



Beyond 18: Ready by 21 Services for Delaware's Youth Who Have Experienced Foster Care

**Response to House Joint Resolution 18
146th General Assembly
Report to Governor Jack Markell and the
Delaware General Assembly**

September 2012

Submitted by the

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families

In cooperation with

Delaware Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI)

University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration

On behalf of

the HJR 18 Committee

and the DYOI Community Partnership Board's

Policy Working Group

**Beyond 18: Developmentally Appropriate “Ready by 21”
Services to Promote Self-Support, Permanency, and
Positive Growth Among Delaware’s Youth Who Have
Experienced Foster Care**

**Response to House Joint Resolution 18
146th General Assembly**

**Report to Governor Jack Markell and the
Delaware General Assembly**

September 2012

Submitted by the
Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families

In cooperation with
Delaware Youth Advisory Council (YAC)
Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI)
University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration

On behalf of
the HJR 18 Committee
and the DYOI Community Partnership Board’s
Policy Working Group

Executive Summary

In response to House Joint Resolution (HJR) No. 18, this report serves as an analysis and provides recommendations for creating a developmentally appropriate, fully integrated system of independent-living services, housing and financial assistance for youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware (see Addendum A). This system shall be referred to hereafter as "Ready by 21."

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF or the Department) was charged by the 146th General Assembly to form a committee of youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware, as well as stakeholders representing state agencies, nonprofits, and social-service providers, to study and propose a developmentally appropriate program to provide ongoing assistance to youth exiting foster care up to their 21st birthday. This report articulates an "ideal" system as voted on by Committee members. The Committee recognizes that this proposal is broad and potentially expensive but believes that it allows the Department and General Assembly to grow services over time to meet the articulated needs and interests of Delaware's youth who have experienced foster care.

Since Fiscal Year 2008, roughly 100 youth have aged out of the Delaware foster-care system annually. With fewer family and community supports, many youth who have experienced foster care lack the skills and guidance necessary to graduate from high school, enroll in college, secure gainful employment, and steer clear of criminal activity. While 100 youth may seem minor compared to the state's total population, Fiscal Year 2010 data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicate that Delaware ranks fifth worst in the nation in terms of youth who age out of foster care with no legal permanence. The Division of Family Services (DFS) has accepted this challenge and is currently implementing best-practice strategies as part of its Outcomes Matter initiative, with the hope of keeping families intact and thereby reducing the number of youth aging out of foster care in years to come. Continual assessment of DSCYF's National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey tools will also serve as an important vehicle for tracking outcomes of expanded or new services designed to assist this population.

Based on the research and discussions held during Committee meetings between July and September of 2012, the Committee is recommending Ready by 21 services that include eight primary areas:

1. **Age** – The age up to which Ready by 21 services should be available to youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware is 21.
2. **Eligibility** – Priority for Ready by 21 services should be given to youth who are in DSCYF custody at the time of their 18th birthday. As funding becomes available and based on a needs assessment, youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption between the ages of 16 and 18 should next be considered for eligibility. If funding is available, youth who have returned to family between the ages of 16 and 18 should also be considered based on need. Youth eligible for Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) should also be eligible for Ready by 21 services. These eligible youth should be required to enroll in an educational, vocational, employment or volunteer program.
3. **Re-Entry** – There should be no restrictions on when a youth can “re-enter” Ready by 21 until age 21—meaning that if a youth is eligible, then he or she should remain eligible until the youth’s 21st birthday. However, there should be a limit to the number of times a youth may re-enter Ready by 21 while he/she is 18, 19, or 20. This limit will be developed by DFS and its community partners once Ready by 21 is implemented. Appropriate financial assistance incentives could help in reducing the number of times youth discontinue and reapply for Ready by 21 services.
4. **Legal Jurisdiction** – Family Court oversight and continued legal representation of youth should be voluntary and considered on a case-by-case basis. To the extent that formal legal representation of youth or Family Court oversight is necessary, the youth can invoke Delaware’s extended jurisdiction statute, 10 Del. C. § 929.
5. **Housing and Supervised Living** – Housing resources for youth receiving Ready by 21 services should be broad and fully utilize Delaware’s current housing options and resources. Providing a wide range of housing alternatives promotes independence

through age-appropriate decision-making based on the specific circumstances, needs, and aspirations of youth who have experienced foster care.

6. **Case Management** – The current Independent Living (IL) case-management design should remain in place, recognizing that supplemental resources and assessments may be necessary with regard to placement and other services. Further, the IL program managers and service providers should make reasonable efforts to have contact with youth receiving Ready by 21 services at least monthly and more frequently as needed. The current IL case plans, together with the requirements set forth by the youth’s housing provider, serve as the agreement between the youth and his/her IL case worker regarding parameters for Ready by 21.
7. **Financial Assistance** – Youth in Ready by 21 should receive a needs-based stipend in addition to housing maintenance payments. Youth who receive stipends will be required to participate in a financial-literacy program. Stipend options and rates should vary depending on circumstances.
8. **Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks** – Evidence-based assessment tools that outline specific criteria and benchmarks related to housing, financial, and life skills of youth receiving Ready by 21 services beyond 18 should be implemented and applied to youth as well as IL providers and foster- and group-home providers. Benchmarks or assessments developed in the past five years in Delaware should be reviewed against evidence-based best practices to determine whether updates are necessary to support Delaware’s Ready by 21 services.

Based on research conducted by the Department and review of fiscal analyses of federal program funding requirements and benefits, it is recommended that Ready by 21 services in Delaware be implemented over time through a state-financed program. The Committee recognizes the fiscal constraints facing the incoming General Assembly and recommends that DSCYF seek funding for components of this program within its formal Fiscal Year 2014 budget process.

It is further recognized that states, in developing Ready by 21 services and programs, have been provided with an option to implement an extension of

foster care to age 21 through the Fostering Connections legislation (www.fosteringconnections.org). Although this option affords states the benefit of recouping federal dollars for all Title IV-E-eligible youth, there are extensive requirements. Additionally, Delaware has a low Title IV-E “penetration rate” (currently estimated at 25%), which equates to minimal federal assistance. Analyses conducted by DSCYF, coupled with outside expert recommendations, indicate that the Fostering Connections option would not be optimal for the state of Delaware. For additional information about why Delaware’s youth would be best served through a state-financed program, please review Addendum B.

The program design that should be considered with this round of funding is one that distributes a monetary stipend to the youth as determined by need. The first year of funding necessary to support these youth is estimated to be approximately \$500,000, allowing youth who participate to receive an average of \$550.00 per month in assistance.

Introduction

Research conducted by the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA) confirms what national studies and other states have found—youth who have experienced foster care typically have fewer family and community supports to help them prepare for and successfully transition into adulthood. With fewer support systems in place, youth who have experienced foster care are at higher risk for depression, substance abuse, and even suicide. Additionally, youth who are neither in school nor working face greater challenges with this transition. For additional information, please visit www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/AgingOut_policybrief.pdf.

Each year, approximately 100 youth “age out” of foster care in Delaware. The hardships they face often make living independently and productively very difficult. Delaware recognizes the challenges facing these young people and has already taken significant steps to improve outcomes. For example, the state’s Independent Living (IL) program offers services (provided by nonprofit contract-provider agencies) that include case management and support for education, employment, housing, medical needs, and life-skills training. Data about the state’s IL program participants are available through the Delaware Youth in Transition Database and IL Outcome Survey tools and can be analyzed in several areas, including education, employment, housing, and incarceration.

As outlined in the *Delaware Environmental Scan* of the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, other steps taken include but are not limited to:

- Increased youth involvement and participation as a result of ten years of an active Youth Advisory Council (YAC)
- Voluntary extended legal oversight (extended Family Court jurisdiction until age 21 through 10 Del.C. § 929)
- Housing options (state agency and nonprofit/community efforts to provide an array of options, including the expanded State Rental Assistance Program vouchers)
- Interagency coordination and agreements (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding among six state agencies to better coordinate efforts and resources to address the complex needs of current and former youth who have experienced foster care)

- Interdisciplinary, statewide community partnerships (Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, Child Protection Accountability Commission, APPLA Workgroup, etc.)

To access the entire *Delaware Environmental Scan* document, please visit www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/PhaseIIEnvScan.pdf.

As mentioned above, one example of an active and interdisciplinary partnership currently underway is the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI), a program of the Delaware Center for Justice, in cooperation with DSCYF. This initiative aims to bring together the people, systems, and resources necessary to assist youth in making the difficult transition from dependency to managing life as an adult. Together, foster-care parents, service providers, stakeholders, and youth who have experienced foster care are changing policies and programs within the child-welfare system to reflect current research and best practices.

