

Chapter 1

LIFE SKILLS AND INDEPENDENT LIVING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

1-1. Purpose. This chapter describes policies and procedures for Rule [65C-28.009](#), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), pertaining to youth and young adults' life skill attainment and independent living needs assessments.

1-2. Definitions.

a. "Exceptional Student Education (ESE)." Instruction for students ages 3 – 21 years of age who have disabilities or are determined gifted.

b. "Independent Living Needs Assessment." A systematic procedure to identify a youth's basic skills, emotional and social capabilities, strengths, and needs to match the youth with appropriate independent living services. The assessment addresses knowledge of basic living skills, job readiness, money management abilities, decision-making skills, goal setting, task completion, and other transitional living needs.

c. "Independent Living Skills Plan." An individualized plan that reflects the strategy for building a young person's life skill competency, particularly in areas of assessed need.

d. "Informal Needs Assessment." Evaluating independent living skills during typical interactions or through observation such as routine home visits.

e. "Life Skills Progress Documentation Log (form CF-FSP 5444, available in DCF Forms)." A codified form used by Child Welfare Professionals and Caregivers to record the youth or young adult's life skill activities.

f. "National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)." A national mandatory data collection system that collects information from states to track transition services to measure outcome data that may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

1-3. Roles and Responsibilities.

a. Caregivers are required to take the lead role in ensuring children and young adults in their home are provided the skills necessary to transition to adulthood and report on the progress of skills development. These skills include daily living activities and other essential independent living skills for enhanced wellbeing and self-sufficiency.

b. Child welfare professionals shall support, train, and assist caregivers with their responsibilities. When no caregiver exists, or the caregiver lacks the ability and resources, the child welfare professional must ensure children and young adults receive the necessary skills.

c. Child welfare professionals are also required to assess life skill progress and incorporate assessment outcomes into relevant case management planning and reporting functions, including, but not limited to, case planning tasks and judicial review social study reports.

1-4. Life Skill Types.

a. Children and young adults in out-of-home care acquire independent living skills that have been paid for or provided by the Department and its contracted service providers using John H. Chaffee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee program) funds. Each of the skills will fall into one or more of the following NYTD categories:

(1) Academic Support. Services designed to help a youth complete high school or obtain a General Equivalency Degree (GED). Such services include the following: academic counseling; preparation for a GED, including assistance for or studying for GED exam; tutoring; help with homework; study skills training; literacy training; and help accessing educational resources. Academic support does NOT include a youth's general attendance in school.

(2) Post-Secondary Educational Support. Services designed to help a youth enter or complete a post-secondary education and include the following: classes for test preparation, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); counseling about college; information about financial aid and scholarships; help completing college or loan applications; or tutoring while in college.

(3) Career Preparation. Services that focus on developing a youth's ability to find, apply for, and retain appropriate employment. Career preparation includes the following types of instruction and support services: vocational and career assessment, including career exploration and planning, guidance in setting and assessing vocational and career interests and skills, and help in matching interests and abilities with vocational goals; job seeking and job placement support, including identifying potential employers, writing resumes, completing job applications, developing interview skills, job shadowing, receiving job referrals, using career resource libraries, understanding employee benefits coverage, and securing work permits; retention support, including job coaching; learning how to work with employers and other employees; understanding workplace values such as timeliness and appearance; and understanding authority and customer relationships.

(4) Employment Programs or Vocational Training. Services designed to build a youth's skills for a specific trade, vocation, or career through classes or on-site training. Employment programs include a youth's participation in an apprenticeship, internship, or summer employment program and do not include summer or after-school jobs secured by the youth alone. Vocational training includes a youth's participation in vocational or trade programs and the receipt of training in occupational classes for such skills as cosmetology, auto mechanics, building trades, nursing, computer science, and other current or emerging employment sectors.

(5) Budget and Financial Management. Training or practice with: living within a budget; opening and using a checking and savings account; balancing a checkbook; developing consumer awareness and smart shopping skills; accessing information about credit, loans and taxes; and filling out tax forms. This also includes working with the youth or young adult on accessing the Department of Financial Services' financial literacy curriculum available at financeyourfuture.myfloridacfo.com.

(6) Housing Education and Home Management Training. Assistance or training in locating and maintaining housing, including filling out a rental application and acquiring a lease, handling security deposits and utilities, understanding practices for keeping a healthy and safe home, understanding tenant's rights and responsibilities, and handling landlord complaints. Home management includes instruction in food preparation, laundry, housekeeping, living cooperatively, meal planning, grocery shopping, and basic maintenance and repairs.

(7) Health Education and Risk Prevention. Includes providing information about: hygiene, nutrition, fitness and exercise and first aid; medical and dental care benefits, health care resources and insurance, prenatal care and maintaining personal medical records; sex education, abstinence education, and HIV prevention, including education and information about sexual

development and sexuality, pregnancy prevention and family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS; and substance abuse prevention and intervention, including education and information about the effects and consequences of substance use (alcohol, drugs, tobacco) and substance avoidance and intervention. Health education and risk prevention does not include the youth's actual receipt of direct medical care or substance abuse treatment.

