

## **Section VII**

# **Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood and Education and Training Voucher Program State Plan 2020 - 2024**

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## **I. Agency Administering Chafee (section 477(b)(2) of the Act)**

The Department of Child Safety is the responsible State agency administering the Title IV-E Program. The Department will administer the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood under Sections 471, 472, 474, 475, and 477 in Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (the “Act”), Title I, Improved Independent Living Program, Public Law 106-169, Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and the Education and Training Vouchers Program (ETVP) under purpose 6 of Section 477(a) of the Act. Arizona’s Chafee Program is hereafter referred to as the “Young Adult Program” or “YAP.” The Department will cooperate with national evaluations of the effects of the programs implemented to achieve its purposes as required under Section 477 (b)(2)(F) of the Act.

Please see Section VII of this Five Year Child and Family Services Plan for the signed certification that the State will expend no more than 30 percent of their allotment of Federal funds for room and board for youth who left foster care because they attained 18 years of age, but have not yet attained 21 years of age. For the purpose of this plan, “room and board” is defined to include housing (direct rental assistance or related costs such as security or utility deposits), food, expenses of a child in their care, personal care, clothing, and basic furniture and household maintenance items. Room and board is made available through the state’s program of continued foster care and through the program of aftercare services, called the Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP). The TILP provides an array of services and supports to legal residents of Arizona under the age of 21 years, who were previously in the custody of a state or tribal child welfare foster care program, in out-of-home care, at age 16 years or older.

The Permanency and Youth Service (PYS) Unit within the Department provides oversight to the programs and agencies that provide Chafee services and supports. The Permanency and Youth Services Unit consist of a Manager, the Statewide Independent Living Coordinator, an Independent Living Program Development Coordinator, two Statewide Education Specialists, and a Peer Mentor. The Unit works closely with the leadership in the field to ensure that Chafee services and supports are being provided to young people ages 14 and older. In 2018, the PYS Unit began doing quality reviews on open DCS cases with youth ages 14-21, the contracted life skills and TILP provider, and the ETV contracted provider. The PYS Unit will continue to deliver technical assistance regarding all services related to Chafee program delivery during the next five years.

## **II. Description of Program Design and Delivery**

One of the key plans for the Department to strengthen the Chafee program over the next five years is to convert the current state funded extended foster care program to a IV-E extended foster care program. The Department collaborated with community stakeholders and engaged Mainspring Consulting to complete a fiscal impact on IV-E extended foster care in Arizona. As a result, Arizona is moving forward with plans to adopt IV-E extended foster care and proposed Senate Bill 1539 - Extended Foster Care to the Legislature during the spring, 2019 session. The

Department believes that the adoption of IV-E extended foster care will bolster the current state funded extended program, by offering additional financial support and additional layers of administrative oversight to assist with the Department's strategic planning efforts around improving outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care.

The Department partnered with various stakeholders to ensure that young people's voices are captured in the Chafee plan. The Independent Living Coordinator spoke with youth during the 2018 Annual Youth Conference to gather input regarding what types of services they felt would improve their transition to adulthood. The Independent Living Coordinator also met with young people at the local Maricopa County Youth Advisory Board and the Keys to Success Advisory Board to share progress made and gather ideas about needs for the five-year plan. The Independent Living Coordinator gathered information from the Fostering Advocates Arizona Board through their facilitator and information was returned in a written response.

The youth highlighted the needs to continue work on creating positive relationships between young people and their case specialists and placements. They shared their desire to see additional supports surrounding financial literacy and normalcy activities. The Department started a project with the Capacity Building Center for States in 2018, titled Arizona Family Engagement & NYTD Support project. During the project, the Young Adult Consultant assisted the PYS team in identifying an approach called Youth Thrive that would complement the Department's family engagement plan of Strengthening Families. Youth Thrive and Strengthening Families are initiatives of the Center for the Study of Social Policy and they promote protective and promotive factors for healthy development and well-being.

The Center for States encouraged the Department to utilize Youth Thrive, as it is a well-rounded approach to ensure young people have the protective and promotive factors of: Knowledge of Adolescent Development, Social Connections, Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competency, and Concrete Supports in Times of Need. The Youth Thrive approach teaches youth allies how to use a trauma informed practice lens, to shift from what's wrong with you, to what's happened to you, and what's right with you? As of April, 2019, the Department has 23 trained trainers in Youth Thrive and plan to train all YAP units by August, 2019.