DYOI was introduced in Delaware in 2011 through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI). The ultimate goal of the DYOI is to build advocacy important to leveraging resources, strengthening partnerships, and expanding legislation related to improving the quality of services for youth aging out of foster care. In 2012 with support from various government and community-based leaders, including Governor Jack Markell and DSCYF Cabinet Secretary Vivian Rapposelli, DYOI developed a Community Partnership Board (CPB) to bring together various stakeholders, both traditional and nontraditional, with the primary focus on ensuring successful transitions for youth aging out of foster care. The CPB, chaired by Lt. Governor Matt Denn, establishes eight working groups that are focused on better outcomes for those who have experienced foster care—**Education, Employment and Transportation, Financial Literacy and Capability, Housing, Permanency, Physical and Mental Health, Policy, and Transitions**. Several groups have merged with existing Delaware Committees. Each group is charged with encouraging youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware to participate in meetings and activities by providing direct input on areas of interest related to their life experiences. For more information about these groups, please visit the DYOI website (www.dyoi.org).

Well-established, existing partnerships and programs in Delaware, along with DYOI's CPB working groups, provide a strong platform for improving

Delaware's delivery of an integrated system of programs and services for youth to directly participate in planning for their futures.

Despite recent initiatives and outcomes, Delaware has further opportunities for improvement. As indicated by the JCYOI, better coordination among current services and programs, together with greater support and guidance through early adulthood for education, employment, financial literacy, healthcare access and self-care, housing, job readiness, and parenting, may help close gaps and solidify lasting connections to comprehensive, meaningful support networks for youth who have experienced foster care.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: Values and Strategies

The JCYOI forms partnerships with communities nationwide to help youth exiting foster care become successful, productive adults by helping improve the systems that support them. These partnership sites implement a set of five core strategies and track systems and youth outcomes. Delaware is one of these sites. The core strategies are built upon a value system comprising permanence, racial equity parity, youth engagement, integrity and trust, good stewardship, community partnerships, strong and responsive systems, and measurement and accountability.

When working in concert, the five core strategies of JCYOI have the potential to dramatically improve the outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. The core strategies:

1. Engaging youth to become better decision-makers and self-advocates
2. Forging alliances and building a network of resources through partnerships and collaboration
3. Galvanizing public will and policy to effect reforms in practices and policies that will bring about more successful transitions
4. Increasing opportunities for economic success
5. Using data from research and evaluation to drive decision-making and shape communications

DYOI Policy Working Group and HJR 18 Committee: Focus Areas and Priorities

In alliance with the values and core strategies set forth by JCYOI and DYOI, the DYOI Policy Working Group, co-chaired by Tania Culley, Office of the Child Advocate, and Julia O'Hanlon, University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, was charged with formulating policy recommendations to the larger DYOI Community Partnership Board (CPB). Critical to the success of the CPB efforts was the voice and vision of youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware. Consequently, the Policy Working Group also focused on empowering our youth to take an active role in making recommendations based on their life experiences. These diverse perspectives and backgrounds were vital in ensuring that the recommendations of this working group addressed developmentally appropriate policies and programs. Identification of minors has been restricted.

Members:

Rep. Michael Barbieri, *Delaware General Assembly*

Amanda Brennan, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Rodney Brittingham, *Delaware Division of Family Services*

Nicole Byers, *Delaware Center for Justice*

Judge Barbara Crowell, *Delaware Family Court*

Judge Peter Jones, *Delaware Family Court*

Felicia Kellum, *Delaware Division of Family Services*

Janet Leban, *Delaware Center for Justice*

Gerard M., *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Julie Miller, *Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative*

Myiesha Miller, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Sherani Patterson, *Nemours Health & Prevention Services*

Demetrius Pinder, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Judge Mardi Pyott, *Delaware Family Court*

Bryan Samuels, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Maegan Soll, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Christella St. Juste, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Ethan S., *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Michelle Taylor, *United Way Delaware*

As presented to the larger CPB in May 2012, the Policy Working Group, represented by eight youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware, incorporated the YAC priority list and identified four primary policy areas for consideration by the CPB and its Chair, Lt. Governor Matt Denn:

- Research and provide recommendations for a Ready by 21 services program for youth who have experienced foster care.
- Address barriers related to obtaining a driver's license and auto insurance access.
- Consider opportunities for successful transitions among youth who have experienced foster care.
- Provide or encourage leadership training for youth and adults working with youth who have experienced foster care.

Through continual discussions and the shared desire to move forward on action items that called for more immediate legislative and community support, the Policy Working Group identified **"research and provide recommendations for Ready by 21 services for young adults who have experienced foster care"** as its priority focus area. Youth who have experienced foster care and serve on the Policy Working Group drafted HJR 18, presented it to Representative Barbieri for introduction and testified in support of the resolution on the House floor. As a result, HJR 18, which was sponsored by Representative Michael Barbieri and Senator Margaret Rose Henry of the 146th Delaware General Assembly with the approval of Governor Markell, was passed in June 2012 and called for a committee, to be led by representatives from state agencies, advocacy groups, community organizations, and, most importantly, current and former youth in foster care, to examine and provide recommendations for creating a developmentally appropriate Ready by 21 services program in Delaware.

The HJR 18 Committee met five times between July and September 2012 to discuss what a Ready by 21 services program would entail and how it would best address filling the gaps in IL services that have been identified by Delaware's youth, especially housing and financial assistance (see Addendum C).

The participation of numerous youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware, including the officially appointed YAC representatives, was critical to the Committee's meeting discussions and deliberations. Committee members promoted public and stakeholder participation through video- and telephone-conferencing meeting options, which also fostered consistent youth participation. Information previously presented and/or published by YAC and recent DYOI survey results about the preferences of Delaware's youth who have experienced foster care were presented and included in meeting discussions. Identification of minors has been restricted.

The official HJR 18 Appointees:

Nathan Badell, *Elizabeth W. Murphey School, Inc.*

Representative Michael Barbieri, *Delaware General Assembly*

Amanda Brennan, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Rodney Brittingham, *Delaware Division of Family Services*

Paul Calistro, *West End Neighborhood House*

Judge William Chapman, *Delaware Family Court*

Judge Barbara Crowell, *Delaware Family Court*

Tania Culley (Co-Chair), *Delaware Office of the Child Advocate*

Eric Lloyd, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Mary Kate McLaughlin, *Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families*

Julie Miller, *Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative*

Julia O'Hanlon (Co-Chair), *University of Delaware*

Demetrius Pinder, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Christella St. Juste, *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Ethan S., *Delaware Youth Advisory Council*

Other participants who provided valuable input at the Committee meetings include John Bates, Keith Zirkle, Felicia Kellum, and Susan Radecki of the Division of Family Services; Judge Mardi Pyott, Judge Peter Jones, and Ellie Torres of Delaware Family Court; IL providers Sue Dougherty, Christina Jones Bey, Mike Kopp, Tasha Warren, and Brian Robinson; group-home provider Aimee DeBenedictis; Jennifer Donahue of the Office of the Child Advocate; Jim Flynn and Shylah Duchicela of the University of Delaware; Janet Leban of the Delaware Center for Justice; Michelle Taylor of the United Way of Delaware; foster parents Sherfone Johnson and Selena Ellis; youth advocates Markisha F., Gerard M., Myiesha Miller, Samatha R., Eiontai S., Maegan Soll, and Laura V.; and all others who contributed to this project.

Research and technical support was provided by the DYOI Program Coordinator and Youth Advisor, as well as the University of Delaware's IPA research team. JCYOI and DYOI resources and best practices related to Ready by 21 services and programming were presented by the DYOI Coordinator and staff. IPA's research team provided state comparisons and service models for key areas identified by the Committee and its regular participants. After review, discussion, and preliminary consensus among the entire group, eight primary components were identified as critical in creating a developmentally appropriate Ready by 21 services program in Delaware—**Age, Eligibility, Re-entry, Legal Jurisdiction, Housing and Supervised-Living Options, Case Management, Financial Assistance, and Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks**. These components, together with recommendations on deployment in Delaware, are detailed in the following section.

What Should Ready by 21 Services Look Like in Delaware?

Tailored services and supports are critical for youth who have experienced foster care as they begin to make important and difficult choices about their relationships, lifestyles, and aspirations in their journey to adulthood. Based on input provided by the youth participating in the Committee, as well as research and support from YAC, DYOI, and the University of Delaware's IPA, the HJR 18 Committee identified eight primary components in the

establishment of a developmentally appropriate, fully integrated system of independent living services, including housing and financial assistance, for youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware. This system shall be referred to hereafter as “Ready by 21” services.

Due to fiscal constraints, the Committee recognizes the need for a “phase-in” implementation approach. This approach will provide for the extension and expansion of the services currently offered through the Delaware Division of Family Services’ Independent Living (IL) program. Ideally, a continuum of fully developed and comprehensive services will be offered as resources and additional funding become available.

For each element, research summaries and detailed discussions led to a preliminary consensus among meeting participants (including stakeholders who were not given formal voting authority) with a final vote among appointed Committee members on September 6, 2012 (see Addendum D).

