Independent Living Guidelines

Requirements for Extended Commitment

- Youth who decide to extend their commitment will complete a **Transitional Living Support Agreement** where they will indicate their purpose for extending commitment and acknowledge the basic expectations for remaining in care past their 18th birthday such as remaining drug free, refraining from criminal activity, and complying with the rules of their placement.

- Youth must maintain the minimum requirements to remain on extended commitment. Youth who do not maintain these requirements will be placed on an **Extended Commitment Probation Contract**. The requirements include:
  
  - Attending school on a full-time basis. This includes attending high school or a GED preparatory program, taking 12 hours in college, or being enrolled in a vocational program.
    
    Or

  - Working on a full time-basis (minimum of 30 hours a week).
    
    Or

  - A combination of attending school part time (at least 6 hours in college) and working part time (15-20 hours a week).
    
    Or

  - Exceptions to the minimum requirements will be made for youth with diagnosed disabilities and severe mental health issues. These youth should be receiving support for improving their independent living skills.

- Youth can modify their **Transitional Living Support Agreement** later if they determine their initial purpose (work/school/or both) no longer matches their skill set, interests, or goals.

- To ensure compliance with minimum requirements, youth will provide the following documentation to program staff. The PCC will withhold monthly stipends until youth provide the documentation (excluding $70.00):
  
  - Paycheck stubs verifying employment;
  
  - School schedule (at the beginning of each semester and immediately upon any changes to schedule during the semester); or
  
  - School transcript (at the end of each semester).

- Youth will notify their case manager and social worker immediately if they drop classes and provide a new school schedule.
Youth who lose their job will be expected to obtain another one within 30 days. After 30 days of unemployment, youth will be put on an **Extended Commitment Probation Contract**. Youth will be expected to keep a record of their job search efforts.

Barriers will be clearly identified for youth who are struggling to meet extended commitment expectations and specific tasks, and case managers or social workers will implement interventions.

**Independent Living Binder**

Youth will maintain an **Independent Living Binder** with all required paperwork including vital documents, employment paycheck stubs, school schedules, school transcripts, health documents, treatment documents, training documentation, tax information, etc. The binder will be reviewed during meetings with DCBS social workers and private child caring (PCC) staff.

*** Youth who lose their binder will be responsible for purchasing another one ($20) from their program.

**Transition Planning**

The regional independent living specialist will facilitate annual transition planning meetings with youth on extend commitment until they exit care. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure youth are developing the skills necessary to live independently, as well as a realistic plan for self-sufficiency upon transitioning out of care.

**Milestones**

Each youth on extended commitment will be expected to work toward specific milestones. Milestones are achievements that demonstrate the mastery of independent living skills. Milestones will be discussed and made clear to youth at the intake meeting at their independent living program.

The **Milestones Chart** and **Independent Living Binder** will be reviewed annually at transition meetings. Case managers/foster parents will use the **Milestones Chart** as a guide in providing services and resources and will refer to the chart during regular meetings with youth. DCBS and PCC staff will initial and date each milestone once it has been achieved by the youth.

Youth who meet at least the required number of milestones at each age (15 at age 18, 10 at age 19, and 10 at age 20) will be given annual incentives. The annual incentives are:

- Age 18 - $50
- Age 19 - $75
- Age 20 - $100

Youth on extended commitment are expected to participate in regional independent living events.

All youth will be strongly encouraged to complete a short-term training or vocational program.
As funds allow, youth who complete a short-term training program, will receive a $250 incentive.

**Rent**

- Independent living programs will withhold mandatory savings (program rent) from the youth’s stipend each month and maintain it in a separate account. The agency will provide youth with a monthly statement of withholdings and savings balance. The agency will document the savings balance in their monthly contacts in TWIST and the DPP-1294 report. The program rent will be as follows:
  - Age 18 - $50 per month;
  - Age 19 - $75 per month;
  - Age 20 - $100 per month.
- Youth should only be given access to the funds prior to exit for the following:
  - The purchase of a vehicle;
  - Payment toward school debt; or
  - Housing expenses in preparation for leaving care (security deposit, etc.).

