

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program



CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM (CFCIP)

Five Year Plan FFY 2010 - 2014

Responsible State Agency

The State of Oregon, through its Department of Human Services (DHS) is the responsible entity in Oregon for administering the Title IV-E federal programs, including the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The Department (DHS) has delegated this responsibility to its Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Division, in the Office of Safety and Permanency for Children.

Children, Adults and Families implement this federal grant program through supports and services for youth and young adults which are primarily delivered within the local communities in Oregon by independent contractors. In Oregon, this system of support and services for youth and young adults are referred to as the Independent Living Program. The community contractors for the Independent Living Program (ILP) are for-profit, non-profit, and governmental agencies throughout the state offering skills training and support services for youth and young adults. In addition, the department contracts with the Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC), another state agency, for assistance in administering the Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program.

In Oregon, as services and programs are being developed and defined for our young people we have found it important to define which group of young people are eligible for different services and programs. Throughout this report reference to "youth" means; young people under the age of 18 years old and references to "young adult" means; young people between the age of 18 and not yet 21 years of age.

This state plan will address the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) in Section I and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) in Section II.

Visioning Process

Oregon hosted an Independent Living Program (ILP) - Strategic Planning Session on February 9 and 10th, 2009 in order to determine what the vision for the ILP should be for the next five years. Through the technical assistance of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development this strategic session included approximately 80 different individuals over the two-days representing youth and young adults (current and former foster youth), caseworkers, foster parents, native community, ILP providers, CASA, other youth service providers such as community colleges and workforce investment group (WIA), as well as youth serving resources who are non- traditional ILP service providers.

A value that was added to this visioning session that was different than the prior 5-year planning session was the participants were asked to consider; “youth and young adult transition as a holistic process”, and not just what the ILP program and services could offer. This challenge to participants helped broaden the scope of the needs for youth and young adult’s transitions rather than limiting the visioning to the CFCIP grant. The elements of this expanded visioning have been included under Section 1 B. 9 Cross System Collaboration. (For complete details regarding the strategic planning session please refer to the attached planning session summary, Attachment A.)

The following six targeted areas were identified during the strategic planning session as areas to incorporate into the youth and young adults transition planning, programs and policy processes over the next five years:

- Supportive Relationships for Youth and Young Adults
- Extended Services for Success
- Increased Housing Opportunities
- Improved Foster Home Environment
- Updated Policies for Youth
- Effective Training and Technical Assistance

The targeted areas include several goals or activities under each of these topic areas which, if accomplished, will assist Oregon in moving forward in meeting the expectations of the planning team participants.

Section I. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)

A. Program Design

Oregon has been successfully implementing Independent Living Program services since the 1980's, and has made great strides as a result of the increased federal support from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. The current program provides an array of services through four distinct but interrelated services; Independent Living Program (ILP) - Skills Training, Chafee Housing, Independent Living Program (ILP) - Discretionary Funds, and Independent Living Subsidy Program. The following includes a general overview of the current program, the assistance provided and the revised eligibility requirements for each program/service.

1. **ILP Life Skills Training:** Oregon implements these services through an array of local community contractors as the formalized method for providing accessible life skill training for eligible youth and young adults. These skill training services are funded primarily by the federal CFCIP grant. However, the local ILP service providers collaborate locally to coordinate with other community partners such as foster parents, youth serving agencies, Workforce Investment Act agencies, mentors, schools, residential facilities, and DHS staff to deliver skill training and support.

Eligibility for ILP life skills training includes:

- a. A youth must be at least age 14 or older and in substitute care (with DHS or a federally recognized Tribe), or
- b. A former Oregon foster youth; the youth was in substitute care for an accumulative 180 days prior to dismissal from substitute care at age 16 or older, and who is not yet 21 years of age.*

(*Please note change in eligibility for 2010-2014, described in detail under, C. PLANNED PROGRAMATIC CHANGES).

ILP Life Skills Training is a basic curriculum which has been standardized across the state. However, how the skills are taught may vary depending on the availability of resources in the local community, the needs of the youth and young adult and the number of youth being served by the ILP contractor (in rural Oregon, 1:1 training or support may be the preferred method for

teaching life skills). Independent living skills training curriculum includes: money management, household maintenance, transportation, legal issues, health, community resources, healthy relationships, housing options, personal hygiene, employment readiness, pregnancy prevention, educational assistance (homework-study groups, college tours, and financial aid/scholarship applications), etc.