1. **Age** – The Committee recommends that the age up to which Ready by 21 services should be available to youth who have experienced foster care in Delaware be 21. This is based on the input and perspectives of the youth participating in the Committee, together with adult appointees, as well as a comprehensive overview of other state models. Review of these models reveals that most states with Ready by 21–like services rescind eligibility at age 21. In addition, current research shows that permitting youth to stay in care until age 21 promotes healthier adolescent brain development, which correlates with a youth’s success later in life.
2. **Eligibility** – The Committee recommends that priority for Ready by 21 services should be given to youth are in DSCYF custody at the time of their 18th birthday. As funding becomes available and based on a needs assessment, youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption between the ages of 16 and 18 should next be considered for eligibility. If funding is available, youth who have returned to family between the ages of 16 and 18 should also be considered based on need. Youth eligible for Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) should also be eligible for Ready by 21 services. These eligible youth should be required to enroll in an educational, vocational, employment or volunteer

program. It is recommended that Delaware's Ready by 21 services decline eligibility for housing and financial assistance for out-of-state youth who come to reside in Delaware. However, these youth would remain eligible for IL services. (This exclusion does not apply to Delaware youth who are attending college in another state - see **Housing and Supervised Living** below).

Youth who are eligible for Ready by 21 services should be required to actively participate in IL services, enroll in an educational or vocational program, and/or be working or volunteering in the community for a minimum number of hours per month. Youth should be given a six-month window to comply with this eligibility requirement. Exceptions for youth whose disabilities prevent them for complying with these requirements should be developed.

3. **Re-Entry** – There should be no restrictions on when a youth can “re-enter” Ready by 21 services until age 21—meaning that if a youth is eligible, then he or she should remain eligible until the youth's 21st birthday. However, there should be a limit to the number of times a youth may re-enter Ready by 21 while he/she is 18, 19, or 20. This limit will be developed by DFS and its community partners once Ready by 21 is implemented. Appropriate financial assistance incentives could help in reducing the number of times youth discontinue and reapply for Ready by 21 services.
4. **Legal Jurisdiction** – The Committee recommends that Family Court oversight and continued legal representation of youth should be voluntary and considered on a case-by-case basis. To the extent that formal legal representation of youth or Family Court oversight is necessary, the youth can invoke Delaware's extended jurisdiction statute, 10 Del. C. § 929.
5. **Housing and Supervised Living** – The Committee recommends that housing resources for youth receiving Ready by 21 services be broad and fully utilize Delaware's current housing options. Providing a wide range of housing alternatives promotes independence through age-appropriate decision-making based on the specific circumstances, needs, and aspirations of the youth. An array of

settings and living arrangements should include supervised-living, independent-living, and college dormitory settings, as well as apartments and group and foster homes. This allows youth to experience “life as an adult” in a personalized, guided, and supported manner that provides resources such as emergency and personal safety, money management, and consumer awareness. The Committee recommends that housing resources should be available for Delaware youth who have experienced foster care and choose to reside outside of Delaware (e.g., college dormitory).

6. **Case Management** – The Committee recommends that the current Independent Living (IL) case-management design should remain in place, recognizing that supplemental resources and assessments may be necessary with regard to placement and other services. Further, the IL program managers and service providers should make reasonable efforts to have contact with youth receiving Ready by 21 services at least monthly and more frequently as needed. The Committee recommends that the current IL case plans, together with the requirements set forth by the youth’s housing provider, serve as the agreement between the youth and his/her IL case worker regarding parameters for Ready by 21.
7. **Financial Assistance** – The Committee recommends that youth in Ready by 21 receive a stipend in addition to housing maintenance payments. Youth who receive stipends will be required to participate in a financial-literacy program. Stipend options and rates should vary depending on circumstances.
8. **Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks** – Evidence-based assessment tools that outline specific criteria and benchmarks related to housing, financial, and life skills of youth receiving Ready by 21 services beyond 18 should be implemented and applied to youth as well as IL providers and foster- and group-home providers. Such tools are important in helping assess competencies of case managers, foster- and group-home providers, and youth. In addition, such tools assist Delaware’s youth to set and achieve long-term goals, evaluate relationships, establish effective work and study habits, utilize community resources, develop personal financial principles, learn

how to budget and pay bills, recognize the need for and follow a health-maintenance and self-care schedule, and establish and maintain permanent connections to caring, supportive adults and peers.

Assessment tools applied to case managers and foster- and group-home providers help in developing the evidenced-based body of knowledge and level of expertise that is necessary for working with youth who are transitioning to adulthood as well as assist the larger system in assessing performance outcomes and further opportunities for improvement among adult role models.

The Committee recommends that the benchmarks or assessments developed in the past five years in Delaware should be reviewed against evidence-based best practices to determine whether updates are necessary to support Delaware's Ready by 21 services.

Conclusion

DSCYF Secretary Vivian Rapposelli, members of the HJR 18 Committee, and the Youth Advisory Council would like to thank the 146th General Assembly and Governor Markell for the opportunity to propose a developmentally appropriate and comprehensive Ready by 21 program that is designed to meet the needs of Delaware youth, as articulated by the youth and Delaware's child-welfare professionals and advocates. This process has allowed comprehensive review of other state systems and national best practices, as compiled by the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration and the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative. The research and staffing of the Committee has been invaluable and has fully informed the discussion and recommendations provided in this report. DSCYF, advocates, and the Youth Advisory Council will avail themselves to the 147th General Assembly to advocate for resources and support in order to implement the Ready by 21 services program as articulated in this report.

Addenda

Addendum A: HJR 18

Addendum B: Fiscal Analysis Summary

Addendum C: HJR 18 Committee Meeting Agendae

Addendum D: HJR 18 Committee Meeting Minutes



**Addendum A:
HJR 18**



SPONSOR: Rep. Barbieri & Sen. Henry

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
146th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES TO SUBMIT AN ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM FOR YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS UP TO AGE 21.

1 WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care have identified extending foster care services and programs
2 as a way to support young adults in transitioning to adulthood, finishing school, and achieving independence while having
3 the stability of a family and/or other community supports; and

4 WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care indicate that they do not receive formal independent living
5 services until age 16, that they struggle to become fully independent in two years, and that they are unable to truly integrate
6 and practice independent living skills until after they reach age 18; and

7 WHEREAS, youth who age out of foster care face significant hardships compared to the general population,
8 including, but not limited to securing and maintaining housing, employment, and medical coverage, as well as attaining an
9 education; and

10 WHEREAS, approximately 100 youth age out of Delaware's foster care system annually; and

11 WHEREAS, research studies on the national population of those aging out of foster care indicate that, compared
12 to the general population, youth who age out of foster care without appropriate family and community supports are at
13 higher risk for being arrested (82% of males reported having been arrested by age 21), becoming homeless (22% reported
14 having been homeless for at least one day after aging out), not completing their education, and suffering with emotional and
15 mental health challenges including a reported lifetime prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder similar to that of many
16 U.S. war veterans; and

17 WHEREAS, while some supports exist for youth past the age of 18 when they exit the foster care system, a
18 developmentally appropriate, comprehensive program that fully integrates independent living services with housing, is
19 needed to serve all youth who wish to receive assistance; and

20 WHEREAS, while much has been done in Delaware to assist youth who have experienced foster care including
21 the establishment of groups such as the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Delaware Girls Initiative, the Division

22 of Family Services' APPLA Workgroup, the Youth Advisory Council and the Child Protection Accountability
23 Commission, no one entity has specifically studied extending foster care to age 21; and

24 WHEREAS, at least 28 states have now adopted some form of extending foster care to the age of 21; and

25 WHEREAS, the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative at the Delaware Center for Justice, Inc., brings together
26 the people, systems, and resources necessary to assist young people who leave the foster care system by fostering
27 successful transitions for all youth exiting care and creating a Community Partnership Board of vested cohorts; and

28 WHEREAS, studies have shown that youth who have experienced foster care have better outcomes when extended
29 and appropriate foster care services and programs are provided to them such as that embraced by the federal John Chafee
30 Independence Act and the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act; and

31 WHEREAS, the State of Delaware also recognizes the benefits of providing supportive services to help youth who
32 have been in the State's care in becoming independent and responsible adults through age 21; and

33 WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care, including the leadership of Delaware's Youth Advisory
34 Council, have requested consideration of creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program to age 21 to assist
35 with their successful transition into adulthood;

36 NOW, THEREFORE:

37 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the 146th General Assembly of the State of
38 Delaware, with the approval of the Governor, that the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families
39 ("DSCYF") shall submit an analysis and recommendations for creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program
40 for youth/young adults up to age 21.

41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DSCYF shall oversee and advise the development of the analysis and
42 recommendations, with representation from state agencies, advocacy groups, and community organizations, and most
43 importantly current and former foster care youth, as follows:

- 44 1. At least one (1) Judge from the Family Court, as designated by the Chief Judge of the Family Court;
- 45 2. The Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, or the Secretary's
46 designee;
- 47 3. The Coordinator of the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, or the Coordinator's designee;
- 48 4. The Director of the Division of Family Services, or the Director's designee;
- 49 5. The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee;
- 50 6. At least one (1) member of the House of Representatives, designated by the Speaker of the House;
- 51 7. At least one (1) member of the Senate, designated by the President *pro tempore*;

52 8. At least five (5) youth who have experienced foster care, including at least two (2) representatives from the
53 Youth Advisory Council, as designated by DSCYF;

54 9. At least one (1) representative from education and academic organizations, as designated by DSCYF;

55 10. At least one (1) representative from community agencies and programs serving youth, as designated by
56 DSCYF; and

57 11. At least one (1) foster parent or group care provider, as designated by DSCYF.