The five year plan includes increasing the reach of Youth Thrive to all DCS Specialists, as the Department sees the value in ensuring that every DCS staff who has interactions with young people, need to have the tools to help them reach their full potential. The Youth Thrive framework will be integrated into all services and contracts which are supported and by the Chafee Grant. This ensuring Chafee funded supports represent a form of prevention services to help youth exit to permanency with the capacity and resources needed to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The PYS unit will continue to engage youth from across the state in the annual Statewide Youth Conference. Bringing together youth from across the state, to learn about program supports, resources, and services; form relationships with other youth experiencing care; and learning valuable life skills which they can utilize in their transition to adulthood. This is an important event which identifies topical issues facing young people not just in foster care, but all young

people. This brings together not only youth, but state and contracted staff together to learn and grow from each other.

The Department participated in the NYTD Federal Review in February, 2018. During the review, the Department received valuable feedback and spent the next year planning and implementing processes to strengthen all aspects of NYTD data collection. In April, 2019, The Department and Arizona State University (ASU), finalized an agreement that will allow ASU to partner with the Department in developing a survey that is informed by youth voice, completing survey practices that will result in every 17 year old being surveyed in the Baseline year 2020A and 2020B, and developing a strategy to use the survey information to inform practices and policies within the Department's Chafee program.

The Department also developed and started tasks in an improvement plan that resulted from the NYTD Federal Review. The PYS unit has conducted NYTD served training with all of the contracted life skills, TILP and ETV providers in 2018. The PYS unit also met with all of the YAP units in the state and reviewed a newly developed NYTD services tool that assists the field in understanding how to complete the NYTD reporting screen. The Department is in process of transitioning from a SACWIS system to a CWIS system and in doing so, improvements to NYTD data collection has been a focus over the past year and will continue to be until the CWIS system is fully implemented. Anticipated date of completion is 2020.

Financial incentives funded through the Chafee grant will continue to be used to support youth involvement in necessary transition activities (as identified in the individual case plan) and to support activities and materials needed for NYTD, the annual statewide youth conference and other local events, as determined by the YAP. Funding will also be used to support youth involvement in other activities identified by the State Youth Advisory Board (or a local regional board) which may include in-state or out-of-state travel to participate in transition conferences and region-based youth gatherings.

### **III. Serving Youth Across the State**

The Chafee program is administered in the same manner across the state. The Department's policies and procedures are applicable to all regions of the state agency. The Department has one Chafee contract for life skills and aftercare program, which is currently administered by Arizona's Children Association. This delivery process has allowed for the fair and equitable treatment of eligibility and service benefits.

Efforts to administer the program equitably across the state are enhanced by the Department's Independent Living (IL) Coordinator meeting with regional IL Coordinators and contract staff on a quarterly basis (or more often if needed). Data is collected, reviewed and discussed during these meetings to identify internal barriers to services delivery as well as to identify and discuss trends in service deliver, both positive and negative, and to resolve areas of concern.

#### **IV. Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence**

The Department is working towards transitioning from state funded extended foster care to IV-E Extended Foster Care, potentially by the end of CY 2019. The IV-E Extended foster care program will improve the current program by providing more oversight to the case management processes for 18-20 year olds. The Department plans to implement an internal Administrative Review team, which would allow a direct line of communication between administrative review staff, PYS unit staff and then improvements to case management in the field. The Department has roughly 800 young people currently participating in the extended foster care program. The Department believes that IV-E extended foster care will allow for more resources towards improving young people's relationships with their DCS Specialists which will increase the likelihood that they decide to continue in the extended foster care program.

An array of services are available to youth statewide, and the specialized case management in multiple counties comprise the YAP. The YAP specialized case management units manage services for those older youth in care who are likely to reach age 18 while in out-of-home care. Youth 14 and older are eligible for services which include referral for participation in activities sponsored by agencies outside of the state foster care system, employment readiness training, job shadowing, volunteer services, secondary and post-secondary education planning and support, counseling, and community mentor programs. Out-of-home care providers are encouraged, and in some instances contractually required, to teach basic life skills as part of every child's normal daily routine.