2. **Chafee Housing Program:** The Chafee Housing Program serves former foster youth. The program is jointly managed by the ILP Desk and local child welfare field staff. The child welfare field staff (caseworker) or Indian Child Welfare (ICW) program determines whether a young adult is appropriate and in need of the housing program and will monitor the young adults progress. The ILP Desk processes the required application materials (budget, plan, etc.) and helps the caseworker with monitoring requirements and the young adult's program compliance. The Chafee Housing Program is funded with Chafee (CFCIP) grant funds.

Eligibility for the Chafee Housing program includes:

- a. Young adult age 18 or older, but not yet 21 years of age; and is requesting to participate in the program
- b. Discharged from substitute care and legal custody (DHS or Tribal) on or after 18th birthday;
- c. Participate in 40 hours of productive activity per week (work, education, or combination of the two – must include at least 4 hours of paid employment).
- d. If young adult has not completed high school, must be actively working to complete high school or obtaining a GED.
- e. Young adult must be enrolled for ILP skill training services.
- f. Young adult is not living with or planning to live with biological or legal parent(s).

Housing Services: Young adult may receive up to \$512 per month to live independently, for a maximum of \$6,000 or age 21, whichever comes first. The funds may only pay for room and board expenses (rate is equivalent to the base rate for room and board in foster care). As a result of Oregon's efforts through Foster Care Rate Redesign Project we anticipate increasing the individual financial support through this program.

3. **Independent Living Subsidy Program (ILSP):** The Independent Living Subsidy Program serves current foster youth. The program is jointly managed by the ILP Desk and local child welfare field staff. The child welfare field staff (caseworker) determines whether a youth is appropriate and is prepared to participate in the housing program. The ILP Desk processes the application materials (budget, plan, etc.). The caseworker and ILP Desk work in partnership to monitor the youth's program progress. The Subsidy Program is primarily funded with State General Funding.

Eligibility is determined in part by Oregon Revised Statute 418.475. Unlike the federally funded ILP services, Tribal foster care is not equal to DHS foster care for this program. Youth must be:

- a. Age 16 or older; and is requesting to participate in the program
- b. In DHS legal care and custody;
- c. Maintain 40 hours of productive activity per week (work, education, or combination of the two);
- d. Have at least one prior substitute care placement; and
- e. Have approval of the court to participate.
- f. If a youth has not completed high school, the youth must be actively working to complete high school or obtain a GED.
- g. Youth must be enrolled for ILP skill building services.
- h. Youth cannot live with parent(s).

Services: Currently, youth may receive up to \$512 per month to live independently through this program. Youth can access the Subsidy Program resources for a maximum of one year (12 months). The funds are intended to provide assistance with monthly household and other expenses. As a result of Oregon's efforts through Foster Care Rate Redesign Project we anticipate increasing the individual financial support through this program.

4. **ILP Discretionary Funds:** The centralized ILP office, referred to as "the ILP desk" establishes a small pool of available funding for each DHS District office and Oregon's federally recognized Tribes to be used as discretionary funding. The funds are intended as an added support to assist youth and young adults with items or services to accomplish goals set forth in their comprehensive transition plan that may not otherwise be identified in the formalized contracted services. The Discretionary funds are funded

solely by CFCIP funds. The discretionary requests are made at the local level and approved by the ILP desk for appropriate CFCIP expenditures.

Eligibility: A youth and young adults must be eligible for and receiving ILP skills training services.

B. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

Through the *Visioning Process - Strategic Planning Session* several targeted ideas for consideration were identified as areas to be reviewed, analyzed, and developed if necessary during this next five-year plan. The Department's plan is to create task focused workgroups with specific goals to achieve. These workgroups will draw from many of the original participants in the Visioning Process as well as include others who bring additional expertise to the group. Membership in the groups will at a minimum include; youth, and young adults, foster parents, community representatives, tribal representatives, and other natural partners such as education, WIA, Transitional Living Programs (TLP), and Housing opportunity programs.

The focused workgroups will include exploration as to service need, gap analysis, prioritization of workgroups, and how to weave focused areas into the overall CFCIP and other Child Welfare services.

The following list of targeted ideas will be used as a place for groups to start arranging goals in which to explore, analyze and/or adopt action plans for implementation. These target areas, defined during the developed *Visioning Process - Strategic Planning Session*, have been woven into the five purposes of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP): Transition Services, Employment, Post-secondary Preparation, Mentors, and Services to Former Foster Youth. The goals also affect other areas not specific to the CFCIP purposes but have been identified in Oregon as additional sections of the state plan (Youth Involvement, Training, Tribal Consultation & Coordination, Cross System Collaborations, and Medicaid Option).