58 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing the analysis and recommendations, DSCYF shall provide
59 information on the programs and services needed for youth to successfully transition, as well as a fiscal analysis of and
60 funding recommendations for a developmentally appropriate foster care program to age 21 which must reflect the voices of
61 the state's youth to ensure continual participation and involvement which is necessary to fully understand the specific needs
62 and interests of the population.

63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DSCYF shall report the findings and recommendations to the Governor, the
64 General Assembly, the Youth Advisory Council and the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative Community Partnership
65 Board no later than September 17, 2012.

SYNOPSIS

This resolution is in response to recommendations from Delaware's Youth Advisory Council, which is comprised of youth who have experienced foster care and who speak on behalf of all youth in care. The Youth Advisory Council provides the opportunity for youth, who are sincere about improving foster care, to assemble and discuss issues and possible solutions. The Youth Advisory Council members, in collaboration with the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, have asked the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and the General Assembly to consider creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program for youth/young adults up to the age of 21 to assist with their successful transition to adulthood. This resolution requires significant youth participation in submitting a timely analysis and report on the practical and fiscal impacts of extending Delaware's foster care program to age 21.



Addendum B: Fiscal Analysis Summary

Whether or Not to Exercise Fostering Connections Option to Extend Foster Care Maintenance Benefits Beyond Age 18 in Delaware – Practical Considerations

*Dennis Blazey, Independent Consultant, Fostering Connections
April 2012*

Fiscal* - Federal reimbursement of extended foster care benefit costs would only be available for those children who are Title IV-E eligible. Not all children are IV-E eligible. Delaware's IV-E eligibility rate is quite low amongst youth 16 -18 years of age - about 35%. Assuming that extended foster care benefits were offered to all otherwise qualifying youth without regard to any given youth's IV-E eligibility status, Delaware's effective federal reimbursement rate would only be about \$194.85 for every \$1000 in benefit costs incurred for the Federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2012. This effectively means that Delaware would be forced to develop and operationalize the full scope of a federally defined program in exchange for a likely reimbursement rate of \$0.20 for each dollar of foster care benefit cost paid thereunder. Were Delaware willing to forgo this nominal rate of federal reimbursement, the State could gain considerable program design flexibility beyond that allowed in Fostering Connections for little increase in overall costs.

Concept of Majority – Under current Delaware law, youth in foster care receive full majority rights upon attaining age 18 (assuming they are otherwise competent). Exercising Fostering Connections' option to extend foster care benefits past age 18 presumes that by remaining in foster care a youth will remain subject to some measure of the State's ability to direct the youth's placement and care. As a consequence, this also means that while in extended foster care, a youth's majority rights are, of necessity, to some degree impaired. The degree, scope, and meaning of that impairment, and how it occurs (ie, voluntary, involuntary, or both), are major policy questions that will require hard, thoughtful, and deliberate consideration. Those decisions will, in turn, need to be reflected in carefully crafted and significant changes to Delaware statute and Court practice.

Program Detail – In order to exercise Fostering Connections' option to extend foster care benefits past age 18, Delaware will need to design and operate its program to ensure that it meets all of the requirements delineated in the Fostering Connections statute and published federal implementation guidance. These requirements may, or may not, create policy difficulties and/or program design burdens for Delaware. Because of this, Delaware should carefully weigh and balance what its programmatic gains and losses would be by accepting the constraints of federal program requirements in exchange for federal reimbursements.

* - the fiscal discussion and reimbursement analysis assumes that federal reimbursement for extended foster care benefits will only be available for a youth who was Title IV-E eligible immediately prior to reaching age 18. Current published federal implementation guidance can be read to suggest that virtually all youth may qualify for federal reimbursement without the necessity to demonstrate prior IV-E eligibility at age 18. That said, this guidance has no support in the language of the Fostering Connections statute, and the federal government has not yet approved State program submissions that incorporate the broad eligibility/reimbursement standard found in that implementation guidance. If the broader eligibility standard is allowed, Delaware's reimbursement rate would rise to about 55-56% of benefit cost.



**Addendum C:
HJR 18 Committee Meeting Agendae**

**HJR 18 WORKGROUP
-- NOTICE OF MEETING --
THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2012
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
WILMINGTON AND MILFORD DFS OFFICES (w/
TELECONFERENCE)
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.**

A G E N D A

- I. Introductions and Welcome – Julia O’Hanlon and Rodney Brittingham
- II. HJR 18 Background and Direction – Tania Culley, Esq.
- III. DYOI Developmentally Appropriate and Individualized Foster Care to Age 21 – Julie Miller
- IV. DSCYF Background, Due Diligence & Estimated Budget – Felicia Kellum and Keith Zirkle
- V. Youth Response
- VI. Open Discussion from Workgroup
- VII. Next Steps – Tania Culley, Esq.
- VIII. Public Comment
- IX. Adjournment

**HJR 18 WORKGROUP
-- NOTICE OF MEETING --
THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2012
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
WILMINGTON AND MILFORD DFS OFFICES (w/
TELECONFERENCE)
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.**

A G E N D A

- I. Introductions and Welcome – Julia O’Hanlon
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Developmentally Appropriate Foster Care – Criteria
 - A. Age
 - B. Eligibility
 - C. Legal System Involvement
 - D. Re-Entry
 - E. Living Arrangements
 - F. Financial Assistance
 - G. Caseworker Involvement
 - H. Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks
 - i. Youth
 - ii. Care Provider
 - iii. Caseworker
 - I. Current Resources & Gaps
- IV. Public Comment
- V. Adjournment

**HJR 18 WORKGROUP
-- NOTICE OF MEETING --
THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2012
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
WILMINGTON AND MILFORD DFS OFFICES (w/
TELECONFERENCE)
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.**

A G E N D A

- 4:00 Introductions and Welcome By Co-Chairs – Julia O’Hanlon, Tania Culley
Approval of Minutes – Julie Miller, DYOI Coordinator
- 4:05 Overview of Meeting Objectives and Intended Action Items
- Confirmation of Process and Voting
 - Confirmation of Official Appointees
 - Review of other States Criteria
 - Determine States, Programs, Services of Priority to Delaware for Developmentally Appropriate Extension of Foster Care
- 4:10 Process and Voting
- 4:20 Official Appointees
- 4:30 Primary Considerations for Shaping Delaware’s Extended Foster Care Program
– Julia O’Hanlon and other University of Delaware Staff
- 5:15 Response by Appointees – Facilitated by Tania Culley and Rodney Brittingham
- 5:30 Public Comment
- 5:45 Priority Items and Path Forward

ADJOURN

**HJR 18 WORKGROUP
-- NOTICE OF MEETING --
THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2012
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
WILMINGTON AND MILFORD DFS OFFICES (w/
TELECONFERENCE)
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.**

A G E N D A

- 4:00 Introductions and Welcome – Julia O’Hanlon
- Approval of Minutes – Julie Miller, Esq.
- 4:05 Developmentally Appropriate Extended Foster Care – Criteria
- A. Caseworker Involvement
 - B. Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks
 - i. Youth
 - ii. Care Provider
 - iii. Caseworker
 - C. Financial Assistance
- 5:45 Public Comment
- 6:00 Adjournment

HJR 18 WORKGROUP
-- NOTICE OF MEETING --
THURSDAY, September 6, 2012
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
WILMINGTON AND MILFORD DFS OFFICES (w/
TELECONFERENCE)
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

A G E N D A

4:00 Introductions and Welcome By Co-Chairs – Julia O’Hanlon, Tania Culley

Approval of Minutes – Julie Miller, DYOI Coordinator

4:05 Overview of Meeting Objectives and Intended Action Items

- Outstanding Items
- Process and Voting (who, how)

4:30 Primary Considerations for Shaping Delaware’s Extended Foster Care Program: FINAL VOTING (see handout for specific voting options for each area)

- Age
- Eligibility
- Re-entry
- Legal Jurisdiction
- Case Management
- Housing/Living Arrangement
- Financial Assistance
- Self-Sufficiency

5:30 Public Comment

5:45 Path Forward

6:00 Adjourn



**Addendum D:
HJR 18 Committee Meeting Minutes**

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday, July 12, 2012 Minutes

Location: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair

The Hon. Barbara Crowell

The Hon. William L. Chapman, Jr.

Nathan Badell

Rep. Michael Barbieri

John Bates

Amanda Brennan

Rodney Brittingham

Jim Flynn

Sherfone Johnson

Christina Jones-Bey

Felicia Kellum

Mike Kopp

Mary Kate McLaughlin

Julie Miller, Esq.

Demetrius Pinder

Susan Radecki

Ethan S.