(8) Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education. Includes education and information about safe and stable families, healthy marriages, spousal communication, parenting, responsible fatherhood, childcare skills, teen parenting, and domestic and family violence prevention.

(9) Mentoring. Mentoring means that the youth has been matched with a screened and trained adult for a one-on-one relationship that involves the two meeting on a regular basis. Mentoring can be short-term, but it may also support the development of a long-term relationship. While youth often are connected to adult role models through school, work, or family, this service category only includes a mentor relationship that has been facilitated, paid for, or provided by the state agency or its staff.

(10) Supervised Independent Living. Supervised independent living means that the young adult is residing in out-of-home care, living independently under a supervised living arrangement, pursuant to subsection [39.6251\(4\)](#), F.S. While this independent living skill may demonstrate a multitude of other life skills, designating this skill type means that the young adult continues to reside in an environment that allows the young adult the appropriately assessed independence essential for transition to adulthood.

b. The NYTD categories detailed above are aligned with Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), Independent Living Case Notes for required documentation and federal data reporting.

c. Children and young adults in out-of-home care also acquire other independent living, practical, and general life skills in their home environment. In conjunction with NYTD categories referenced above, the following life skill areas shall be formally addressed as a strength or a need upon completion of an Independent Living Needs Assessment documented in FSFN by a child welfare professional:

- (1) Career Planning;
- (2) Daily Living;
- (3) Education Planning;
- (4) Emergency and Safety Skills;
- (5) Food Management;
- (6) Health;
- (7) Housekeeping;
- (8) Housing;
- (9) Interpersonal Skills;
- (10) Job Maintenance Skills;
- (11) Job Seeking Skills;

- (12) Knowledge of Community Resources;
- (13) Legal Skills;
- (14) Leisure Activities;
- (15) Money Management;
- (16) Personal Appearance;
- (17) Religion;
- (18) Self-Care;
- (19) Social Relationships;
- (20) Transportation; and,
- (21) Work Life.

d. All skill topics addressed with youth and young adults for the purpose of building capacity toward adulthood may fall into one or more of the life skill areas and categories previously noted.

1-5. Assessing Life Skills. Child welfare professionals shall assess a youth and young adult's ongoing progress and competency in acquiring essential life skills.

a. An Informal Needs Assessment shall be completed monthly at a minimum using a Life Skills Progress Documentation Log (form CF-FSP 5444, available in DCF Forms) for youth and young adults 13 years of age or older.

b. The Life Skills Progress Documentation Log shall be completed by caregivers and child welfare professionals attesting to or assisting the young person in acquiring life skills.

c. All youth and young adults age 16 years or older shall be encouraged to participate in an Independent Living Needs Assessment. The assessment shall gauge a young person's knowledge and/or ability of the skills referenced in paragraph 1-4c of this operating procedure.

(1) The Casey Life Skills Assessment and the Daniel Memorial Independent Living Skills Assessment are examples of recommended tools that may be used to measure life skill competency; however, the assessment may also be the process in which a child welfare professional utilizes the youth or young adult's case records to conduct a thorough review and determine strengths and needs.

(2) The assessment shall be discussed collaboratively with the youth, caregiver, guardian, and anyone else that the youth selects to be a supportive adult on their transition to adulthood.

(3) If the youth or young adult has an impairment due to a physical, intellectual, emotional, or psychiatric condition that substantially limits his or her ability to participate, the child welfare professional shall work with the young person's caregiver, supportive adults, service providers, and school district personnel as applicable to complete the assessment.

(4) The assessment shall also yield information that assists in outlining specific, measurable goals that will help guide in the development of an Independent Living Skills Plan.

d. The outcome of all assessments shall be documented in FSFN.

1-6. Life Skill Plans.

a. All youth and young adults age 16 years and older must have an Independent Living Skills Plan that details the following:

(1) Goals for acquiring the skills that were assessed as deficient in the assessment process;

(2) Activities, steps, or demonstrated behaviors for achieving the goals; and,

(3) Resources to assist in completing the activities.

b. The child welfare professional must work collaboratively with the youth or young adult on the completion of the plan as well as with other supportive adults that the young person selects to participate.

c. If a youth or young adult is enrolled in an ESE program, plans shall be coordinated with the educational institution or relevant school district.

1-7. FSFN Documentation.

a. Informal Life Skills Assessments must be documented in the following ways:

(1) Complete an Independent Living Case Note and check all relevant NYTD categories as referenced in the Life Skills Progress Documentation Log (form CF-FSP 5444, available in DCF Forms) aligned with paragraph 1-4a of this operating procedure.

(2) Upload the completed Life Skills Progress Documentation Log in the Independent Living Filing Cabinet under the Image Category called Assessments.

b. Independent Living Needs Assessments must be documented the following ways:

(1) Complete an Independent Living Case Note and check the Independent Living (IL) Assessment category.

(2) Input strengths and needs in the relevant Life Skills fields of the Life Skill Assessment Pop-up page under the Academic and Life Skills Progress Tab of the Independent Living Module.