1. Transition Services:

- a. Goal: Increase understanding and awareness regarding comprehensive transition plans. There are several goals related to this topic as follows:

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- Clarify the roles of DHS and ILP Contractors regarding comprehensive transition planning.
- Ensure youth's input has been included in plan development.
- Establish peer mentors and coaches to assist teens in care with transition planning and decision making.
- Increase involvement of supportive adults in youth plan development.
- Ensure transition plans are reviewed and updated at a minimum of every six months.

The Department is in the process of finalizing updates to policy and procedures regarding transition services and planning that is supported by this plan. A comprehensive training plan will be developed and implemented to target all department branch offices and/or districts by the end of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010. Whenever possible, youth presenters or youth videos (i.e.: Digital Stories) will be incorporated into the training plan. On-going training and technical assistance will be made available to the field.

- b. Goal: Increase coordination between child welfare workers and ILP Contractors regarding court dates and documentation deadlines.

A workgroup will be formed to follow-up on a survey conducted to determine the barriers to achieving this goal. The group will determine methods to overcome the identified barriers. Training in this area will also be a critical element to achieve this goal.

- c. Goal: Increase housing opportunities for current and former foster youth including increased transitional housing in rural areas, expanding the types of transitional housing available, increasing host homes, and simplifying access to housing programs.

There was significant work done in this area over the past five years. Discussions will continue with Homeless and Runaway Transitional Living Programs, housing developers, HUD, and Oregon Housing and Community Services. A workgroup will research the best methods for mapping existing housing options in local areas. This will help to determine the gaps, needs, and potential housing partners. In order to accomplish this task, members of the local community will need to be identified and willing to assist DHS' efforts.

Access to the ILP Housing Programs has been simplified in the policy updates (anticipated policy release in summer 2009). One recommended change is providing housing funds available on a one-time basis, in addition to the current on-going programs. Utilization of the housing programs will be monitored to determine whether the revised policy and procedures have achieved the goal of simplifying access.

The Department will work with the Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) to survey and obtain feedback from youth ending their housing services or those unable to obtain service. The purpose of the survey will be to determine how youth may have been better prepared to access the housing programs, and what services or skills were most beneficial once living independently.

- d. Goal: Access services available to the youth through other community systems, and services that support the youth's identification with cultural communities.

The department has made progress in this area but still has room for growth with unique projects such as a local community collaborative between two service providers; Portland Impact and New Avenues for Youth in neighborhood specific services and the Native American Youth and Family Services Center who provide ILP services through focused Contracts. Department staff still requires support and understanding to become more familiar with the variety of services and supports available to youth in their community and neighborhoods. A workgroup will research methods for raising awareness of local resources and supports.

- e. Goal: Increase hands-on, experiential life skills activities.

A workgroup will be created to research existing experiential life skills activities. The workgroup will determine how to obtain feedback from the youth regarding which activities would best meet their needs and be engaging for youth. ILP Contractors will be involved to help determine the costs associated with implementing new experiential activities. Foster parents will be involved to determine how to increase hands-on learning in the home and community.

- f. Goal: ILP Contractors to create a peer support group for ILP enrolled youth.

ILP Contractors will be surveyed to determine how many already provide peer support groups and what the cost may be to implement a peer support group if one

does not currently exist. A contract amendment may be necessary to achieve this goal.

- g. Goal: Standardize department policies and procedures to support youth access to driver's permits and driver's licenses while in foster care.

While current DHS Policy does allow youth to obtain their driver's permit and license, each District has the ability to implement their own practices to determine access to driving privileges. There is currently a legislative house bill in the Oregon Legislature that may expedite this goal (HB 3464). Additional planning for this goal will be completed at the conclusion of Oregon's legislative session.

- h. Goal: Increase the number of foster teens and young adults receiving independent living skill building services.

The new policy and procedures to be implemented by the end of 2009 will help achieve this goal. The increases may not be seen in contracted ILP life skills, as funding does not exist to increase these contracts. The increase will most likely be seen in individual foster homes, and residential facilities. Oregon will be able to monitor this goal once the new SACWIS system (OR-Kids) is implemented in the fall of 2010. Reports will be available every six months detailing the number of youth served, the types of services provided, and who provided the services.