Ellie Torres

Tasha Warren

Keith Zirkle

Welcome & Introductions

Rodney Brittingham welcomed everyone to the meeting and spoke about how in the next few months this group has the undertaking of creating a developmentally appropriate extended care system. This group will create a “menu of options” for youth who wish to stay in care past their 18th birthday.

Tania Culley had some housekeeping items to address in order to assign tasks to committee members and groups. She discussed the importance of the agendas being posted a week prior to the meetings in order to be compliant with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Julie Miller volunteered to take minutes for the Committee. The committee also agreed that the University of Delaware would complete the background research through the use of a graduate student and staff at the Institute for Public Administration. In addition, budget analysis and report preparation would be completed by the Division of Family Services.

HJR 18 Background and Direction

Tania explained that the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative had formed a Community Partnership Board with several working groups at the beginning of this year. Tania and Julia O’Hanlon were asked to chair the Policy working group, to which they accepted. Through this group, the issue of extending foster care to 21 was addressed. The group, with the help of several youth, wrote a resolution, HJR 18 sponsored by Rep. Michael Barbieri, to form this current committee. Three youth testified, and HJR 18 was passed in both the House and Senate and signed by Governor Markell. This current committee must now decide how extended care will look in Delaware and how much it will cost, all by September 17th. Tania and Julia will continue to be the chairs and direct the group over the next few months.

DYOI Developmentally Appropriate and Individualized Foster Care to Age 21

Julie Miller discussed the importance of developmentally appropriate extended care to 21. Part of that definition, as defined by the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, includes having the broadest more flexible options of care for older youth. She further explained the need for friendly venues for review of a young person’s case as well as youth directed advocacy. Julie stated that Delaware will be used as a model site for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, as they embark on a national campaign to extend care to 21. Additionally, she explained that Delaware has put into practice the STEPS plan at 17. This plan allows youth,

about to exit from care, to bring together important people in their lives to plan for the transition to adulthood. Through Jim Casey's developmentally appropriate framework, the Initiative is looking to move this type of planning to 14 years of age.

DSCYF Background, Due Diligence & Estimated Budget

Keith Zirkle was asked to discuss a fiscal analysis the Division of Family Services (DFS) had done in considering the extension of foster care to 21. According to Keith, DFS started to look at the costs to extend in 2010 when the Foster Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed by Congress. He explained that there were two models that have been analyzed:

Model 1

Keith explained that this model was budgeted to look exactly the same as foster care to 18, but extended up to age 21. Young adults would live with foster families, have the same supervision, same money services, and same independent living services. Requirements would be the same as those of Title IV(e) to get Chaffee dollars. He explained that averaging 115 youth reaching age 18, with 20 cases per caseworker, DFS would need to create nine new positions: six workers, one supervisor, one IV(e) eligible caseworker, and one assistant. Additional costs would include board payments and adoption subsidies. Due to the low penetration rate or IV(e) eligibility of youth in Delaware (32% and falling), total cost for this plan would be \$2.9 million, including federal funds (state share is increasing because of low penetration rate). Medicaid costs are not included in the cost analysis. However, Rep. Barbieri and Amanda Brennan would contend that most youth that are aging out of foster care would receive Medicaid benefits as a result of low income so that is not a new cost to the state.

Model 2

Using the same model and services as the foster care system in place now, the state would contract an outside agency to service the 18-21 population, including housing. The budget was created using the assumption of \$150 a day per older youth or \$55,000 a year per youth. Model 2 would also use as much IV(e) monies as possible. Unfortunately, youth that are placed with DFS contracted homes would have to move to a new home, contracted through the outside agency. Keith estimated that the total cost would be a total cost of about a\$1 million for every 18 youth.

Earlier this year a consultant from Annie E. Casey, Dennis Blazey, an expert in Fostering Connections, helped to go through a fiscal analysis with members of DFS. Through this analysis, it was determined a completely state supported extended care system may be the best option for Delaware. Because of this, Delaware will not have some of the restrictions placed on states that opt into Fostering Connections.

Mary Kate McLaughlin added that she wants to make sure that this is not a system that continues foster care in the same way. She wants the committee to recognize the importance of creating a system that creates young independent adults. Rodney also describes that there are currently youth and young adults utilizing vouchers and other housing help for apartments that we must consider in determining extended care in Delaware.

Felicia Kellum described some states that have already extended foster care to 21. She chose to discuss the completely state funded programs because the committee agrees that federal funding does not warrant the restrictions through Fostering Connections. Through this discussion, the committee agreed that the areas that we would like to start molding are: age limit, eligibility requirements, legal involvement, re-entry, living arrangement, financial assistance/services, case worker/independent living involvement, and philosophy.

Youth Response

Ethan S. discussed how he was getting acquainted with the information provided at this meeting. He will be prepared at the next meeting to discuss what programs he would like to see for older youth partaking in extended care. Amanda Brennan discussed the importance of current and former foster youth from all over the state to participate in this group and urged the independent living providers to each bring one youth with them to the upcoming meetings.

Open Discussion from Workgroup

Nate Badell mentioned the need for a savings incentive program when older youth reach certain benchmarks, like graduation or paying bills on time. Julie Miller explained the Jim Casey Opportunity Passport IDA savings Program and the hope to bolster West End's already existing program. Judge Barbara Crowell then suggested the need for social skills learning. Julie mentioned Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative Transitions working group and their goal of building social capital among older youth. Tasha Warren will bring in a budget from the West End Lifelines Program that currently houses twenty-two youth to help determine costs for housing on a state-wide level. Christina Bey-Jones added that she would like the group to consider developmentally disabled services for older youth and other state's youth moving into Delaware for services when building our extended care system. Keith Zirkle would also like to the group to consider extension of foster care and services might be a disincentive for youth to be adopted and ways to get around this.

Mary Kate McLaughlin closed the discussion by mentioning that money should not constrain the system the group builds. The committee should also consider that phasing in costs can help alleviate a high cost system.

Next Steps

The committee should review what other states are doing, per Felicia Kellum's handout and come to the next meeting with ideas for Delaware's model in the areas of age limit, eligibility requirements, legal involvement, re-entry, living arrangement, financial assistance/services, case worker/independent living involvement, and philosophy.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETINGS –

All meeting will take place at Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference):

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

- **Thursday, July 26, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, August 9, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, August 23, 2012 – 4:00 pm**

- **Thursday, September 6, 2012 –4:00 pm**

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday, July 26, 2012 Minutes

Location: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair*

The Hon. Barbara Crowell

The Hon. Mardi F. Pyott

Rep. Michael Barbieri

John Bates

Amanda Brennan

Rodney Brittingham

Paul Calistro

Aimee DeBenedictis

Sue Dougherty

Shylah Duchicela

Jim Flynn

Christina Jones-Bey

Felicia Kellum

Laura V.

Janet Leban

Eric Lloyd

Gerard M.

Mary Kate McLaughlin

Julie Miller, Esq.*

Susan Radecki

Brian Robinson

Christella St. Juste

Michelle Taylor

Tasha Warren

Keith Zirkle

*Denotes those who have been officially appointed to the Workgroup thus far

Welcome & Introductions

Tania Culley welcomed everyone to the meeting and addressed some housekeeping items. She asked Amanda Brennan which youth applications had been submitted in order to have five youth appointed to the Committee. Amanda stated that paperwork had been sent in for herself, Demetrius Pinder, and Eric Lloyd. Julie Miller added that Christella St. Juste's application had been sent by Felicia Kellum. Tania also said that her office had send Ethan S.'s paperwork, completing the five youth requirement. Gerard M. will also send in paperwork, as he would like to participate on the committee.

Approval of Minutes

John Bates moved to approve the minutes, with Felicia seconding. All in attendance approved.

Developmentally Appropriate Foster Care – Criteria

Shylah Duchicela from University of Delaware Institute of Public Administration is in the process of creating a matrix to compare how fifteen other states have extended developmentally appropriate care, including the requirements to do so. Specifically, the matrix will be broken up into nine different categories. Examples include housing, independent living services, eligibility, and funding sources. Jim Flynn added that UD looked for the fifteen states that closely resembled Delaware's foster care population.

Age

The committee discussed what ages should be considered for extended care. Julie stated that the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) research shows that at 21, young adults are more ready to function independently. Based on UD's research, most states extended care to 21, and developmentally appropriate care starts at 13 or 14. Felicia stated that perhaps as a caveat to the bill, Independent Living services could be offered at age 14 instead of 16, when they start now. **The committee agreed that the appropriate age to extend care to should be 21 in Delaware.**

Eligibility

The committee discussed the requirements of eligibility for extended care to 21. Julie stated that the JCYOI extended care approach follows the Fostering Connections Act requirements closely and should be as broad as possible. The Act allows states to extend care, with some federal support, for youth up to the age of 19, 20 or 21 if the youth is 1) "completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;" 2) "enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education;" 3) "participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment;" 4) "employed for at least 80 hours per month;" or 5) "incapable of doing any [of the above] due to a medical condition."

