

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
Child and Family Services Agency



**Memorandum**

To: Damon King  
Chair, DC Citizen's Review Panel

From: Michele Rosenberg  
Chief of Staff, Child and Family Services Agency

Date: November 25, 2014

Subject: CFSA Response to CRP Preliminary Recommendations for Improving  
Services for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Thank you for submitting the *Preliminary Recommendations for Improving Services for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care from the Citizen's Review Panel*.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on the following recommendations.

1. CFSA and the Collaboratives should work together to ensure that all foster youth ages 15 to 21 are aware of the full range of transition and aftercare services available.

**CFSA RESPONSE:**

When a youth in care reaches the age of 15 years old, CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE) sends a welcome pamphlet to the youth that outlines all transition services available, including youth aftercare services. Information for transition and aftercare services can be accessed through CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment at <http://cfsa.dc.gov/service/youth-services-cfsa>. In addition, CFSA's Older Youth Policy identifies all services available to older youth.

All social workers are expected to engage their youth in activities that support their transition goals. While it is important for the Collaboratives to know about transition services, the main focus is for the Collaboratives to know the actual transition goals for the youth they will support through the Youth Aftercare program. Youth only need to access services from the Collaboratives when they exit foster care. Collaborative after-care workers are assigned to the youth at age 20 and become part of the youth's transition team, at which time is appropriate and expected for the youth to become acquainted with the Collaborative's services and supports.

2. CFSA should review its referral process and ensure that all youth are referred to aftercare services at age 19.5, consistent with CFSA policy.

CFSA RESPONSE:

OYE has reviewed the current referral process and will continue to provide outreach to social workers (both CFSA & private agencies) via oral and written communication to obtain referrals when a youth reaches age 19.5. All social workers from CFSA and private agencies will attend a Procedural Operations Manual (POM) training conducted by OYE once the POM is finalized.

3. CFSA and the Collaboratives should clarify the role of Collaborative workers in the transition planning process for youth between the ages of 19 ½ and 21 and ensure that minimum contact requirements in CFSA/Collaborative contracts are met.

CFSA RESPONSE:

The monitoring of contact requirements is performed by CFSA's Contracts Monitoring Division, Foster Care Resources Administration. Additionally, time can be set on the agenda at scheduled Youth Transition meetings so that Collaborative workers can discuss their role and identify services they can provide upon a youth's transition from care. OYE will begin attending the monthly Collaborative leadership meetings and can monitor the contact requirements further. The Collaborative leadership meeting is facilitated by CFSA's Community Partnership Administration and we anticipate OYE's participation at these meetings will promote improved coordination of supportive services.

4. CFSA and the Collaboratives should coordinate their employment-related programming, sharing contacts and replicating effective programming to ensure continuity of programming after a youth turns 21.

CFSA RESPONSE:

The Collaborative after care worker is part of the youth's transition team, which includes a Career Pathways specialist, and the youth's employment status is a primary component of transition planning. This is especially true at the 30 day 21 Jump Start process, and the after care worker should be invited to attend. OYE staff will also plan to participate in the monthly Collaborative leadership meetings to ensure coordination efforts.

5. CFSA should review the approval process for Rapid Housing to ensure that youth receive timely approval and funding.

CFSA RESPONSE:

OYE and the Community Partnership Administration have commenced a strategic planning process with the goal of revamping the Rapid Housing program for youth and families.

In October 2014, CFSA transitioned to a new fiduciary agency for the Rapid Housing Program. The DC Housing Authority now dispenses Rapid Housing electronic payments. In

addition, the team has started the process of designing a new consumer friendly Rapid Housing online application process and data reports for the DC Housing Authority and CFSA's use. More importantly, CFSA has developed a comprehensive housing plan that includes an array of housing options to accommodate all transitioning youth (attached).

6. CFSA and the Collaboratives should jointly increase outreach to area landlords regarding the housing needs of former foster youth. CFSA and the Collaboratives should also research what child welfare systems in other jurisdictions are doing to address the housing needs of former foster youth.

CFSA RESPONSE:

OYE will strategize on next steps at monthly Collaborative leadership meetings for outreach to landlords and identifying best practices in supporting the housing needs of former foster youth.

CFSA and the Collaboratives will continue to strengthen the aftercare services provided to youth as they transition from the child welfare system, and during the course of the two-year aftercare period. Efforts involve identifying housing, counseling youth, and assisting with budgeting.

In addition to an array of housing options, CFSA's strategic housing plan includes:

- Adoption of a proven evidence based transitional supportive housing model.
- Maximized access to funding by ensuring that youth oriented housing needs are incorporated into the City's strategic housing and economic development plans.
- Work with the DC Housing Authority and Housing Finance Agency to secure financing for projects that address the needs of CFSA involved families and youth exiting foster care.
- Promotion of vigorous interagency cooperation to better leverage and coordinate services for our mutual clients.

7. CFSA and the Collaboratives should explore expanding programming to help former foster youth cope with emotionally difficult relationships.

CFSA RESPONSE:

The DC Department of Behavioral Health staff are now co-located at the Collaboratives and will be able to provide linkages to services for youth with mental health needs.

8. CFSA and the Collaboratives should agree to a set of outcome data, including post-case closure data, to be collected for each youth aging out of foster care. The Agency and the Collaboratives should collect and analyze this data jointly to identify programming gaps and guide future programming changes.

CFSA RESPONSE:

CFSA provided additional funding to the Collaboratives to enhance their current data base system called Effort To Outcomes (ETO) and to retain a quality assurance specialist position.

An expected consequence of the enhancements and the new staff is to ensure the Collaborative's quality assurance system can accurately collect and provide to CFSA comprehensive reports. CFSA's Community Partnership Administration provided the Citizens Review Panel with copies of draft youth aftercare program report templates and new ETO aftercare data fields that are currently being considered as part of the ETO upgrade.

CFSA's Community Partnership Administration has made it a priority to support the OYE team in increasing their efforts of partnering with the Collaboratives not only to track youth aftercare data but to enhance service delivery. Instrumental to this increased partnership will include OYE's participation at the monthly Collaborative leadership meetings.

9. CFSA and the Collaboratives should jointly set up a system for youth participating in the CFSA transition planning process and youth aftercare services to provide real-time feedback about their experiences, so that service gaps can be identified quickly, and programming adjusted as needed.

CFSA RESPONSE:

The *Youth Transition Toolkit* encourages youth to prepare an individualized transition plan with the supportive adults involved in their lives (e.g., foster parents, teachers, or mentors), and is designed to help youth assess their assets, identify resources, and plan for life after foster care. The toolkit also provides a "Readiness Scale" for youth to track their progress in 10 critical areas, including but not limited to finances and money management, job and career choices, education, self-care and health, housing, and other life skills related to community, culture, and social life.

We can strategize using the *Youth Transition Toolkit* (on-line version) as a feedback tool, since youth can continue to utilize this instrument beyond age 21.

10. CFSA and the Collaboratives should have a standard Foster Care Alumni Review Board to both advise the Agency/Collaboratives regarding programming for older and former foster youth and provide peer support to foster youth in their last years before aging out.

CFSA RESPONSE:

CFSA is exploring the establishment of a foster youth alumni organization and will include the Collaboratives in our planning process. .