

Striving for Success in Transitions to Adulthood - New Jersey – DCF Adolescent Services Strategic Plan

HOUSING				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Provide a variety of living options for transitioning youth on a continuum from therapeutic to non-clinical independent housing.	Objective 1: Increase availability of supportive (intermediate) housing for 18-21 year old youth that are transitioning from intensive mental health treatment programs, have a history of substance abuse, and/or violent histories (i.e. fire setting and sexual offenses).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify best practice through researching effective housing models and obtaining feedback from providers and youth regarding their experiences in current programs. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and ensure that all DCF contracted housing programs provide the necessary support services and graduated and behavioral step-down support leading to self-sufficiency for all youth as they demonstrate capabilities. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to encourage collaboration with DCBHS and other relevant state agencies to identify and develop housing for these youth. 	Current to 1 year	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specialized supports/consultants for providers to strengthen programming and enhance eligibility and access to programs. 	Long-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with other government and community stakeholders to identify where these youth can secure permanent housing. 	Long-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify barriers (i.e. liability insurance) to providers that restrict access of these youth to their housing programs. 	Long-term	
	Objective 2: Address supportive housing needs of DDD, low-IQ/non-DDD eligible youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to ensure a seamless transition of care from the child to adult serving system to meet the housing needs of developmentally disabled youth and young adults. 	Current and ongoing	
Objective 3: Increase housing for Young Mothers and Fathers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify best practice through researching effective housing models for young parents and young parents with multiple children. Expand housing programs. 	Intermediate		
Goal 2: Provide pathways to permanent, safe, stable, and affordable housing.	Objective 1: Improve access to housing programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a data system to track housing utilization and placement availability to maximize capacity. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand host homes and summer housing programs for youth receiving NJ Scholars support who need housing during the semester breaks. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to housing programs for youth between the ages of 18-21 who were in a permanency arrangement (KLG and adoptions) as minors, but have since become homeless. 	Short-term	
	Objective 2: Identify affordable housing options for youth after 21 or transitioning out of a system of care that are requesting case closure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research federal and state government funding opportunities (i.e. SRAP vouchers, HUD homes/apartments) and business models promoting partnership to ensure availability of permanent and affordable housing. 	Long-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a "roommate matching" service allowing youth to meet each other and pool resources to afford housing. 	Short-term	

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EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal: Address the educational and employment preparation needs of DCF transitioning youth.	Objective 1: Ensure that youth have their basic educational needs met.	▪ Strengthen the collaboration with DOE and local school districts by finalizing the MOA to address the needs of youth in-care or treatment settings.	Intermediate	
		▪ Continue to develop means of sharing information between the two systems (DOE and DCF), including data tracking, trending, and evaluating program outcomes.	Intermediate	
		▪ Partner with education advocacy groups and staff to research and develop best practice models regarding education rights, pathways, and services for addressing needs of youth with education challenges.	Short-term	
		▪ Ensure that the youth’s network of formal and informal supports is informed and participating in the tracking and planning for the educational needs, options, and resources of youth.	Short-term	
	Objective 2: Improve access to supports for post-secondary education bound youth.	▪ Review NJ Scholars procedures to maximize eligibility, recruitment, and access.	Current to 1 year.	
		▪ Improve college entry and graduation for DCF transitioning youth by developing post-secondary education readiness preparation and support activities, beginning in middle school.	Intermediate	
		▪ Leverage partnerships with public and private institutions of higher education to develop strategies to support and retain youth in college.	Intermediate	
	Objective 3: Improve access to employment programs and opportunities for youth.	▪ Collaborate with the Department of Labor to identify, evaluate, and expand access to employment programs, models, and partnerships.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Partner with private sector companies to provide educational sessions, internships, shadowing, volunteer, mentoring opportunities, and permanent employment positions for youth.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Expand access to vocational training through financial assistance.	Short-term	
		▪ Increase use of one-stop career centers, family success centers, and other programs through training and resource guide.	Short-term	
		▪ Provide employment related resources and information to DCF contracted providers working with youth.	Short-term	