Life Skill Training is individually tailored for youth with special educational, behavioral, or other needs. A variety of presentation methods and materials may be used to more effectively reach young people with low reading levels and cognitive deficits. Life Skills training is also a Title XIX covered service. Youth with significant mental health needs are referred through the Child and Family Team for training through this resource. Youth eligible for services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) are also served through the YAP and receive additional support from DDD staff who assist in navigating the DDD service delivery system, including securing enrollment in the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) for eligible youth. Most youth who are deemed ALTCS eligible are transitioned into that service system after turning 18, while youth who are DDD eligible but not ALTCS eligible remain on YAP caseloads and receive services on the same basis as other youth in the state. In some situations, a conservator is sought to assist in making financial decisions and providing oversight and support to youth with disabilities.

Young people have shared that they would like to see an increased focus in financial literacy, healthy relationships, and stable housing opportunities. The Department plans to include an evidenced based financial literacy curriculum to an updated life skills contract in the next five years. The life skills contract will also include a larger emphasis on health relationships, peer to

peer mentoring, family finding, and family planning. The Department also utilizes the services of other state agencies (including workforce and rehabilitation services), community organizations, volunteers, community mentor programs, and colleges and universities to expand opportunities for youth to gain experience and knowledge in support of their transition to adulthood.

The state provides “aftercare” services to legal residents of Arizona age 18-21 who were in any State or Tribal foster care system at age 16 or older through the Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP). These former foster youth typically are living on their own, and no longer have an open service case with the DCS or with another state’s foster care program. TILP services are delivered through a community based provider who assist youth to develop an individualized service plan. The service plan must identify goals specific to employment, education, life skills and other areas necessary for transition to adulthood. . Some financial support is available (dependent on resources) to assist youth pursue education, employment, therapeutic services, etc. A TILP case specialist will meet with youth to discuss his/her needs and goals. TILP services may be provided as often as needed but not past the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Youth must actively participate in the service plan and understand their personal responsibility to the program in an effort to empower the youth and drive the plan.

Former Arizona Foster Youth under age twenty-one who left care at age eighteen or older and need long-term case management and support services have the option of returning to the State agency for these services, including transitional living support and the cost of foster care.

Re-entry is currently facilitated through the contract provider of the life skills training service. In the next five years, and as changes are made in the delivery of Voluntary Continued Foster Care, Arizona will evaluate the re-entry process and streamline it best meet the needs of youth, and abilities of the infrastructure of the agency.

The Department will evaluate extending Chafee services to age 23 as the extended foster care program progresses. This will be an evolving process over the next five years as program participation, funding and youth needs continue to be assessed.

As a component of the Department’s project with the Center for States and the implementation of Youth Thrive, they will be utilizing the Youth Thrive survey as an assessment tool to evaluate the five protective and promotive factors for young people.

## **V. Collaboration with Other Private and Public Agencies**

The Department relies heavily on strong partnerships with private and public agencies in assisting young people in Arizona having successful transitions to adulthood. The Department’s Statewide Independent Living Coordinator continues to have bi-annual Independent Living Coordinator meetings, which have been extended to any community member that feels they can contribute to successful transitions to adulthood for youth experiencing care. Current collaborations include, but are not limited to: Community colleges, State Universities, Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, Fostering Advocates Arizona, WIOA providers, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Education,

Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, Housing Authorities, Homeless Youth Providers, Behavioral health providers, and additional privately operated community partners.

The Department recently distributed a Request for Information (RFI) in March, 2019 as the first step in developing a more robust transitional housing model for young people in Arizona. The Department plans to continue collaborating with contractors and community members to provide young people with unique and individualized housing options to meet different stages of development and support needs.

Community partners in Arizona all agree that developing and maintaining an array of housing options for youth experiencing care is a key part in assisting young people as they transition to adulthood. The next five years will include intentional discussions and planning relating to solving housing crises for youth who have experienced foster care. The Department is committed to being a leader in these housing discussions and is working to identify solutions with the RFI for transitional housing options.

## **VI. Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services (Section 477(b)(2)(E) of the Act)**

The Department requires a Preparation for Adulthood Plan, for all children age 14 and older in out-of-home care to ensure each youth has an opportunity to build the skills necessary for a successful transition to adulthood. This plan includes goals and activities focused on building self-sufficiency skills in areas such as personal care, home sanitation, workforce readiness and other areas common to all adolescent youth. Youth 16 years of age and older in out-of-home care with a permanency goal of Independent Living (aka Another Planned Permanency Goal/APPLA, Emancipation) are referred for participation in the YAP. These youth will receive services that include an array of activities and supports (both contract and non-contract) designed to promote self-sufficiency through enhancement of various life skills, personal assets (including financial assets) and the development of lifelong supports through connections with dedicated adults.