2. Employment:

- a. Goal: Increase career exploration activities and opportunities for foster teens.

A workgroup will be formed to research the current use of Career Information Systems (CIS) by foster youth in their high schools. Once a youth has accessed this tool, CIS can be accessed by the teen at any time. The workgroup will research the possibility of having ILP Providers trained and allowed access to CIS for students already accessing the system. For those youth who are out of school or their school does not currently access CIS, the workgroup will research the option to have DHS or the ILP Contractors enrolled as a CIS site. Cost must be a factor included in the research.

- b. Goal: Increase access to internships, apprenticeships, and other work experience opportunities for older foster teens and young adults.

A workgroup will be formed to research the best methods to conduct outreach to the business community, apprenticeship programs, Workforce Investment Act agencies, Job Corp, Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, NW Youth Corp, Community Colleges and other entities that may be able to provide work experience or training to foster youth. The work experience may be non-paid and may include job shadows and volunteer opportunities.

3. Post-Secondary Training & Education Preparation:

a. Goal: Increase awareness and knowledge of post-secondary staffs regarding the barriers and needs facing foster youth.

There is currently a legislative house bill in the Oregon Legislature that if approved will assist with achieving this goal (HB 2833). The bill will require a Task Force to study and report back to the legislature the challenges, barriers and offer recommendations as to how best to support foster and former foster youth in post-secondary educational settings. Additional planning for this goal will be completed at the conclusion of Oregon's legislative session.

b. Goal: Increase foster youth post-secondary education and training access, retention, and completion rates.

The creation of the NYTD tracking system will help to determine retention and completion rates. This will provide a baseline to measure the results of efforts toward improvement. The Department will work with the OFYC to create a survey for foster youth in post-secondary education or training and those preparing for post-secondary education or training. A workgroup will be created to review the survey results and determine next steps. Depending on the outcome of HB 2833, the survey may be shared with the task force to help inform their work.

ILP Contractors will continue assisting ILP enrolled youth with completing necessary paperwork for enrollment in postsecondary education or training programs, financial aid, and scholarship applications. ILP Contractors will also provide college tours as needed.

4. Mentors and Interactions with Dedicated Adults:

a. Goal: Increase permanent support systems for youth.

This goal may be achieved by assisting youth to strengthen existing, natural supportive relationships with adults. A workgroup will be established to research existing literature and programs that achieve this outcome. The group will determine the viability of incorporating similar training or programming in Oregon to achieve this goal.

b. Goal: Increase the use of mentors.

There has been improvement in this area over the past five years. The department has recently participated as panel members in a Statewide Conference hosted by Oregon Mentors to promote the idea of mentors for foster youth through transition periods. One successful partnership for the last several years dedicated to Youth Transitioning has been Powerhouse Mentoring project in the Portland Metropolitan area. However, during the strategic planning session it was evident that improvements in this area must continue. A workgroup will be formed to determine how to expand access to mentors for foster youth.

c. Goal: Increase involvement of supportive adults in youth decision meetings.

The ILP Desk has recently hired a Youth Transition Specialist. This position will be working directly with the field caseworker staff to standardize the youth decision meeting process and increase youth voice in the process. A plan will be drafted to ensure staff are trained in conducting outreach to supportive adults in a youth's life.

5. Services for Former Foster Youth:

ILP services will be made available to former foster youth that were discharged from care with at least 180 days of substitute care placement at age 16 or older and who are under age 21. Foster care alumni may be returned home, in a guardianship, adopted, or living independently and retain eligibility for most ILP services. As mentioned in the Program Design section, Chafee Housing services are available to foster care alumni who left care and custody of a child welfare agency (state or tribal) at age 18 or older, and who have not yet turned age 21.

Following are the goals set for improved services to foster care alumni:

a. Goal: Expand outreach efforts to former foster youth who may be struggling with the transition to self-sufficiency and adulthood.

A workgroup will be formed to research methods for connecting with foster care alumni who may be struggling. The research conducted will include:

- Measures to improve connections to other youth serving entities and programs where foster care alumni may turn for services, and
- Options for increased financial supports available to youth aging out of care and former foster youth.

b. Goal: Increase awareness of other state's ILP contact information and services to improve out-of-state transitions.

The DHS Youth Transition Specialist will research existing information resources to determine the best approach for gathering, organizing, and distributing information regarding ILP services available in other states.

c. Goal: Create a method for maintaining contact with former foster youth selected to participate in the follow-up surveys required by the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD).