In these events, the agency should pay the vendor directly and not give the funds directly to the youth.

In the event the youth transfers to another agency’s independent living program, the program should provide the savings to the new agency, rather than to the youth directly.

**Changing Scattered Site Placements**

- Youth should not transfer from one independent program to another unless they are returning to their home county or need to relocate for educational purposes.

- Youth should not transfer from one independent living program to another independent living program within the same county. Social workers who have concerns regarding the services provided by a program should contact the PCC liaison in central office for assistance.

**Leaving Care**

- Each youth age 18 and over will complete an exit survey upon leaving care. Social workers will ensure the exit survey has been completed prior to closing the case.

- Scattered site programs will provide youth with their savings upon exiting the program. Programs can recoup the cost of damages to the unit, up to $500 from the youth’s savings, after providing the youth with an itemized list of damages.

**Foster Home Addendum**

- Youth on extended commitment that are placed in foster homes or group home type placements should also be encouraged to work toward milestones. Foster parents, case managers, and independent living specialists should provide support and guidance toward this end.
The primary focus of youth in high school should be to earn a diploma. As such, they are not required to work if they are attending high school full-time.

Truancy will not be tolerated for high school students on extended commitment. Social workers should run attendance records on a monthly basis. Youth who are habitually truant will be put on an **Extended Commitment Probation Contract**.

Youth in college will be expected to provide a copy of their school schedule and grades each semester. Youth will notify their social worker immediately if they drop classes and provide a new school schedule.

Youth who have graduated from high school and are working are expected to open a savings account and save a portion of their income. The saved amount should be at least $50 per month at age 18, at least $75 per month at age 19, and at least $100 per month at age 20. Employment paycheck stubs and savings account statements should be provided to DCBS and PCC staff to review every month.

Youth in foster homes are also eligible to earn the annual incentives for completing the milestones.
Independent Living Milestones Checklist

Youth’s name ___________________________ DOB __________________

18-Year-Old Milestones (Must Complete 15 for Incentive)

Staff Initials

_______ Complete annual medical exam  -  Mandatory
_______ Complete annual dental exam  -  Mandatory
_______ Complete annual vision exam  –  Mandatory
_______ Utilize a wellness benefit offered through their MCO
_______ Gym membership
_______ Register to vote
_______ Register with selective service - males only  -  Mandatory
_______ Obtain driving learner’s permit or driver’s license
_______ Complete driver’s education course (if doesn’t already have license).
_______ Open a bank account
_______ Complete tax return
_______ Save 25% of tax return with PCC
_______ Develop education plan and discuss with case manager and/or foster parent
_______ Provide school schedule and grades -  Mandatory
_______ Maintain at least a 2.0 overall grade point average
_______ Provide monthly paystubs that verify employment  -  Mandatory
_______ Maintain employment with the same employer for four out of 12 months (if working is part of youth’s plan).
_______ Earn raise at work
_______ Receive a positive work evaluation
_______ Save at least $50 per month (program rent)  -  Mandatory
_______ Submit their tuition waiver to college/university by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester).

*** Confirmed by school account printout.
_______ Complete FAFSA form by October 30th

*** Confirmed by FAFSA email confirmation only.
_______ Complete college registration for college by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester) and May 15th (Summer semester).

*** Confirmed by school schedule only.
_______ Complete college “To Do List”, financial verification, etc. by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester).

*** Confirmed by printout only.
_______ Complete free online financial literacy program (www.cicmoney101.org/All-Tools.aspx)
_______ Discuss Occupation Profile with case manager and/or foster parent: https://www.careeronestop.org.Toolkit/Careers/Occupations/occupation-profile.aspx
_______ Complete 5 Myplate quizzes (www.choosemyplate.gov/quiz)
Maintain mental health regimen

Obtain annual credit check (www.annualcreditreport.com)

Register for applicable housing program waiting lists

Participate in a regional independent living event

*Save at least 25% of their residual check from one semester.
*Save at least 25% of their residual check from two semesters.