Administrative rules drafted in 2014 were finalized in January 2016 and can be found in Title 21, Chapter 5, Article 2, Independent Living and Transitional Independent Living Programs. The rules provide clarification and guidance on eligibility criteria. Program policy includes requirements and procedures for advising youth of available services and supports, program requirements (including acceptance of personal responsibility and own efforts towards self-sufficiency), and the right to appeal decisions made during the time they are under the supervision of and/or receiving services through the Department, including decisions related to any denial or termination of services [(Section 477 (b)(2)(E) of the Act)]. The state website <http://www.azdcs.gov/> also provides links to an array of policy, program, and service and resource information, including contact information for staff statewide. TILP services are available to youth who have reached 18 years of age or older when the youth is a legal resident of Arizona, has not turned 21 years of age, and was formerly in any state or federally recognized tribal foster care program (in out-of-home care while under the jurisdiction of the state or tribal court or child welfare agency) at 16 years of age or older. Youth who are legal residents of Arizona, and who are residing out of state on a temporary basis (e.g., for the purpose of education or training) remain eligible for services while

temporarily residing out of state. Youth 18 years of age and older who become legal residents of another state may access Chafee-funded services available through the state or county (for county administered states) of residence.

#### **VII. Cooperation in National Evaluations (section 477(b)(2)(F) of the Act)**

The Department will cooperate with national evaluations of the effects of the programs implemented to achieve its purposes as required under Section 477 (b)(2)(F) of the Act.

#### **VIII. Cooperation in National Evaluations (section 477(b)(2)(F) of the Act)Chafee Training**

The Youth Thrive training will be the main Chafee related training in FY 2020 through 2024. There are currently 23 Trained Trainers and the initial plan is to train all YAP Specialists in CY 2019. The Department has also developed a Computer Based Training (CBT) for onboarding new YAP Specialists. The CBT was finalized in May, 2019 and all current YAP staff will receive the training to ensure consistency amongst staff. The CBT includes information on, but not limited to: Chafee, NYTD, ETV, protective and promotive factors, adolescent brain development, trauma informed care, case planning for older youth, natural supports, and transitional support services.

#### **IX. Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program**

The FFPSA amended the ETV program to extend eligibility to youth up until their 26th birthday, while placing a five-year limit on the total length of time a youth can receive an ETV voucher (section 477(i)(3) of the Act). The maximum annual amount of the voucher (\$5,000) and its purpose (to apply toward the cost of attendance at an institution of higher education) remains unchanged (section 477(i)(4) of the Act). Arizona's current program makes vouchers available to youth who left foster care for any reason at 16 years of age or older. The Department contracts with Foster Care to Success to operate the state's ETV Program. Current and former foster youth may apply directly for the voucher by submitting an application online at [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org). Designated Department staff enters the web-based application and provides verification of former foster care status for all initial applicants. Contract staff work directly with youth to ensure all necessary documentation is submitted prior to authorizing funding. Funds for tuition, school room and board and fees are paid directly to the institution. Funding for living expenses are distributed monthly, based on the approved application and budget.

The Department contract further provides ongoing support to students through one on one contact with Foster Care to Success staff, care packages and involvement in supplemental support services (for struggling students). Department staff hold a teleconference with contract staff on a monthly basis (or as needed) to discuss progress and resolve issues/barriers to student success, and review and approve invoices on a monthly basis, monitoring the number and types



of assistance provided to students. Additionally, internal meetings with budget/finance staff are held to monitor expenditures.

The Department monitors the amount of financial assistance provided to students through monthly invoices and monthly budget reports that are reviewed by both financial administrative and program staff. The Department contractor ensures the total amount of education assistance to a youth does not exceed the total cost of attendance (as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965), and does not duplicate benefits under any other federal or federally assisted benefit program per sections 477(b)(3)(J) and (i)(5) of the Act, and Attachment C.

Goals and outcomes for the ETV Program as reflected in the Department contract include: To spend 100% of ETV funds; 100% of ETV applications will be processed within 5 business days of completed application; 75% of approved and eligible applicants complete their funded course of study; and 80% of youth who received the ETV shall maintain at least the minimum required performance standard for the institution they are attending.