A workgroup will be formed to research methods for maintaining contact with current and former foster youth. All forms of contact (Facebook, ILP website, email, mentors, telephone, radio announcements, billboards, mailings, and in-person contact) will be reviewed to determine the most effective method. Solicit feedback each year from youth participants of the annual teen conference, teen retreats, and native teen gathering regarding current networking preferences among teens and young adults.

6. Youth Involvement:

a. Goal: Involve youth in workgroups and program planning to achieve the five year program goals.

As mentioned previously, each workgroup must include youth in their discussions and research. A wide variety of youth shall be included: youth currently in care, former foster youth, homeless youth, youth from rural and urban settings, and of various cultures and ethnicities.

b. Goal: Expand foster youths' awareness and participation in the Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) youth advisory council.

The DHS ILP will continue to provide support to the OFYC, including some limited funding as available within existing funding, until the OFYC is able to fulfill its vision of becoming a stand-alone, non-profit entity. The Department will provide opportunities for OFYC members to speak at various functions and conferences. The ILP Desk will continue to forward OFYC announcements to foster youth and alumni, ILP Contractors, DHS staff, and community partners.

7. Training:

a. Goal: Clarify the roles of the Department, ILP Contractors, and Foster Parents as they relate to independent living services.

There is currently a very narrow view of what “independent living services” are and who can provide those services. Increased training regarding this topic is necessary. As mentioned previously, the new Youth Transitions Policy once approved and implemented, should increase awareness of the broad spectrum covered under “independent living services,” life skills training, or transition services. A training curriculum will be crafted that will help workers and community partners understand anyone can assist a youth to gain life skills or independent living skills. DHS staff will understand the importance of capturing all services provided to assist a youth gain life skills – not just contracted ILP services.

A separate training must also be created to distinguish the roles of each supportive adult once a youth is referred for contracted independent living program (ILP) services. The training will concentrate on the collaborative approach and relationships that are necessary to help youth achieve their goals. Training will be conducted by the ILP Coordinator, Youth Transition Specialist and the PSU Child Welfare Partnership.

b. Goal: Increase opportunities for teen related trainings involving youth, DHS, ILP Contractors, Judges, CASA, CRB, and foster parents.

A workgroup will be formed to research the various trainings and conferences currently held and targeted toward child welfare workers and others involved in the Oregon child welfare system. The workgroup will determine if opportunities exist to include additional training related to teen and young adult transition issues

and needs. A separate workgroup may be needed to create or research existing trainings specific to the targeted audience.

a. Goal: Have a cohort of trainers available to provide Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment training.

In order for a comprehensive transition plan to be crafted, the youth must first complete an assessment to help determine their existing life skills knowledge and abilities. Oregon has selected the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) as the tool to be used. DHS will work with the National Resource Centers to bring a training of trainers to Oregon. Those trained will include PSU Partnership trainers, ILP Desk staff, and others who train child welfare staff and community partners. This will provide sustainability of skilled ACLSA trainers in Oregon. The ACLSA trainers will train DHS staff, ILP Contractors, foster parents and other supportive adults assisting foster youth prepare for the transition to adulthood and living independently.

8. Tribal Consultation and Coordination:

a. Goal: Improve and increase consultations with Indian Tribes specifically relating to determining eligibility for benefits and services for Indian youth in care under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act.

In order to achieve this goal, the DHS ILP Staff will:

- Continue to attend the ICWA Quarterly Meetings in an attempt to stay connected with Oregon's federally recognized Tribes.
- Make it a priority to visit each Tribal office to discuss the needs of each Tribes young people relating to ILP services.
- Continue to allocate each Tribe ILP Discretionary funds to assist the Tribes with providing Native American teens with items or services necessary to achieve their goals for transition. The ILP Coordinator will continue to notify the Tribes of the amount remaining and how to expend the funds.
- Ensure ILP eligible Native American teens continue to receive services from their local ILP Contractor on the same basis as all other youth in the state.
- Continue to provide funding for a Native Teen Gathering event each year.

- Continue to attend Oregon's Indian Child Welfare Act Conference. The ILP Coordinator will also provide support for ILP presentations conducted at the conference.

