exiting FC at 18 and ensuring youth have the skills and resources needed to live independently.

INDEPENDENT LIVING AND TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS

- The TY Unit conducts quarterly monitoring of statewide Independent Living Programs and Transitional Living Programs in order to ensure delivery of services and identify needs of youth being served.

COLLABORATION WITH YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD (LEAF)

- The TY Unit staff partner with the Youth Advisory Board (Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force) through participation in LEAF subcommittees and events. (All TY Consultants and Managers belong to a LEAF Subcommittee)
- DCFS and LEAF work together to review agency policies affecting foster youth and update policies when a need is identified.

CREDIT CLEARANCES AND NYTD SURVEYS

- Credit clearances are completed for youth prior to exiting FC to ensure they have clean credit reports;
- NYTD surveys are conducted on youth prior to and following exit from FC to gain information about services received

TY UNIT STRUCTURE

- **Manager 2** (Foster Care, Transitioning Youth and ICPS Units)- Karen Austin
karen.austin.dcf@la.gov
- **Manager 1** (Transitioning Youth Unit) Karen Carpenter
karen.grant.dcf@la.gov
- **TY Consultants:**
 - Monique Spaulding (Orl/Cov/Thib regions)
monique.spaulding.dcf@la.gov
 - Shameka Alexander (BR/LAF/LC) shameka.alexander.dcf@la.gov
 - Beatrice Lewis (ALEX/SHPT/MON) beatrice.lewis.dcf@la.gov
 - LaToya Saulsby (State Office—policy, approval requests, IL Coordinator, LEAF liaison, NYTD,) LaToya.Saulsby.dcf@la.gov
 - Patricia Sommerfeld (WAE)- NYTD and Credit Clearance Reporting
Patrica.Sommerfeld.dcf@la.gov

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program



Teaching Youth How to Succeed in Life



GOODTRANSITIONS

Chafee Independent Living Service Provider Referral

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name _____ Date _____
TIPS/JRMS/JETS # _____ SSN _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____
Zip _____ Parish _____ Phone _____ Alt. Phone _____
Birth Date _____ **Age _____ Race _____ Gender _____
Caregiver: _____ Relationship _____
Date of OJJ or DCFS Custody: _____

REFERRAL INFORMATION

Person Referred by: _____ Email: _____
Agency Referred by: _____
Office Number: _____ Cell: _____
List any behavioral or health concerns: _____

DCFS ATTACH YOUTH TRANSITION PLAN.
OJJ ATTACH INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PLAN

Referents Signature _____

Table with 2 columns: Location, Phone Contact. Rows: Shreveport (318) 629-5972, Natchitoches (318) 629-5972, Alexandria (318) 629-5972

Send Completed Form to:

Table with 2 columns: Shreveport Region (Email: fpayne@goodwillnla.org), Alexandria Region (Email: fpayne@goodwillnla.org)

Independent Living Program

Services

- Ages 14-15 Summer & Holiday Classes: Love 146
- Ages 16-17 In-Home Support Services: LYFT online learning
- Ages 18-23 Case Management Services
- Youth Engagement Activities all ages
- NYTD Surveys

LYFT Topics

- Personal Finance
- Communication Skills
- Self-Care/Health
- Getting & Keeping a Job
- Independent Living
- Applying for a Social Security Card
- Nutrition Facts
- Resiliency
- Final LYFT Survey

Love 146 Not A Number

- *Not a Number* is an interactive child trafficking and exploitation prevention curriculum designed to provide youth with information and skills in a manner that inspires them to make safe choices. Youth learn to identify and utilize healthy support systems that may decrease their vulnerabilities.