Arizona continues to have the state Tuition Waiver for current and former foster youth, which the age of being in foster care to meet eligibility requirements, decreased from 16 to 14 in April, 2019. The YAP will coordinate the development of additional goals, outcomes and measurements for the state ETV Program to the extent possible and appropriate for the program. Additionally, the Department ETV contractor has developed a database that gathers information on youth served through the state Tuition Voucher including the number of youth served, basic demographics and characteristics of youth served, funding approved per student, etc., and will be distributing reports to stakeholders on a regular basis.

The Department has not made any changes to the ETV Program, but meetings have been held with stakeholders to discuss the additional changes the FFPSA is allowing states to make. During initial meetings, stakeholders are interested in the Department considering to increase the eligibility age to 26, in order to give young people a longer amount of time to engage in post-secondary programs with the support of ETV.

The Department continues to collaborate with College Success Programs throughout the state. Maricopa Community Colleges and Arizona State University continue to partner with their respective Bridging Success programs. PYS members participate on their Advisory Committee that meets quarterly and includes College Success Programs across the state: College Depot, College Success Arizona, Fostering Success-University of Arizona, FosterEd,

The Department's contracted ETV provider, Foster Care to Success will continue to provide unduplicated number of ETVs awarded each school year.

## **X. Consultation with Tribes**

Benefits and services under the YAP and ETV Program are available to Indian youth in the state on the same basis as to other youth in the state. Tribal child welfare staff refers youth age 16 years and older, directly to the contract service provider. Services available include life skills

training and support, financial assistance to support specific transition needs outlined in the youth's individualized case plan and the ETV. Youth 18 years and older who were formerly in out of home care under tribal jurisdiction may self-refer to the Department contract provider for services through the aftercare program, which is the same process used by youth formerly in state foster programs. Department staff contacts tribal foster care staff directly to verify eligibility for services for all applicants. Tribal youth apply for the state ETV in the same manner as other applicants, through the online application at [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org).

The PYS unit and Department contract provider (Arizona's Children Association) have jointly conducted outreach efforts to Arizona's tribes for the purpose of informing on current services available, developing a single referral process, reviewing the effectiveness of services provided and coordinating services with available tribal resources. The department contractor continues to engage tribes and build relationships through in person meetings and program presentations. Local contract staff work directly with tribal youth, caregivers and the assigned tribal case manager to create an individualized service plan for each youth served.

As part of the Department's contract, the Arizona's Children Association will continue to work individually with Tribal Leaders to establish rapport. The Independent Living Clinicians and/or Coordinators will ask permission to meet with Tribal Leaders at the Tribe's preferred location. As permission is granted, the IL program staff most appropriate for the geographical area will meet with Tribal members. ILP staff will give proper respect, observe and learn from communication styles, and will ask questions in a sensitive way in hope of gaining insight regarding the Tribe's perception of the family structure, acculturation or assimilation, customs and spirituality, and the view of youth living independently. Once rapport has been established the program staff in attendance will describe State supported services that may be of interest to eligible youth. On the premise that most youth are best served by persons who are part of or are familiar with their unique cultural heritage, mentoring opportunities, volunteer and/or part-time positions within the Independent Living Program for Tribal Members will be discussed.

The Independent Living Program will continue to participate in the Inter Tribal Council meeting in an effort to share information with Tribal members and youth about opportunities available to them. Written materials will also be disseminated to entities such as the Phoenix Indian Hospital, Phoenix Indian Center, etc. Effectiveness of service provision to tribal youth will be monitored through a variety of methods including regular satisfaction surveys of youth participating in services, as well as assessment of individual achievement of service plan goals. Functional outcomes such as obtaining appropriate housing, maintenance of employment and achievement of educational goals will be monitored. In addition, tribal youth will be invited to become active participants on AzCA's Youth Advisory Boards. Through participation on these boards, tribal youth will have opportunities to provide direct feedback regarding the effectiveness of services, including the ability to have input into program development and improvement processes.

The Department was notified in December, 2018 by the Capacity Building Center for States that the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC) was approved to provide IV-E

Chafee services. The Department and Members from the SRPMIC met in January, 2019 and began discussions around programming and how the Chafee program is operated by the Department. The SRPMIC team will collaborate with the Department as they finalize how they plan to deliver their IV-E Chafee program.

The Navajo Nation also has an approved Title IV-E plan or a Title IV-E tribal/state agreement. To date, there has been no request to receive directly an allotment of CFCIP funds. Any tribe that obtains such a plan or agreement shall be consulted on the option to receive directly from ACF a portion of the state's CFCIP and/or ETV allotments to provide services to tribal foster youth (Section 477(j) of the Act).

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