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PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal: Ensure coordinated and appropriate physical and mental health care of youth who are transitioning and involved with DCF.	Objective 1: Improve transition to adult mental health and/or substance services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with DCBHS and other government agencies to develop a coordinated and integrated service system appropriate to the level of need of the youth that will ensure an appropriate transition to adult serving systems. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure NJ 2-1-1 service is informed of and provides comprehensive and current information on youth and young adult mental health and substance use treatment resources and services. 	Current and ongoing	
	Objective 2: Improve treatment of dually diagnosed (mental health and substance abuse) youth and young adults ages 14-21.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the appropriate access/ implementation of mental health and substance use screening tools (DYFS, DCBHS, JJC, DPCP). 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess whether there should be a single- shared screening tool to be used by all DCF divisions (consider for substance abuse and mental health, a combination or 2 separate tools). 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the range and adequacy of services available to youth and young adults who are dually diagnosed. 	Intermediate	
	Objective 3: Improve understanding and treatment of trauma amongst youth served by DCF programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing trauma trainings and consultation to DCF staff. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all DCF contracted providers are trauma informed and/or incorporate trauma-focused treatment as part of their mental health services. 	Intermediate	
	Objective 4: Achieve progress in reaching adolescent and young adult health and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure DCF service providers (i.e. DYFS Child Health Units) provide youth with information about their personal health and health care resources to promote their ability to manage their health care as adults, including: preventative healthcare, health insurance, pregnancy prevention, and medical issues. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the retention of youth with mental health or substance use problems in aftercare services following treatment. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and identify sustainable healthcare partnerships in the community that can be utilized and accessed by youth when they transition to the adult healthcare system. 	Intermediate	

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GENERAL TRANSITION SUPPORT				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Ensure that transitioning DCF youth have access to financial assistance to which they are eligible.	Objective 1: Clarify and update the independent living stipend policy.	▪ Review and update policies, including independent living stipends, for housing and food.	Intermediate	
		▪ Review policies for providing wraparound/aftercare support services to youth.	Intermediate	
	Objective 2: Improve access to wraparound funds.	▪ Provide training to DCF staff and providers regarding eligibility and accessibility to wraparound funds.	Short-term	
		▪ Provide youth serving staff with training and a resource directory to improve access to and understanding financial assistance available to youth.	Short-term	
	Objective 3: Improve access and understanding of financial assistance resources.	▪ Create partnerships in the community and private sector that are willing to assist transitioning youth financially or through donations.	Intermediate	
Goal 2: Ensure that youth in DCF programs receive appropriate transition planning, life skills, and case management services.	Objective 1: Improve transition planning case practices, ensuring that youth receive appropriate life, financial literacy, social, and problem solving skills and supports, beginning at age 14.	▪ Revise transition-planning practices to be reflective of the full range and individualized needs of youth transitioning to adulthood that include and are guided by youth in the development of their plans through training and policy.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Ensure DCF staff is aware of the available services and providers and promote collaboration with various DCF resource/community development specialists to share information about the resources available to youth and improve linkages and access through regularly scheduled meetings.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Consider expansion of transitional support services to DCBHS served youth that do not have family supports, despite not having been removed to state custody.	Short-term	
		▪ Ensure the appropriate use of the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessments, distribution of life skills slots, and delivery of quality life skills programming (i.e. use of experiential learning), through updating policy, providing training, and establishing a means of tracking life skill accomplishments and utilization.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Ensure that housing programs, residential treatment programs, community programs, resource parents, relative placement guardians, and/or caseworkers provide quality and standardized life skills to youth.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Ensure that housing, residential treatment, and other community programs providing case management identify sustainable community resources that a youth can utilize beyond the age of 21.	Current and ongoing	