Amanda brought up the discussion from last meeting of youth with disabilities and whether these youth will be covered if care is extended. Questions were raised about what services the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) is already providing for young adults who age out of care with disabilities. Concerns over housing were brought up by the Independent Living Providers. The Division of Family Services (DFS) will bring data on the amount of youth that fit into this category to frame the discussion further at the next meeting. Because of the DDDS discussion, Susan Radecki suggested DHSS sit at the table during these meetings, as well as any other agency that might be affected by extended care (DSHA, DOL, etc.). **The committee needs to take a formal vote as to whether youth who are eligible for DDDS services should also be eligible for extended foster care.**

The committee discussed whether Delaware's extended care should include current and former foster youth who have moved from another state into Delaware. Gerard and Eric would like to help as many youth as possible no matter which state they age out from and suggested that there be some flexibility in deciding this matter. Felicia was concerned about rising costs to the system if Delaware does include these youth because there is no way to predict the costs associated with them. Out of state youth are currently eligible for Independent Living (IL) services through one of the four contracted providers already and that would remain the same, even if care is extended. In looking at other states, Felicia stated that housing isn't always provided, but financial assistance is almost always offered. Paul Calistro agreed in that most major components are already provided for through IL services. Right now, the state is only providing assistance for less than 10 out of state youth. **The committee's initial vote was to decline eligibility for out of state youth.**

The committee next discussed those youth who have already achieved permanency (adoption, reunification, guardianship). Should these youth be allowed to reenter foster care after 18 if their permanent situation falls apart? Tania stated that they should and discussed the case of Nicole Byers having been adopted at a young age and then put back into care at a later age, close to the time she "aged out". It would have been helpful for Nicole to stay in care longer. Amanda explained that after reunification with her biological mother she was homeless until she was placed in care. The reason for her example was that even though there are good plans for permanency a backup plan needs to be in place for the foster youth, especially those reuniting with family they were estranged from for years. The group considered perhaps youth who were placed in a permanent setting between 16-18 would qualify for extended care if that setting fails.

Currently in Delaware if a youth is sent home and turns eighteen they will not qualify for any independent living services. Additionally, if a youth has a case already open with independent living and moves into care with a biological family member services will continue for the youth only for an additional 60 days. Paul expressed that West End is flexible with cases like this and looks at individuals when deciding if they will help the youth. Judge Pyott was concerned for youth when things don't work out and helping them. Brian Robinson said there needs to be a

needs based assessment looking at the permanent settings financials in deciding this matter. The University of Delaware will provide the group with what other states are doing to frame the conversation. **The committee initially concluded that priority for extended foster care should be given to youth who are in foster care at age 18; however, ideally youth who exited foster care to guardianship or adoption between the ages of 16 and 18 should also be eligible. The committee was split as to whether youth who exit to family reunification between the ages of 16 and 18 should be eligible. If funding is available to serve youth beyond those who are exiting at age 18, the committee suggested a needs assessment approach.**

The group then considered the Fostering Connections criteria of employment and education. Paul asked the present youth some questions about what requirements should be placed on the youth and young adults that are living in the houses that are being supported by stipends or youth who choose to stay in care. Some eligibility requirements that he started with are employment and education. The youth panel agreed that either youth should work or go to school or both. Christella said that we should only help people that want to help themselves. However, we should allow time (6 – 9 months) for the young adult to get situated and find work or schooling when they first decide to extend care. Tasha Warren was concerned with those youth who have serious mental illnesses and cannot go to school or maintain employment. Rep. Barbieri said in cases like this, there should be two different systems. One for those who can work or go to school, in which case services are graduated based on specific benchmarks. The services would decrease as the young adult hits those benchmarks (graduating, finding employment, etc.). The other system would be for those who need extra help. DFS would work with other state agencies to access services for this population. **The committee initially concluded that youth should be enrolled in some type of educational or vocational program and/or working or volunteering in the community to be eligible for extended care. The committee also agreed that there should be a six month window post age 18 to comply with this requirement. The committee was undecided as to whether there should be an exception to this requirement for those youth who cannot meet this criteria being mindful of those youth with disabilities.**

The committee finished the meeting with a conversation centered on who can live with youth when the housing is completely paid for by stipends or vouchers. Gerard agreed with many adults in the room that no one should live with them. Laura said it depends on the individual and should be looked at by individual cases. There should be some oversight, but the youth should be making the decision in the end. Perhaps trial housing could be used for this. Mary Kate McLaughlin would like to look at how other states limit housing. John said we should consider relationship building for this issue as well as others when looking to extend care.

Next Steps

At the next meeting, the committee will finish eligibility discussions and move onto legal system involvement and re-entry.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETINGS –

**All meeting will take place at Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference):
1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199
247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.**

- **Thursday, August 9, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, August 23, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, September 6, 2012 – 4:00 pm**

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday August 9, 2012

Locations: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair
Julia O’Hanlon – Co-Chair
The Hon. Barbara Crowell
The Hon. Peter Jones
The Hon. Mardi F. Pyott
Nathan Badell
John Bates
Amanda Brennan
Rodney Brittingham
Aimee DeBenedictis
Sue Dougherty
Shylah Duchicela
Selena Ellis
Sherfone Johnson

Christina Jones-Bey
Felicia Kellum
Janet Leban
Eric Lloyd
Gerard M.
Mary Kate McLaughlin
Julie Miller, Esq.
Demetrius Pinder
Samatha R.
Susan Radecki
Maegan Soll
Christella St. Juste
Vanessa

Welcomes & Introductions

Julia O’Hanlon welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Approval of the Minutes

Rodney Brittingham moved to approve the minutes, with Tania Culley seconding. All in attendance approved.

Overview of Meeting Objectives and Intended Action Items

Confirmation of Process of Voting

Julia explained confirmation of process and voting for the meeting. The process can be somewhat complicated and because of the short time frame the committee has before the report is due to the Governor and the General Assembly, everyone must bear with the Co-Chairs.

Confirmation of Official Appointees

Rodney Brittingham listed the following committee members as those becoming official appointments: Judge Crowell (designated by Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Coon); Mary Kate McLaughlin (designated by Cabinet Secretary Vivian Rapposelli); Julie Miller* of the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative; Rodney Brittingham (designated by Division of Family Services Director Vicky Kelly); Tania Culley* of the Office of the Child Advocate; Representative Mike Barbieri, Senator yet to be named; Youth Ethan S., Eric Lloyd, Amanda Brennan, Christella St. Juste, and Demetrius Pinder; Julia O’Hanlon (representing educational institutions); Paul Calistro (representing community organizations); and Nathan Badell (representing foster parents).

*denotes those who have already been officially appointed to the committee thus far.

Review of States Criteria

Mary Kate McLaughlin explained that the Governor’s office is currently processing the applications for appointee’s for the HJR 18 committee and that each person appointed would receive an official letter at their place of residence stating their official appointment. The committee would remain a public meeting.

Process of Voting

Tania Culley and Julia agreed that since only two people are currently truly appointed to the committee, Tania and Julie Miller, the group would take consensus votes on issues at the moment. Once everyone is appointed as required by the HJR 18, voting will occur in the most expedited way possible, as required by law. The committee will rely heavily on proxy and offline votes.

Primary Consideration for Shaping Delaware's Extended Foster Care Program

Julia discussed research that the University of Delaware has been putting together for the HJR 18 committee. She explained that the documents handed out at the meeting, *States Policies, Criteria, and Resources, for Extended Foster Care* (the matrix) and *Primary Considerations for Shaping Delaware's Extended Foster-Care Program* are still drafts and that this committee can have input on what edits and additions should be made. However, the documents can help summarize some important information and compare data from the states on what extended care should look like.

Primary Considerations for Shaping Delaware's Extended Foster-Care Program explains the matrix:

- Eligibility (see Tables 1-4 of supporting document)
 - Who is eligible for extended foster care to age 21? /What circumstances determine (e.g., permanency status)? (see Table 1/ Table 2)
 - What are the requirements/conditions? (Table 3)
 - Education/Vocation
 - Employment
 - Medical Condition
 - When will youth be advised of the availability of extended foster-care benefits and eligibility?
- Oversight and Case Management (see examples on page 8)
 - What case work responsibilities are required for youth in extended foster care to age 21?
- Re-Entry (see Table 8)
 - Can youth exit and re-enter care after age 18?
- Legal Jurisdiction /Involvement (see Table 9)
 - Who has legal responsibility for youth in extended foster care to age 21?
 - Are court reviews and judicial determinations needed for youth in extended foster care to age 21?
- Supervised Independent -Living Services (see Tables 10-12)
 - How are rates determined for youth living in supervised independent-living settings?
 - Is supervised living an option for extended foster care?/At what age do foster youth become eligible?
 - What are the requirements/conditions?
- Healthcare (See Table 13)
 - Are youth in extended foster care to age 21 eligible for health care? If so, what does this look like and include? How are applications completed (e.g., Medicaid)?
- Programs & Services (*see Tables 14-15*)
 - What living arrangements or settings will exist for youth in extended foster care? How are these the same or different than current arrangements/settings?
 - Continuation of Placement with Foster-Care Family
 - Supervised Independent Living

- Are workforce support and employment services available?
- What education-assistance programs are available?
- What financial assistance is provided and for how long?
- What life-skills training programs will be available to youth in extended care?
- What transition planning is required for youth in extended foster care to age 21 (e.g., specified plan in place for “life after extended care”)?
- What agencies, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, and private-sector partners will be involved in developing the range of programs and services that meet a youth’s individual needs and circumstances?