* Confirmed by youth giving saved amount to PCC to put into savings account where rent is kept. Youth can only withdraw this amount for the purchase of a vehicle or insurance.

(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)

(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)

19-Year-Old Milestones (Must Complete 10 for Incentive)

Staff Initials

Complete Annual Medical Exam – Mandatory
Complete Annual Dental Exam - Mandatory
Complete Annual Vision Exam – Mandatory
Utilize a wellness benefit offered through their MCO.
Maintain mental health regimen
Gym membership
Obtain learner’s permit or driver’s license
Complete tax return
Save 25% of tax return with PCC
Develop and review education plan
Provide school schedule and grades - Mandatory
Maintain at least a 2.3 overall grade point average
Provide monthly paystubs that verify employment - Mandatory
Maintain employment with the same employer for six out of 12 months
Earn raise at work
Receive a positive work evaluation
Save at least $75 per month (program rent) - Mandatory
Submit tuition waiver to college/university by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring Semester), and May 15th (Summer semester).
*** Confirmed by school account printout
Submit FAFSA form by October 30th
*** Confirmed by FAFSA email confirmation only
Complete college registration for college by July 15th (Fall semester),December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester).
***Confirmed by school schedule only
Complete college “To Do List”, financial verification, etc. by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester)
*** Confirmed by printout only
Discuss Occupation Profile with case manager and/or foster parent: https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/Occupations/occupation-profile.aspx
Complete 5 Myplate quizzes (www.choosemyplate.gov/quiz)

Complete short-term, vocational training program

Obtain annual credit check (www.annualcreditreport.com)

Participate in a regional independent living event

*Save at least 25% of their residual check from one semester

*Save at least 25% of their residual check from two semesters

* Confirmed by youth giving saved amount to PCC to put into savings account where rent is kept. Youth can only withdraw this amount for the purchase of a vehicle or insurance.

(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)

(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)

20-Year-Old Milestones  (Must Complete 10 for Incentive)

Staff Initials

Complete annual medical exam – **Mandatory**

Complete annual dental exam - **Mandatory**

Complete annual vision exam – **Mandatory**

Utilize a wellness benefit offered through their MCO

Maintain mental health regimen

Gym membership

Obtain driver’s license

Complete tax return

Save 25% of tax return with PCC

Provide school schedule and grades - **Mandatory**

Maintain at least a 2.3 overall grade point average

Provide monthly paystubs that verify employment - **Mandatory**

Maintain employment with the same employer for eight out of 12 months

Earn raise at work

Receive a positive work evaluation

Save at least $100 per month (program rent) - **Mandatory**

Submit tuition waiver to college/university by July 15th (Fall Semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester)

*** Confirmed by school account printout

Complete FAFSA form by October 30th.

*** Confirmed by FAFSA email confirmation only

Complete college registration for college by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester)

***Confirmed by school schedule only

Complete “To Do List”, financial verification, etc. by July 15th (Fall semester), December 15th (Spring semester), and May 15th (Summer semester).

*** Confirmed by printout only

Complete CareerOneStop’s interest assessment (www.careeronestop.org/toolkitcareers/interest-assessment.aspx)

Discuss occupation profile with case manager and/or foster parent


Complete 5 Myplate quizzes (www.choosemyplate.gov/quiz)

Complete a vocational or short-term training program
Obtain annual credit check (www.annualcreditreport.com)
Apply for applicable housing programs
Participate in a regional independent living event
Develop self-sufficiency plan

*Save at least 25% of their residual check from one semester
*Save at least 25% of their residual check from two semesters
*Confirmed by youth giving saved amount to PCC to put into savings account where rent is kept. Youth can only withdraw this amount for the purchase of a vehicle or insurance.

Complete an exit survey
Save vital documents in ifoster virtual locker

(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)
(Milestone customized for individual youth by DCBS or PCC case manager)