GENERAL TRANSITION SUPPORT - <i>continued</i>				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 2 – Continued	<p>Objective 2: Ensure that sub-populations have their specific transitioning needs met.</p> <p><i>Note: Youth transitioning out of a system of care (i.e. DYFS) are a primary sub-population and addressed throughout the plan. Additional needs of mental health and criminally involved youth are addressed in those respective service sections.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth with Developmental Disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve assessment and tracking of youth with developmental disabilities through the addition of values in New Jersey Spirit so that referrals needed to adult systems can be tracked by supervisory and management staff. ○ Improve the partnership with DDD to improve and/or enhance case management and supports for DDD youth. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young Parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify statewide community resources and service gaps for young parents. ○ Provide training and practice guidance resources to DCF staff to improve engagement and service linkage regarding young mothers and fathers involved in DCF programs. ○ Collaborate with DPCP to ensure that fatherhood programs are accessible and meet the needs of young fathers. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LGBTQI Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand and identify Safe Space Liaisons model beyond DYFS to also include DCBHS, DPCP, and other identified community programs working with LGBTQI youth. ○ Improve access to and identification of services and programs for LGBTQI youth. ○ Partner with national and state LGBTQI advocacy groups/organizations to increase resources and advocacy. ○ Evaluate LGBTQI specific training available to DCF staff and contracted providers ○ Develop strategies for youth, providers, staff, and other stakeholders to access LGBTQI resources. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annually track the needs of youth in the system and identify trends and emerging sub-population areas. 	Current and ongoing	

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT					
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status	
<p>Goal: Develop opportunities for youth voice in their case plans, programs, and communities.</p>	<p>Objective 1: Improve youth engagement in case planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and strengthen practice to support the involvement of youth in their case planning, including youth participation in family team meetings and court hearings. Provide training as needed. 	Current and Ongoing		
		<p>Objective 2: Continue to develop and publicize community Youth Advisory Groups and other opportunities for youth to have voice in community and state-wide service planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and evaluate youth engagement approaches in order to establish a model approach for NJ. 	Current and Ongoing	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage staff and service providers to include youth representatives on their formal and informal planning committees and connect Youth Advisory Groups such as Foster Care alumni associations, Youth Advisory Boards, Youth Partnerships, Youth Development Councils, and other youth advocacy/empowerment groups. 	Current and ongoing	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide transportation and/or incentives for youth to participate in youth leadership opportunities. 	Short-term	
	<p>Objective 3: Facilitate engagement of DCF served youth in common adolescent life activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with DCF Youth Advisory Groups and other youth advocacy/empowerment groups to raise awareness regarding youth capacities for engaging in decision making, developing leadership skills, as well as other issues related to adolescent services, such as trauma, cultural competency, and resources. In order to inform and change policy and regulations at the Department of Children and Families. 	Current and Ongoing		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand mentorship programs and opportunities, including expansion to youth over 18. 	Current and Ongoing		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess policies and resources available for adolescents in state custody or residential treatment to maximize their opportunity to participate fully in adolescent life, to the degree that is safe and appropriate for the youth. 	Short-term	

PERMANENCE AND FAMILIAL SUPPORT				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Facilitate connections to a committed, caring adult for youth.	Objective 1: Expand access to resource homes for youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with DYFS to expand the pool of resource homes that are willing to take adolescents, including sub-populations: DDD, low-IQ/non-DDD, young mothers/fathers, high risk youth, medical/mental health, LGBTQI, transitioning out of the juvenile justice system, sibling groups. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research whether KLG permanency placements are comparably stable to adoptive placements after age 18 	Intermediate	
	Objective 2: Ensure that resource and relative home provide cultural and developmentally appropriate care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with DYFS to prepare resource homes, including relative providers, to provide culturally competent, developmentally appropriate, and supportive environments for all adolescents in-care, including positive youth development, education on the impact of trauma, and life skills training 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support resource parents and relative placements by developing informal support networks among resource parents and relative homes (i.e. blogs, support group, use geo mapping to facilitate support networks). 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase collaboration between DYFS Adoption Operations and the Office of Resource Families and OAS to promote dissemination of materials and inform policy and practice. 	Immediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Adolescent Training Module 2 for DCF staff and stakeholders to provide more information regarding Permanency Pacts, access to permanency programs, and the importance of caring adults and how to identify and support these relationships, including identifying and maintaining key relationships when the child is first placed, such as extended family and siblings. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand utilization of the permanency programs that exist to facilitate permanency alternatives for youth that will not likely be adopted before they turn 18. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify DCF mentoring contracts to include permanency planning within the mentoring relationships with youth. 	Short-term	