Felicia Kellum stated that some of the information provided in the matrix may not be up to date, since Fostering Connections to Success has been adopted and implemented. Julia agreed and said new information is available constantly and UD will continually update the matrix as much as they can. Amanda Brennan spoke about how this information will inform the committee’s discussion moving forward and more information can be provided for outstanding issues. Mary Kate and Julia agreed that more information can be provided when framing the specifics of extended care. In addition, states vary, so this information will be helpful.

Legal System Involvement

Court Involvement between the ages 18-21

Gerard M. felt that youth should be required to attend a court hearing with a judge at least once after 18. If the youth is doing well, then they would not have to go back to the judge. He worried that some youth may not want to see a judge, but really need to in order to stay on the correct path toward success. Christella St. Juste stated that youth should be able to make a decision whether they need to continue seeing their judge or not. Maegan agreed it should be optional because if the hearings would no longer be about parental involvement, but more about the young adult. In addition, the Child Placement Review Board does status hearing already, so they should be in place of Court meetings. Samatha R., Amanda, and Demetrius Pinder agreed.

Tania suggested that mandatory judges hearing would be costly and most likely require additional judges on the bench. Sue Radecki and Nathan Badell believed it should be based on the youth and looked at case by case. Julie Miller added that the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) perspective calls for a case by case review. In addition, Delaware currently has extended legal jurisdiction, so case by case would not change what is in place.

The committee agreed that court involvement should be voluntary and looked at in a case by case review of the youth who stay in care past 18, as is already legislated in the extended legal jurisdiction act.

Involvement with CASAS/GALS from 18-21

Christella and Samatha believed that CASAs and GALs should be formally involved with youth who remain in care only if the youth is involved with the courts. Selena Ellis, Felicia, and Maegan, however, felt that it is very important to have an advocate for other hearing, like the Child Placement Review Board. Maegan also stated that GALs always know where the youth can seek supports and acts as a mentor. Nathan Badell spoke about the role of CASAs and GALs after the age of 18. It is no longer what is in the best interest of the child, but what the youth wants. JCYOI believes CASAs and GALs should be tied to the court system, formally.

The committee agreed that the CASAS and GALS should only represent those that remain in care past 18 if the court is also still involved. This does not preclude any informal interactions with the youth.

Re-Entry

According to JCYOI, the extended care system should be penetrable, meaning youth can reenter care even after leaving at 18. Samatha thought that youth should have one year to re-enter after leaving the system, but would not be allowed to re-enter after 20 years old. This is because youth are adults at that time, and should have their lives more or less together. There just would not be a lot of time for Division of Family Services to help with any kind of transition. Maegan also agrees that youth should be able to come back, but only until six to eight months. This would give the young person enough time to have healthy risk taking and if they falter, they can come back to the system. Mary Kate would extend that time to nine months, because generally it takes that amount of time to “fail”. Christella stated any time limit should be tied to experiences, like when the youth will graduate high school. Girard agreed.

Judge Jones stated that extending care is tied to housing and youth can receive other services even if they are not in care through Independent Living Services, so there should be no limit. Demetrius agreed and stated that eight to nine months to get one’s life together is not enough time. Amanda agreed, and read results of a survey taken of 23 current and former foster youth who wished to reenter at any time. She stated that most rental agreements are for a term of one year. Amanda believes limiting re-entry to a year would leave a person that tried to be independent and failed without a safety net. She would rather an opened ended re-entry until 21. She affirmed it is invaluable to not have a limit and this would help to give the youth a direction. Selena worried that some youth may take advantage of a system that allows for youth to re-enter at any time. She felt that if a youth comes back at 20 for one year to age out at 21 it may not be a lot of help. Sherfone Johnson responded that one year of help could be beneficial for someone who is struggling and has been finding the right path.

The committee agreed that there should be no age limitation on re-entry until 21. However, there may need to be a cap on number of times a youth can return to care between the ages of 18-21.

Supervised Independent Living Situations

Julie stated that the JCYOI model allows for a wide variety of housing options. The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative would suggest trial period of independent apartment living as early as possible. Options given should include but are not limited to dorm rooms, apartments, cluster homes, group homes, residences halls, and host homes.

Christella agrees that youth should have no limitations on housing options. Samatha and Gerard believe we should have out of state arrangements. Gerard mentions these options because youth may be interested in going to college out of state. Amanda suggested that if living with foster parents, stipends could be tied to a rent system. Nathan asked what are the costs associated with this. Rodney said that DFS is currently working on specific numbers with broad living arrangements and would bring those figures to the next meeting. In a survey to 23 youth, everyone has a different plan on living arrangements. Youth want options. Tania stated that whatever is put into place would not undercut what is already available in terms of housing.

The committee agreed that housing options would be as broad as possible, with certain stipulations depending on the type of housing. In addition, that state would support out of state housing options.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Priority Items and Path Forward

University of Delaware will research whether youth can receive financial and other support while living with a family member by looking at other states, such as Texas and Indiana. Julie will continue to clarify the JCYOI perspective. At the next meeting, the committee will discuss casework involvement, healthcare, self-sufficiency benchmarks, and financial assistance.

NEXT MEETINGS –

All meeting will take place at Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference):

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

- **Thursday, August 23, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, September 6, 2012 –4:00 pm**

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday August 23, 2012

Locations: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair
Julia O’Hanlon – Co-Chair
The Hon. William L. Chapman, Jr.
The Hon. Barbara Crowell
Nathan Badell
John Bates
Rodney Brittingham
Jennifer Donahue, Esq.
Sue Dougherty
Shylah Duchicela

Markisha F.
Christina Jones-Bey
Felicia Kellum
Gerard M.
Julie Miller, Esq.
Susan Radecki
Eiontai S.
Tasha Warren
Keith Zirkle

Welcomes & Introductions

Julia O’Hanlon welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Approval of the Minutes

Rodney Brittingham moved to approve the minutes, with Felicia Kellum seconding. All in attendance approved.

Developmentally Appropriate Extended Foster Care – Criteria

The University Of Delaware Institute for Public Administration provided the committee with research focusing on general policies and state examples in the areas of caseworker involvement, self-sufficiency benchmarks, and financial assistance. In addition, possible considerations for Delaware’s system were suggested.

Caseworker Involvement

- Should all casework responsibilities applicable to youth under 18 continue under an “extended care” program?

Rodney Brittingham stated that in the extended care system, those volunteering to stay in the system will have a “closed” case file, meaning DFS will not have mandatory caseworker involvement, but will continue to have independent living (IL) worker involvement. Case workers currently oversee educational opportunities, medical and counseling services, employment, housing, etc., according to Sue Dougherty. Basically, any social services that a youth may need help with, IL supports them.

The committee agreed that IL services will remain the same if care is extended to 21 in Delaware.

- How often should a young adult in an extended-care program meet with their case worker or Independent Living IL provider?

Usually, an IL case worker will see a youth at least once a month, though there is no requirement for all IL providers. Christina Jones-Bey says that People’s Place sees their clients twice a month, but feels that it should not be mandated because every IL provider has different needs and time constraints. Contact should be dictated by the provider’s contract. Sue and Tasha Warren agree that it should be “as needed”, but strongly encouraged it to be once a month. Nate Badell also said it should depend on the youth and their needs, so it should be monthly, and maybe more based on assessment of the youth.

Gerard M. and Markisha F. both stated that IL case workers were extremely beneficial to them and the more times a youth can meet with their case worker, the better. Eiontai S., however, acknowledged once a month contact should be the norm and if the youth needs their case worker, they should contact the worker themselves to show some independence. Judge Crowell agreed and said there should be a graduated system. At first a youth should be required to see a case worker, but after meeting certain benchmarks, the contact decreases.

The committee agreed that IL case workers should make reasonable efforts to have contact with youth at least once a month and as needed.

- Should an agreement that outlines a young adult’s goals, parameters, meeting times, personal interests and needs be a required or voluntary condition of being part of an “extended-care” program? Who is responsible for working with youth on this agreement or plan? Is this a team-based approach or between case manager and young adult only?

Felicia stated there should be an agreement, but it should not define if a youth stays in extended care if they do not adhere to the agreement. Right now, case plans are done every six months with youth in IL services. The youth works with their IL provider and anyone else they want in order to create and revise the case plan. Tasha feels that there should be requirements to promote milestones and this falls with self-sufficiency benchmarks. Eiontai said planning meetings are helpful to him and others in mapping out next steps in life. Felicia agreed and said every housing option (foster homes, Life Lines, dorms, etc.) all have different requirements and expectations that should not be dictated by DFS.

The committee agreed that the current IL case plan and housing option requirements are enough to suffice an agreement and parameters for extended care.

