

Fostering Futures: VA Extends Foster Care to 21

PRESENTED BY: ALLISON GILBREATH, VOICES FOR VIRGINIA'S CHILDREN

Agenda

- Overview of Fostering Futures Law/Program
- Break into Small Groups – How to communicate it to the Youth
- Learn Advocacy Skills to help Represent Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
- Learn Advocacy Skills to help Represent "Cross Over" Youth

Housekeeping/About the Presenter



- Restrooms
- Candy
- Ask questions throughout (Step Up Step Down)
- Temperature/Throw Blankets
- Thank you for being a CASA!

What is Fostering Futures?

- In 2016, the VA Appropriations Act (Item 346 #3c) authorized the extension of foster care to 21, in a program known as Fostering Futures
- Prior to this, at age 18 youth would "age out" with some limited independent living services available to age 21.
- The program is carried out by local departments of social services.



Who is Eligible?

- Must "age out" of foster care, or
- Must have been in foster care immediately prior to their commitment to DJJ and leave a DJJ facility after age 18 and before turning 21.
- Must be between 18 and 21



What do Youth get in Fostering Futures?

- Case Management + Monthly Worker Visits
- Independent Living Services
- Post-Secondary Education Support and/or Job Training (tuition and room and board)
- Rental or purchase of required educational equipment, materials, or supplies
- Childcare
- Medicaid to 26 (all who age out)



Approved Living Situations

- Participants may reside in a Supervised Independent Living setting. These settings include:
 - On their own
 - With their spouse
 - In a college dormitory
 - With a family or extended family member
 - In a foster family home – including treatment foster care and LDSS approved
 - Military reserves
 - Job Corps or vocational school

Maintenance Payments

- Are intended to cover the participant's costs for food, shelter, clothing, supplies and personal incidentals.
 - Rate is the 13 and over amount: \$700/ month as of July 1, 2016
- May be made directly to the youth with responsibility to pay for rent, groceries and other basic expenses.
- Participants are eligible for annual clothing money.
- Maintenance payments can be made for the minor child of a Fostering Futures participant residing with the participant.

How Youth Stay Eligible

- Participants must meet at least one of these five criteria to continue to be eligible for the program:
 - Completing secondary education or in a GED program
 - Enrolled in college or a vocational program
 - Attending classes to promote employment or remove barriers to employment
 - Working at least 80 hours per month, or
 - Unable to meet one of the four conditions above due to a documented medical reason

What is Your Role as a CASA?

LONG-TERM GOALS, TRANSITION PLANNING, STAYING WITH THEM IN THE PROGRAM

CASA's Can and Should...

START TALKING ABOUT:

- Transition planning at age 14
- Where they would like to live after they turn 18
- Support programs like Great Expectations
- Their feelings about the foster care system

STAY WITH THEM AFTER THEY "AGE OUT"

- All participants will sign a Voluntary Continuing Services and Support Agreement (VCSSA)
- Youth can request CASA continue as a part of their team.
- The agreement isn't just a service agreement, it acts as an entrustment agreement.
- The agreement must be approved by the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.



Educate youth about Fostering Futures!

Youth don't know the benefits!

Break Out Time
 PAIR OFF INTO GROUPS OF 4 -5
 READ HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION
 HAVE A CASA MEETING



Why wouldn't a youth enroll in Fostering Futures?

CASA's are different than every one else in that child's life. You can help them understand all the benefits of fostering futures!

Going from Best Interest to Youth Driven

- CASA's should encourage and support youth in taking responsibility for becoming increasingly self-sufficient and interdependent over time.

CASA's can help youth:

- Understand their responsibility for developing and achieving a plan
- Develop personal goals
- Identify strengths, interests, and needs

What about "Cross Over" Youth?

CROSS OVER YOUTH ARE YOUTH IN BOTH CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Cross-Over Youth

- Youth who were in foster care immediately prior to entering DJJ **ARE** eligible for Fostering Futures.
- Support these youth by:
 - Regular visits
 - Communicating fostering futures
 - Long-Term Planning
 - Connecting to support services



Important Notes

- Participants who have exited the program, may re-enter by signing a new VCSSA at any time prior to their 21st birthday, provided they meet one of the eligibility requirements.
- There is **no limit** to the number of times the young adult can re-enter, nor is there a limit to the time between exit and re-entry.
- Youth who are medically unable to fulfill the eligibility requirements can get approved periods of leave or be served by the Dept. of Aging and Rehabilitation Services.



Getting Involved with the General Assembly

- Youth Advisory Group
- Share systemic problems with policy makers





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