Participants Learn ways to:

- Raise their awareness of what constitutes human trafficking and exploitation
- Recognize recruitment tactics and understand vulnerabilities
- Challenge harmful stereotypes and societal attitudes
- Identify red flags in relationships
- Identify healthy support systems
- Develop skills to safely navigate potential exploitative situations
- Access community resources when situations occur that increase their vulnerability

Youth Engagement Program

ACTIVITIES

Events Virtual and In-Person

Fun and Engaging Activities

Guest Speakers

Youth Presentations

Community Partner Support

Educational

Youth Feedback



Case Management Ages 18-23

- Short term Services: Connecting to community resources to assist with an emergency or answering a question they may have regarding help with community resources
- Longer term Services: Completion of Case Management Service Plan to assess the young adults needs and goals



National Youth in Transition Database

Information for Caregivers About the Survey

What is the survey: The federal government requires all states to collect information on youth in or leaving foster care. NYTD surveys are being requested in all States to collect information on how youth leaving foster care are doing and how resources are used.

Who Completes Survey: All youth, aged 14-23, who receive services through their involvement with the state complete one survey. Some youth in foster care who are turning age 17 during certain federal fiscal years complete a separate survey. This 17-year-old group is referred to as the Baseline Group. A portion of those 17-year-olds will be randomly chosen to complete a survey again at ages 19 and 21. In the event the youth is one of the randomly selected 17-year-olds, someone will contact them when they turn 19 and again when they turn 21 to complete the additional surveys.

How Will Information be Used: Data will be used to evaluate and improve programs that help foster youth become independent adults.

Benefits of Participation: Completing the NYTD survey allows the youth to use their experience to improve the future for other foster youth. The state must have a certain level of participation and compliance with the survey in order to not lose federal money that funds youth programs and services. Each year the state must keep up with some 17-year-old youths so they can be surveyed again at ages 19 and 21. In order to assist with locating these youth there will be a yearly reunion for the Baseline Group.

Survey Is Voluntary: The youth's participation is voluntary and there will be no penalty to them if they choose not to participate. While completing the survey, the youth may decline to respond to any questions they do not want to answer.

Confidentiality: The youth's name and personal information will not be released outside the department in a way that will identify them. The information will be compiled into a data report based on all the youth responses to the surveys.

Youth Can Stay Connected:

The youth are being asked to contact their local DCFS office each time their contact information (address, phone number, email) changes. They are given the name, phone number, and address of the local office to contact.

Check out the Youth Link at DCFS
www.dcfslouisiana.gov/YouthLink

► **MISSION:** Advocate with current and former foster youth to unite voices and change policies, laws, and perceptions in order empower youth to become leaders and reach their full potential.

► **VISION:** Create a community where every child has the right to safety, a loving home, permanency and overall well-being in which they are able to build a successful future.

► **TAGLINE:** Utilizing negative experiences to facilitate positive changes for foster youth.

LOUISIANA ELITE ADVOCACY FORCE



ADVOCATE · CHANGE · EMPOWER

Independent Living Peer Support staff serve on the LEAF Board

- **Peer Support staff will share ideas, concerns and progress reports from their regional youth engagement programs with LEAF promoting Youth Voice.**



- Youth may be elected to serve as an officer on the board including; President, Vice President, Secretary, Communications Officer, Parliamentarian, and Peer Mentor.
- Officers and members attend monthly meetings and scheduled retreats.
- Youth interested in applying may contact the board President:
Kayana “Keedy” Bradley

la.elite.advocacy.force@gmail.com

Cell: 504-905-9877



Youth Scenario

- Jacob, a foster youth in care has recently turned 16 years old. He expressed to his IL staff at the last in-home session that he would like to get a part-time job at Chick-fil-A during the summer. He also expressed he isn't sure about how to manage the money he will be earning. He asked if he can attend drivers education so that he can get his driver's license. He learned about the LEAF board at the last youth engagement activity with his IL provider. He is interested in learning more about how he can be involved with the LEAF board and apply to be a member.
- What would you do to help support Jacob's current life goals and how would you collaborate with others to do that?

THANK YOU

www.dcfsl.a.gov