Self-Sufficiency Benchmarks

- When should a foster care youth or young adult in extended care start receiving training, coaching, and other guidance related to self-sufficiency (housing options and interests, financial literacy & budgeting, etc.)?

Tania Culley and Jen Donahue spoke about the benchmarks already in place through IL providers (“the blue book”). This was reviewed in the last two years. IL Providers use the Ansell Casey life skills assessment on clients. The assessment is completed when a youth enters IL care and usually not completed again. Sue said that is not the most helpful because the youth self-report on the assessment. It needs improvement. Judge Crowell wanted to make sure Health Education and Maintenance were a part of the benchmarks.

- Should young adults in extended care be required to undergo a life skills assessment? If so, when should this occur?

Jen stated there were IL provider benchmarks, from at least 2008, that should be revived. Judges should go through them at hearings.

The committee agreed that the DYOI Transitions working group should look at both the IL provider benchmarks and the blue book to develop protocol on self-sufficiency benchmarks for both youth in extended care and IL workers.

Financial Assistance

- Should financial assistance options and rates vary depending on circumstances?

According to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, there should be different options and rates depending on circumstances. Much of this would be tied to housing options and self-sufficiency benchmarks.

The committee agreed that financial assistance options and rates should vary depending on circumstances.

- Should young adults in extended care receive a stipend in addition to maintenance fees?

The committee agreed that young adults in extended care should receive a stipend in addition to maintenance fees.

- What kind of financial literacy training programs should youth undergo during extended care and who is responsible for overseeing this happens?

Julie Miller spoke about Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative's (DYOI) Opportunity Passport™ program and the need for strong financial literacy programs in Delaware. Currently, IL providers are doing a good job with financial literacy programs in place, but with Opportunity Passport™, those programs can be expanded. Many of the financial literacy programs, like \$tand By Me, are working with DYOI to bring Opportunity Passport™ to Delaware. Eiontai thinks these programs are extremely important and would like to see them tied into stipends, so there is an expectation put on the youth. Tasha said all youth need to be oriented about financial literacy. Julie added that there would be a number of different financial literacy options, so the youth and IL provider can pick the program best suited for the youth.

The committee agreed that stipends, based on assessment, would be given to youth only if they have taken part in some form of financial literacy program or expanded services, with an opt-out provision for good cause.

Next Steps

All voting members, those that have been officially appointed to the taskforce, must come to the next meeting. Official votes will be taken on the issues of eligibility, legal involvement, re-entry, housing, caseworker involvement, self-sufficiency benchmarks, and financial assistance, as well as any other outstanding issue.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING –

All meetings will take place at Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference):

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

- **Thursday, September 6, 2012 –4:00 pm**

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday September 6, 2012

Locations: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair

Julia O’Hanlon – Co-Chair

The Hon. William L. Chapman, Jr.

The Hon. Barbara Crowell

The Hon. Mardi F. Pyott

Nathan Badell

Rep. Michael Barbieri

John Bates

Amanda Brennan

Rodney Brittingham

Paul Calistro

Sue Dougherty

Sherfone Johnson

Christina Jones-Bey

Felicia Kellum

Eric Lloyd

Gerard M.

Mary Kate McLaughlin

Julie Miller, Esq.

Myiesha Miller

Demetrius Pinder

Susan Radecki

Christella St. Juste

Tasha Warren

Keith Zirkle

Welcomes & Introductions

Julia O’Hanlon welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Approval of the Minutes

Rodney Brittingham moved to approve the minutes, with Paul Calistro seconding. All in attendance approved.

Overview of Meeting Objectives and Intended Action Items

Tania Culley explained that only those that have been officially appointed to this Committee can vote at this final meeting although all input and comments are welcome. The official appointees are: Judge Crowell and Judge Chapman (designated by Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Coon); Mary Kate McLaughlin (designated by Cabinet Secretary Vivian Rapposelli); Julie Miller of the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative; Rodney Brittingham (designated by Division of Family Services Director Vicky Kelly); Tania Culley of the Office of the Child Advocate; Representative Mike Barbieri; Youth Ethan S., Eric Lloyd, Amanda Brennan, Christella St. Juste, and Demetrius Pinder; Julia O’Hanlon (representing educational institutions); Paul Calistro (representing community organizations); and Nathan Badell (representing group homes or foster parents). The majority of the votes determine the outcome of each extended care criteria.

Primary Considerations for Shaping Delaware’s Extended Foster Care Program: Final Voting

Age

The majority voted (8-0) in favor of extended care services being available to youth until age 21.

Eligibility

The majority voted (8-0) in favor of giving priority of edibility for extended care services to youth who are experiencing care on their 18th birthday. In addition, the majority (11-1-0) agreed that youth who may have exited foster care due to guardianship or adoption between the ages of 16 and 18 will also be eligible for extended care services, regardless. No needs assessment is required to be eligible. This is consistent with current Independent Living services eligibility. The majority voted (0-12-0) that youth who have reunified with family members between the ages 16-18 will be eligible for extended care services, based on a needs assessment. The options regardless, needs assessment, and no were given again. With the same voting options, the majority voted (1-5-7) to not allow out of state youth eligibility for Delaware’s extended care program. Using the same voting options, the majority voted (6-4-3) to allow youth eligible for Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) to partake in extended care services, regardless.

If a youth is eligible based on the above criteria, the majority voted (13-0) the youth is required to enroll in an educational or vocational program and/or be working or volunteering in the community for a minimum number of hours per month. The majority voted (12-1) that youth should be given a six-month window to comply with this eligibility requirement. In addition, the majority voted (11-1, with 1 abstention) for exceptions for youth whose disabilities prevent them for complying with these requirements to be developed.

Re-Entry

The majority voted (13-0) that there be no restrictions on the number of times a youth can “re-enter” extended care services until age 21—meaning that if a youth ages out of foster care, then he or she should be eligible to receive extended care services at any time until age 21. However, the majority voted (14-0) that there should be a limit to the number of times a youth may reenter extended care from ages 18-21. This limit will be set in an internal task force once extended care is implemented.

Legal Jurisdiction

The voting members decided that based on the voting options (court involvement in every extended care case, as needed, or never) that court oversight and continued legal representation should be voluntary and considered on a case-by-case basis (0-14-0). This is consistent with the current extended jurisdiction statute 10 Del. C. § 929. Using the same voting options, the majority voted (2-11-1) that Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) and Guardian at Litems (GALs) would be formally involved only as needed, consistent with the current extended jurisdiction statute 10 Del. C. § 929.

Case Management

The majority voted (14-0) that current Independent Living (IL) case management design should remain in place recognizing the need for supplemental resources and assessment with regard to placement and other services may be necessary. Further, the majority voted (14-0) the IL program managers and service providers make reasonable efforts to have contact with youth receiving extended care services at least monthly and more frequently as needed. The committee recommends that the current IL case plans, together with the requirements set forth by the youths’ housing provider(s), serve as an agreement between youth and their IL case workers regarding parameters for extended care.

Housing/Living Arrangements

The majority voted (13-0, with 1 abstention) that housing resources for youth receiving extended care services be broad and should fully utilize Delaware's current housing options. An array of settings and living arrangements should include supervised-living, independent-living, and college dormitory settings, as well as apartments and group and foster homes. The majority voted (14-0) to allow each housing option to implement their own regulations and the youth would then choose the best environment based on those regulations. The majority also voted (14-0) to allow the youth the option of out of state housing, such as in the case of a college or university campus.

Financial Assistance

The majority voted (13-1) to allow young adults in extended care to receive a stipend in addition to maintenance payments. In a vote of 13-1, with 1 abstention, the majority decided the stipend amount would be based on an individual assessment process. In addition, by a vote of 8-6-0 (voting options are regardless, opt-out provision for good cause, and no), youth can receive a stipend only if they take part in some form of financial-literacy training or expanded financial services.

Self-Sufficiency

The majority voted (14-0) that the benchmarks or assessments developed in the past five years and/or being utilized by the current IL system (e.g., "Blue Books, IL provider benchmarks) be reviewed and assessed to determine whether updates are necessary to support Delaware's extended care services. The group recommends that the DYOI Transitions Working Group is an appropriate, multidisciplinary forum to accomplish this task.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Path Forward

A report from this committee must be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by September 17, 2012. The committee voted 13-0 to give authority to Mary Kate McLaughlin, Rodney Brittingham, Tania Culley, Julia O'Hanlon, and Julie Miller to write the report and send to the appropriate parties. This Committee's work is now completed and the Co-Chairs thanked everyone for their significant contributions and hard work – Committee members and regular participants. The Co-Chairs were also thanked. The Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI) regular Policy Working Group will meet on Wednesday, October 17, 2012 at the Murphey School in Dover from 5-6 pm. Future meeting dates will be arranged at that time. In addition, a DYOI Community Partnership Board meeting will be held October 29th from 10 am – 12 pm at the Delaware State Troopers Association Hall in Cheswold. These meetings are open to the public and all participants from the HJR18 Committee are welcome.



Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families