9. Cross System Collaboration:

Discussions during this year's strategic planning session acknowledged that several of the goals being set were out of the control or scope of the DHS ILP staff. Therefore, the role of the DHS ILP staff in the following goals will be to bring awareness of the issues and recommended improvements to the appropriate DHS unit/department or community partners. The DHS ILP staff shall work collaboratively with the necessary parties to accomplish or positively impact the following goals:

Department of Human Services:

- Standardize, where possible, cross-systems transition age youth policies.

CAF Field Services:

- Address DHS caseloads or workload to allow more time for contact with clients.
- Increase use of courtesy caseworkers when appropriate for youth who reside outside the local area.

Foster Care Unit:

- Impact placement matching through efforts of the CFSR – PIP to reduce number of moves foster teens experience.
- Evaluate maximum number of youth allowed in a foster home.
- Increase the amount of life skills training opportunities foster parents provide in the home and community for children and teens.
- Improve recruitment efforts for foster parents adequately prepared to care for teens, and increase culturally diversity of foster placement options.
- Increase flexible funding options for extra-curricular and quality of care activities such as; sports program, school or civic clubs, and graduation expenses, etc.
- Provide every youth transitioning out of care with a foster care with a minimum of a photo ID.
- Explore opportunities to create a matched savings account for foster teens.

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- Continue to advocate for staffing ratio's and expertise within the ILP program areas.

Office of Performance and Reporting & Office of Information Services:

- Continue planning with the SACWIS design team to implement ORKIDS and the requirements of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) as a component of OR-Kids.

Residential Treatment Services:

- Increase the amount of life skills training opportunities provided for children and teens in residential treatment facilities.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Youth Transition Program):

- Increase independent living services and life skills training for transitioning youth and young adults experiencing significant impediments to employment.

Senior and People with Disabilities:

- Increase independent living services and life skills training opportunities for transitioning developmentally delayed youth and young adults.

Physical and Mental Health Care Services:

- Increase independent living services and life skills training for transitioning youth and young adults accessing mental health services.
- Increase and streamline access to Oregon Health Plan (OHP) coverage for youth aging out of the foster care system.
- Presumptive eligibility for medical and mental health at age 18 for all foster youth who transition out of care.

Courts (Judges, CRB, CASA):

- Promote goal that every foster child should have access to a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).
- Increase teen related trainings for judges, CRB members and CASAs.

Department Training Unit:

- Evaluate and increase opportunities for DHS caseworkers and supervisors to obtain positive youth development training within first year of employment

and develop model for existing child welfare caseworkers and supervisors to be trained in Positive Youth Development.

- Include youth as co-facilitators or trainers during DHS caseworker and foster parent training.
- Include the “foster youth culture” as part of cultural diversity training.
- Make cultural diversity training available to judges, DHS workers, service providers and other community partners.
- Foster parents need to be better trained regarding foster teen issues (relating to school/college, health concerns, healthy relationships, employment, etc.).

C. PLANNED PROGRAMATIC CHANGES

One area planned during the previous 5-year plan was to evaluate the eligibility criteria, remaining focused on the primary intent of the Chafee Foster care Independence Act;

- *to identify children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and to help these children make the transition to self-sufficiency*

In this analysis it has become evident in the scope of the ILP Services program that a deeper focus with services that are more developed for the youth most likely to be in foster care until age 18 is needed. The state contemplated a plan that would have adopted a narrower general eligibility focus by raising the minimum age to 16. After a survey and feedback from youth, community partners, and staff the decision was made to continue serving current foster youth beginning at age 14 for life skills training. This will allow DHS staff and ILP Contractors to begin building relationships at the younger age when youth are more receptive to assistance. The following eligibility criteria will allow for incremental increases in services as a youth ages:

- Eligibility for ILP skills training includes:
 - a.) A youth must be at least age 14 or older and in substitute care (with DHS or a federally recognized Tribe), or
 - b.) A former foster youth; the youth was in substitute care for an accumulative 180 days prior to discharge from substitute care at age 16 or older, and who is not yet 21 years of age.

The change in eligibility will allow the department and ILP contractors the option to provide basic life skills training beginning at age 14. At age 16 a foster youth may retain eligibility to age 21 for ILP skill building, ILP Discretionary Funds,

and the Chafee ETV. At age 18, a foster youth will then be able to also retain eligibility for the Chafee Housing program, up to age 21. This eligibility criteria provides access to additional services as the youth ages.

