

Summary of Federal Guidance on Action States Can Take to Support the Needs of Youth in and Leaving Foster Care During the Pandemic

Below is a summary of actions that states can take to better support youth in and leaving foster care during and following the pandemic. This information comes from the series of guidance documents that have been issued by ACF since March 2020.

| Action to Support Older Youth | Steps to Take | Source of Guidance | How it Can Positively Impact Youth |
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| Provide IV-E extended foster care through simplified process. | Complete and submit Attachment A and B of ACF PI. | PI, Stafford Act Flexibility for Certain Title IV-E Requirements, May 8. | Offering extended care can provide youth housing and services during the pandemic. The state can fund these supports w/IV-E. |
| Suspend participation requirements (work, school) for extended foster care. | Complete and submit Attachment A of ACF PI. | PI, Stafford Act Flexibility for Certain Title IV-E Requirements, May 8. | Suspending these requirements means that youth will not lose eligibility for extended care and will remain connected to placement and services. States will be able to draw down IV-E for these supports. |
| Provide re-entry for youth 18-21 | States with extended foster care can provide re-entry at any time. | Children’s Bureau Letter on IV-E Flexibility, April 27 Children’s Bureau Guidance on Extended Foster Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, May 26. | Providing re-entry will allow the state to provide immediate assistance in the form and placement and services. Given the option to suspend work and school requirements, re-entry will allow states to provide services to more young people in need. |
| Provide expedited processes for re-entry | States can implement these processes immediately by using Voluntary Placement Agreements. | Children’s Bureau Letter on IV-E Flexibility, April 27 | VPAs allow the child welfare agency to establish placement and care responsibility and begin providing placement and services for youth without court action so immediate assistance can be provided (and funded w/IV-E). |
| Provide an enhanced foster care rate to support family based settings for youth. | No action other than documenting the increased need of the young person. | Children’s Bureau Letter on IV-E Flexibility, April 27 | Family based settings are optimal at all times. During COVID-19, group settings pose an even greater threat to young people. Enhanced support to kin caregivers and foster families can be funded through an increased rate that is IV-E reimbursable. The higher need could be a |

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| | | Child Welfare Manual, 8.3B.2, Q 2 | result of many things, including: COVID-19, behavioral or physical health needs, or to support the needs of a parenting youth. |
| Provide flexible living settings for young people ages 18-21 | States can provide the flexible and IV-E reimbursable “supervised setting in which the individual lives independently” for youth 18-21 in extended care at any time. | Children’s Bureau Guidance on Extended Foster Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, May 26. PI, Fostering Connections, July 9, 2010. | Many young people are in great need of a safe place to live that is age-appropriate and is not group setting. This flexible setting can be developed quickly and be responsive to the youth’s needs and current situation. This flexible setting can include things like: host homes, living with a parent or kin, a supervised apartment. It is IV-E reimbursable. |
| Outreach to youth ages 18-21 who are no longer in care. | States can proceed with outreach at any time. | Children’s Bureau Guidance on Extended Foster Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, May 26. | Pro-active outreach to adolescents and young adults is the most effective way to determine whether they have unmet needs and to ensure that they are aware of the assistance that is available. Waiting for young people to reach out misses opportunities to provide aid, prevent crises, and promote trust at a time when youth may be isolated and without support. |
| Outreach to pregnant and parenting youth, provide enhanced support and connection with community resources. | State can proceed with outreach at any time. | Children’s Bureau Guidance on Extended Foster Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, May 26. | Pregnant and parenting youth are likely to have increased material and other needs due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. They may need assistance is accessing food, diapers, and other supplies for their children that have become harder to access. They are also likely to need information on how to address services for their children that have been impacted by the crisis. Being pro-active, reaching out and connecting young people will services will aid in maintaining family stability. |
| Provide Chafee services until age 23. | Contact ACF regional office to take option. | Children’s Bureau Letter on | Child welfare agencies can serve more young people in need by extending the age of eligibility. |

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| | | IV-E Flexibility, April 27 | |
| Use Chafee and/or IV-B funds for cell phones and communications tools. | No action other than documenting connection of purchase to Chafee goals and/or IV-B uses | Letter from the Children’s Bureau, April 20. | Having a cell phone and connection to the internet is vital to ensuring that youth can stay connected with family, casemanagers and service providers. This is the only way to ensure access to services, supports, and continued participation in work to achieve transition to adulthood and permanency goals. |