

Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) & Related Legislation

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History of the PAL Program

1986

- Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program implemented to ensure older youth in substitute care are prepared for the transition from foster care to adulthood

1990s

- College Tuition Fee Waivers for former foster youth, enacted 1993
- Federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Act signed into law, 1999
- PAL continued to receive recognition as best practice as conveyed by Independent Living Coordinators from other states

2000s

- Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program, 2001
- Transitional Medicaid for former foster youth 18-21 years of age, with single application, 2005

Life Skills Training

- In core areas such as money management, job preparedness, planning for the future

Educational / Vocational Services

- Assist youth in assessing / identifying areas of education and career interests
- Accompany youth to college / school campus tours and orientations
- Guide / support completion of school, aid and scholarship applications

PAL Services

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

- Youth up to age 23 attend postsecondary educational/vocational training
- Assistance of up to \$5000 per eligible youth per academic year
- Residential housing, transportation, books, supplies, child care, etc.

Transitional Living Allowance (TLA)

- Up to \$1000 for PAL youth participants who age out of foster care

Aftercare Room and Board Assistance

- Based on need
- Not to exceed \$3000 per youth

Case Management

- To help youth with transition planning and resource connections

Support Services

- High school and college items
- Counseling
- Tutoring
- Driver's Education
- Mentoring

Life Skills Assessments

- Ansell-Casey instrument to assess strengths and needs in life skills attainment

Texas Youth Hotline

- Counseling information and referrals

PAL Services

Tuition and Fee Waiver, enacted 1993, revised 1997

- For youth in care on or after their 18th birthday to obtain college or vocational degree

College Partnerships

- Scholarships for residential housing
- Mentoring for PAL students
- Leadership camps and conferences

Transition Centers

- Dallas, Houston, San Antonio

Local, State and National Youth Leadership Activities

- Youth and Alumni serve as advisors / partners in all efforts
- Youth Specialists to be hired in all regions
- Youth Leadership Council (statewide)

Legislative Requirements - SB 6

Improve discharge planning

- Expand discharge planning efforts for youth transitioning to adult living

Increase availability of transitional Family Group Decision Making (Circles of Support, or COS)

- All youth age 16 and older in CPS conservatorship

Extend Medicaid coverage with a single application

- Continuous Medicaid eligibility to age 21 (no annual recertification)

Cooperative agreements with Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and local workforce development boards

- Expand services to youth in and aging out of the system

Legislative Requirements - SB 6

Annual survey regarding substitute care services

- 14+ year-olds
- Evaluate the PAL program to determine program effectiveness
- Include interviews with youth as they leave the program

Develop re-entry policy

- Allow re-entry into care after age 18 for youth to achieve goals of PAL program

Extended Care

- Extend payments up to age 22 for youth pursuing high school diploma (HB 614)
- Extend foster care eligibility and transition services to age 21

Achievements

Standardized Transition Planning template

- Identifies the services and specific tasks needed to assist the child in making the transition
- Describes the services available through the PAL program
- Incorporated into Circles of Support

Circles of Support established and expanding statewide

- Based on Family Group Decision Making model
- Operating in all regions statewide
- Available to all youth age 16 and older in CPS conservatorship
- Facilitated by staff, adults commit to supporting youth and youth's goals
- 529 COS conducted in FY05

Achievements

Medicaid single application process has been implemented

- Continuous through the month of youth's 21st birthday
- Youth fact sheet distributed statewide FY2004
- Incorporated into mandatory caseworker training

Cooperative agreements between DFPS and TWC currently being reviewed by both agencies

- Meet PAL objectives
- Housing referrals
- Workforce and child care services
- Cross-training between TWC and CPS
- Outline of roles and responsibilities

Achievements

Young people engaged in all aspects of work

- Annual youth survey
- Alumni participation in committees
- Youth leadership councils (regional and statewide)
- Regional youth specialist positions

Houston Transition Center

- For youth aging out of care
- Opened August 2005

Achievements

Extend foster care eligibility and transition services to foster youth

- Rules to be proposed at April 2006 DFPS Council Meeting

Eligible youth to return to foster care as necessary to achieve goals of the Preparation for Adult Living program (PAL)

- Policy is under development

Measuring Success and Monitoring Outcomes of PAL

Life Skills Assessment Reports

- Ansell-Casey on-line, web-based youth assessment completed by youth, caregivers and staff to assess youths' performance, needs and progress across life skills categories

Youth Focus Groups, Advisory Meetings

- Youth Leadership Groups meet quarterly at times most convenient to them

Mid-Year/Annual PAL Reports

- Completed, reviewed and evaluated twice yearly (quantitative and qualitative data)

Federal Chafee/Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Monitoring and Reporting

- Statewide data regarding services and outcomes
- Quality assurance monitoring