



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

May 26, 2020

Dear Child Welfare Directors:

The Children's Bureau recently issued Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-20-10 providing instructions to title IV-E agencies on how to request flexibility in meeting certain title IV-E program requirements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and national public health emergency. The available flexibilities include allowing states to opt into the title IV-E extended foster care program through a simplified process. In addition, agencies may request flexibility to provide title IV-E payments to otherwise eligible youth ages 18 – 21 who are unable to meet the program's education and employment eligibility requirements as a result of the pandemic. While I will be reaching out to states that have not previously exercised the title IV-E program option to serve youth up to age 21, I also wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge the opportunities you have to review your current title IV-E extended foster care program to better support the needs of youth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Promoting the "Re-Entry" of Youth into Extended Foster Care Without Delay

I know you work tirelessly to review and enhance your extended foster care programs. As noted above, you may now request flexibility to make title IV-E payments to youth ages 18 - 21 who are unable to meet education and employment requirements, thereby expanding the number of youth who may be able to participate in the title IV-E foster care program during the COVID-19 crisis. Many youth who have already left foster care at age 18 or older could also benefit if able to "re-enter" foster care without delay. As discussed in a previous "[Dear Child Welfare Director](#)" letter (April 27, 2020), I again encourage states and tribes to review and revise your policies and procedures, as needed, to allow youth to re-enter the extended foster care program as quickly as possible and in a way that meets the developmental needs of youth.

Utilizing All Placement Options

Title IV-E agencies participating in the extended foster care program may use the placement option of "supervised independent living" for young adults over the age of 18. Making use of this placement type may prove optimal in serving some youth during the COVID-19 crisis, as it would allow young people to receive foster care services while remaining in their current living arrangements. As a reminder, [ACYF-CB-PI-10-11](#) details the requirements and flexibilities for extended foster care, including information about the use of supervised independent living arrangements. I also urge agencies to consider and develop other placement solutions for older youth, including using host home models, making renewed efforts to find and locate kin, and developing natural supports (such as a relationship with a former teacher, coach, or Guardian ad Litem) to serve as temporary placements for young people in extended foster care. In this time of social isolation, supporting placements where young adults can be connected to the important adults in their lives is critical.

Extending Foster Care to Youth From Other States

Young adults are a highly mobile population; I urge state agencies to determine whether there are youth/young adults from other states currently residing in your state who may benefit from extended foster care if they are not otherwise receiving such a benefit. In this time of crisis, a youth's state of origin should not preclude them from receiving critical services to prevent homelessness and connect them to essential social services.

Special Needs of Pregnant and Parenting Youth

A significant number of youth in extended foster care are pregnant or parenting. I encourage you to continue to monitor the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for any specific or additional guidance for pregnant youth (see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>). I also urge you to reach out and provide enhanced services to those youth who are pregnant or parenting, ensuring these young families have stable housing, enough food, support with home schooling, and other services needed while children are unable to attend school and child care. I also encourage you to support the provision of safe prenatal services and planning related to the delivery of the child.

Contact with All Youth Currently Not in Foster Care, Ages 18 to 21

Lastly, I ask all title IV-E agencies to reach out to every youth who the agency believes may be eligible for extended foster care, whether or not they are currently residing in your state or service area. I urge you to explain to them in youth-friendly and concrete terms the availability of assistance, their rights, and responsibilities. In this time of crisis, we know outreach and contact is a critical method to engage with youth, including those with whom we may not previously have had a positive relationship. We should utilize all methods possible to do youth-specific outreach to inform them about the flexibilities now available in the state's extended foster care system. Youth should know about the range of services available to them during the COVID-19 pandemic, both immediately and in the coming months.

I know many of you have been champions of older youth services and extended foster care over the last decade. The Children's Bureau is pleased to be able to support your efforts by providing additional flexibilities in the operation of your program. I also want to remind you that the federal government is able to pay a greater share of the costs for title IV-E foster care maintenance payments during the public health crisis, due to the temporary 6.2 percentage point increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rate. (See Information Memorandum [ACYF-CB-IM-20-05](#) for more information.)

Thank you for your commitment to serving young people. If you have questions, please contact your Regional Office.

Sincerely,



Jerry Milner
Associate Commissioner
Children's Bureau