This change will allow focus on the age group of 16-20 year olds, following the original intent of the Federal legislation. The intent of the state plan is to provide "out-reach" efforts an introduction to ILP service opportunities for the 14 and 15 year old foster youth. A full engagement of the ILP services should occur by age 16, which mirrors both the Federal and State regulations around Comprehensive Transition Planning for foster youth. DHS will determine which youth may be allowed to be grandfathered into the program based on current eligibility.

Another area of planned change is to increase youth access to housing services on a one-time basis. Currently, youth can only access room and board funds if they agree and comply with the on-going program rules and expectations. However, there are many youth who only need assistance with start-up housing costs; security/cleaning deposits, utility deposits, first month's rent, etc. The pending policy updates will allow this change.

The Department is in the process of a complete restructuring of the Foster Care Reimbursement system for room and board. The Chafee Housing services program, as well as the Independent Living Subsidy Program, has utilized a monthly cap rate similar to the base foster care rate for youth. Once the Foster Care Reimbursement system establishes the rate structure (anticipated by Sept. 2009), the ILP Desk will re-evaluate policy provisions and establish a rate structure for the housing services programs.

D. MEDICAID OPTION

To date, DHS has not implemented the Chafee Medicaid option. However, Oregon legislature is in session (Spring 2009) and House Bill 2116 was introduced with a very successful first hearing, based on several compelling testimonies by former foster youth. HB2116 will create a new category of eligible "categorically needy" applicants for the Oregon Health Plan – foster youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older and have not yet reached age 21. This would in essence implement the Chafee Medicaid Option.

Currently, Teens under the age of 19 are considered a child by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). However, those youth who are aging out of the foster care system struggle to obtain health insurance. While youth aging out of the foster care system have been designated a population that can apply for OHP coverage, the application process has not been standardized. Therefore, what works in one area or county may not work in another. Youth must also meet all OHP eligibility requirements (including an income cap of approximately \$800). If a person is a full-time student, they will not qualify for OHP coverage. If a youth does not apply within the timelines stated, they will go on a waiting list with the general population. Currently the general population is being added through a lottery process for a limited number of slots.

The Foster Care Manager will work with the Department of Medical Assistance Programs to review the barriers to implementing the Chafee Medicaid option. This is a resource that is in high demand by youth aging out of care. Foster care alumni in college also indicated that health insurance is a resource that is lacking. When surveyed, 62 percent of the alumni responding indicated they wish they had someone to help them apply for health insurance (see Attachment B).

Section II. EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV)

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Program Administration:

DHS receives a separate Chafee funding allocation to assist youth with postsecondary education and training. The ILP Desk administers the ETV program, in collaboration with the Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC). This collaboration with another Oregon State entity has significantly helped in limiting administrative costs and efficiency as well as streamlined access and outreach opportunities to potential youth.

A. Program Design

Foster youth and former foster youth who are eligible may receive financial assistance for the costs of attendance, pro-rated for an academic year, for an eligible Post-secondary education and training program. Funding is limited to a maximum of \$4,000 for allowable costs during 2010-2011 and may be adjusted annually based on available funding. Funding limitations will not exceed CFCIP – ETV regulations

The preferred method of accessing funds is for youth to complete the Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) application. The ETG applications are submitted electronically to OSAC. The ILP Desk has access to an electronic Portal to review the applications and determine eligibility. The ILP Desk updates the Portal with the youth's eligibility status. If the youth submitted a complete, error free FAFSA (free application for federal student aid) application, OSAC then notifies the school that the youth is eligible to receive up to \$4,000 in Chafee ETG funds. The school determines the student's financial need and issues the ETG award.

The bulk of the Chafee ETV/ETG funds are expended through the grant process. Two of the initial barriers in this program area have since been eradicated through the collaboration between DHS and OSAC;

- Youth with an open DHS case are able to obtain a small amount of ETV funds through their DHS caseworker as a means to bridge the need until the formal grant process occurs.
- ETV funds available through a Voucher Request (CF78A) are now only processed for emergency purposes. Missing an ETG/ETV deadline is no longer considered an emergency.

B. Eligibility

Oregon's revised eligibility criteria for ETV/ETG funds, based on the Program Instruction issued for the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, is as follows:

- 1) Youth must be age 14 or older and in child welfare substitute care (DHS or Tribal), or
- 2) Youth was in child welfare substitute care for at least 180 cumulative days prior to discharge from substitute care at age 16 or older, or
- 3) Youth was adopted or entered a guardianship from foster care after the age of 16, and
- 4) Youth must be on the program prior to age 21.
- 5) If youth is receiving services at age 21, he or she may continue to receive support until 23rd birthday.
- 6) Youth must be accepted/enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program in order to receive funds (application available at: www.osac.state.or.us/ChafeeEtv.html)

Note: Youth may not be able to access both the ETV funds and Chafee Housing funds at the same time. The ability to access both will depend on the school's costs of attendance. If Room & Board is not included in a school's cost of attendance, the youth may be able to access both programs.

