



Youth Welfare Approach

The Good-Better-Best Continuum of Service Provision

Transition Plan and the Independent Living Needs Assessment

As directed by the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, and the Code of Virginia ([§ 63.2-905.1](#)), VDSS requires all youth, age 14 and over, regardless of their permanency goal, to have a transition plan. The transition plan must specify the IL services, activities, and supports needed to help the youth successfully transition to adulthood. In addition, during the 90-day period immediately prior to the youth turning 18 years old, the service worker, youth, and youth's team must create a transition plan which documents the specific plans for the youth to successfully transition from foster care services to adulthood.

The transition plan is based on a formal life skills assessment, also known as the Independent living (IL) needs assessment, which is a systematic procedure to identify a youth's basic skills, emotional and social capabilities, strengths and needs to match the youth. The transition plan must be completed within 30 days of the IL needs assessment. An individualized, comprehensive assessment support effective service planning and delivery. The transition plan and IL needs assessment are critical in beginning permanency service planning and preparing youth for self-sufficiency.

Outlined below are suggestions agencies can use to provide service along the Good-Better-Best Continuum to assist a youth in the completion of the IL needs assessment and development of a transition plan.

Service need: [Transition Plan and IL Needs Assessment for all Youth ages 14 and over](#)

A **Good** level of service provision includes:

- ▶ Satisfying federal requirements
- ▶ Scheduling appointments with youth in advance to work on the IL needs assessment and transition plan
- ▶ Explaining to youth the purpose of a IL needs assessment and transition plan and how they are crucial to successfully transition to adulthood
- ▶ Working with the youth as an equal partner in crafting the transition plan and identifying appropriate services
- ▶ Basing service provision on individualized planning
- ▶ Ensuring that service provision takes into account each youth's level of cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development
- ▶ Providing the youth with printed or digital information on the IL needs assessment and the transition plan

- ▶ Meeting regularly with the youth to go over the transition plan and responding when the youth reaches out for advice or assistance
- ▶ Arranging for the youth to be referred to or signed up for life skills or similar classes
- ▶ Documenting work and services provided and making the youth's official records and documents readily accessible
- ▶ Ensuring the youth's IL needs assessment and transition plan are documented in OASIS

Example: *Worker meets with the youth to explain the purpose of the IL needs assessment and transition plan, then schedules the best date/time for the youth to begin working on the document.*

A **Better** level of service provision includes:

- ▶ Beginning the IL needs assessment and transition planning process early in a youth's development, around age 14
- ▶ Continuing to focus on permanency services planning as youth begin working on the IL needs assessment and transition plan
- ▶ Following up regularly with the young person on their transition plan and IL needs assessment to monitor developmental progress and provide assistance as needed
- ▶ Providing extensive printed and digital information on transition planning and life skills assessment planning as well as opportunities to discuss and ask questions
- ▶ Ensuring that the youth is knowledgeable of supports and connected to quality services in areas such as education, housing, life skills training, vocational exploration, health care, community resources, etc.
- ▶ Working collaboratively with young people to develop their knowledge and skills identified in the IL needs assessment
- ▶ Identifying youth strengths in order to inform individualized service planning, monitor service provision, and assess outcomes
- ▶ Using the caseworker's deep understanding of life skills development to help the young person develop the capacity to benefit from the information acquired in life skills or other training classes
- ▶ Building a close relationship with the youth, which will form the foundation for all assessment planning and service provision
- ▶ Ensuring the IL needs assessment is strength-based and have specific goals that are measurable
- ▶ Connecting young people with community partners and resources to help them creatively plan for the future and reach their goals in the transition plan and IL needs assessment

Example: *The worker carefully reviews and discusses the results of the IL needs assessment with the youth to include their strengths, needs, and goals.*

A **Best** level of service provision includes:

- ▶ Ensuring that service provision is transparent, equitable, and developmentally appropriate
- ▶ Engaging youth so they can be fully involved partners in their own service planning, decision-making, and advocacy
- ▶ Ensuring the transition plan is youth-driven and completed collaboratively with the youth, service worker, birth parents (if appropriate), and members of the youth's team
- ▶ Increasing agency and individual focus on transition planning to help youth create support networks

- ▶ Framing available services in a developmentally appropriate way that is easily navigable for young people
- ▶ Ensuring that services provided add real value to the youth's life from the young person's point of view without the need for additional incentives
- ▶ Working with the youth to develop "soft skills" so that concrete skill development identified in the life skills assessment occurs in the context of community and peer relationships
- ▶ Evaluating services provided from the youth's perspective and provide many opportunities for youth feedback
- ▶ Framing peer advocacy within the child welfare system as normal healthy behavior, providing opportunities for this advocacy, and modifying programming, when possible, based on youth feedback
- ▶ Creating a culture of problem-solving led by young people themselves

Example #1: *After the worker's initial review of the transition plan and the IL needs assessment, the youth initiates the follow-up discussion about the plan and the assessment expressing the services and supports they believe they need. The plan is developed with a team of adult supporters that the youth identifies. The meeting is lead by the youth and the youth is actively involved in the decision-making for their lives.*

Example #2: *The worker reviews and discusses the transition plan with the youth at the worker's monthly visits to get their feedback and determine if additional support is needed to achieve their goals.*

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<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/youth-development/youth-welfare-guide/>