C. Goal and Objectives

- 1) Goal: Increase the number of staff, Contractors, foster parents, and foster youth trained on post-secondary financial aid, and other information important to determining which school a youth may be able to attend.

A workgroup will be formed to research the best approach for disseminating information to a foster youth's supportive adults. The research will include ways

to inform caseworkers, foster parents and other supportive adults about the existing trainings and resources available.

2) Goal: Improve access, retention, and completion rates for foster youth.

As mentioned in the CFCIP, Post-Secondary Preparation section, the creation of the NYTD tracking system will help to determine retention and completion rates. This will provide a baseline to measure the results of efforts toward improvement. In addition to the OFYC, the Department will work with the OSAC to review survey results and determine next steps.

3) Goal: Conduct outreach to increase public awareness regarding the need for additional financial support for foster youth's postsecondary education and training costs.

Create a workgroup to determine the most efficient and effective method for conducting outreach to foundations, the business community, and others with the resources to donate to the DREAM Scholarship for Foster Youth. OSAC will be involved in the discussions.

4) Goal: Catalog individual campus processes and procedures for financial aid and other supportive services to minimize access delays for foster youth.

The ILP Desk has already begun this process. The ILP Desk staff will continue to meet with college, university, and vocational programs' financial aid officers. The ILP Desk will create an easy to use reference guide for students. The guide will help youth understand each school's financial aid process and potential follow-up questions to ask to ensure speedy processing of their financial aid package.

A workgroup of current foster care youth and alumni already attending college will be formed. This workgroup will help detail the resources available on campus.

5) Goal: Create programs on campus that allow foster care alumni a place to meet to obtain up-to-date information on services and supportive programs available, and to become mentors for new alumni on campus.

6) Goal: Establish an ETV Resource staff and/or primary contact for information and referral.

Continue working with OSAC to find funding or an existing program that will employ an ETV Resource staff to conduct outreach to ETV or ETG (ETV/G) recipients and provide support, information and referral to needed services or supports. This position would also be able to build relationships and collaborations with financial aid administrators.

7) Goal: Conduct outreach and informational mailings to organizations that former foster youth may frequent (Self Sufficiency Program, Employment Department, Transitional Living Programs, etc.). Until an ETV Resource staff is hired, continue to provide informational mailings to school districts and post-secondary education or training institutions.

D. Services to be Provided

DHS will continue to collaborate and contract with OSAC to award Education and Training Grants (ETG) to eligible youth. DHS will partner with OSAC and ASPIRE to continue the ASPIRE Regional Training, Fall Kick-off Conference, Road Map to College pocket calendars, ASPIRE foster youth website, and compilation of other non-federal grants and scholarships awarded to Oregon's foster youth.

DHS will continue to scale back funding for the voucher process for accessing ETV funds (requests submitted by the DHS worker). While this has been a valuable tool to assist youth with immediate postsecondary needs, the Department has made the decision to minimize these funds and maximize the ETG funds distributed by OSAC. The Department has determined that missing a deadline will no longer constitute an emergency or immediate postsecondary need. Youth must begin planning at least two months in advance of attending college or vocational schools.

The ILP Coordinator and Youth Transition Specialist will continue training DHS staff regarding the ETV/G and other postsecondary financial aid options available to foster youth. The ILP Desk Staff will continue to find creative ways to outreach to foster youth, foster parents, and community partners to expand the awareness of the services and funding available to foster youth pursuing postsecondary education or training.

E. Population and Geographic areas to be served:

All youth residing in Oregon who meet the ETV/G eligibility criteria are able to obtain ETV services. Youth must be receiving ETV/G funds by their 21st birthday; if actively participating in the ETV/G at age 21, funding may continue through the term or semester the young adult turns age 23.

When necessary, Oregon may provide services to an Oregon eligible youth who is attending an out-of-state school. Youth are required to apply for ETV funding from the state in which they reside. If the state of residence is not willing to assist an Oregon foster care alumni, Oregon may provide ETV/G services.