PERMANENCE AND FAMILIAL SUPPORT - <i>continued</i>				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 2: Give youth the option to re-engage with birth families in a manner that is safe and healthy for them.	Objective: Where appropriate, provide opportunities and services for in-care youth to safely re-engage with birth parents or relatives as youth reach the age of 18, when appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop policies, procedures, and services regarding DYFS involved adolescents that will age-out of foster care without a permanent home and have maintained a relationship with their birth families, to receive counseling to develop healthy boundaries and relationships as an adult, with their birth families. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and guidance to caseworkers regarding how to identify safety, risk, and well-being issues for youth age 18 to 21 that may be re-engaging with their birth families. 	Short-term	
Goal 3: Address permanency needs of non-DYFS involved youth provided residential placement by DCBHS.	Objective: Expand access to non-DYFS involved youth receiving services in DCBHS out of home services to a broader array of DCF permanency focused supports, services and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a work group to address promoting family involvement with youth in residential treatment and how to respond when efforts fail and the youth needs an alternative or back-up plan. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify non-DYFS involved youth and expand access to DCBHS youth in residential treatment that have permanency needs. 	Short-term	

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE/LEGAL SERVICES				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Work with other departments to ensure that DCF involved adolescents and youth with a criminal history and/or leaving correctional facilities have appropriate discharge and service plans.	Objective: Improve access to housing, education, and job programs by identifying exclusionary criteria that might restrict these youth based on incarceration alone and not an individual assessment of their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with JJC and other agencies that work with this population to identify service needs, address access issues, develop best practice strategies, and share/streamline resources. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote cross systems collaboration for and engagement of youth with criminal justice involvement. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage external stakeholders (i.e. county bar associations and Law School programs) for pro bono help in expunging criminal records so youth qualify for federal/state financial aid, housing; and other services they might be disqualified from receiving because of certain types of convictions. 	Intermediate	
Goal 2: Address problems of juvenile delinquency amongst youth.	Objective: Provide programs and services to address and prevent juvenile delinquency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research, identify, organize, and develop opportunities for youth to be involved in positive after-school programs, summer activities, and employment opportunities. 	Short-term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information regarding young adult mentors, juvenile delinquency prevention, healthy relationships, and domestic violence prevention program connections for youth in resource materials and trainings provided to DCF providers, staff and other relevant stakeholders. 	Short-term	
Goal 3: Improve the treatment of undocumented and recent legal immigrants.	Objective1: Appropriately utilize legal exceptions to obtain legal residency for domestic violence and child abuse victims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate DCF staff and other service providers regarding eligibility for these exceptions. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for advocacy or legal groups that may provide assistance to families that meet these criteria. 	Short-term	
	Objective 2: Improve access to services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add information regarding immigration services/ agencies to the resource guide and trainings provided to DCF staff and other service providers. 	Short-term – Guide Intermediate - Training	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff about the acceptance criteria of programs with legal status or documentation requirements. 	Intermediate	

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GENERAL - CROSS SYSTEMS				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Ensure access, coordination, and quality of services.	Objective 1: Ensure that contracted service providers meet the expectations of the contract.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all contracted programs serving adolescents and aging out youth use best practices that reflect the needs of the youth, needs of the geographic area, and practices addressed elsewhere in the strategic plan. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that DCF contract monitoring addresses performance outcomes related to adolescent services, including taking corrective action to address contract issues. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop or convert existing contracts to “no eject” policy programming so that youth are not dismissed from services for displaying the behavior for which they were admitted. 	Current and ongoing	
	Objective 2: Improve the coordination and access to services across service sectors and Divisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a universal training that ensures that all youth serving staff have the same basic knowledge regarding adolescent needs, services, trauma, and best practices. Ensure that sub-populations’ needs are addressed in the training programs (i.e. young parents, LGBTQI, etc). 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide better linkages and access between programs housed in sister Divisions within DCF and other state and private entities. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop materials, including an expanded Adolescent Services Guide and adolescent needs assessment, to improve access to services. 	Current and ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for improving sustainability and dissemination of best practice programs, such as public/private funding partnerships, training and technical assistance contracts, or standing committees. 	Intermediate	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a process for regular communication with community stakeholders who can inform DCF decision-making and policy (i.e. evaluating current OAS workgroups/committees and/or developing an advisory board). 	Short-term	
		Objective 3: Develop and promote the use of models, evidence-based practice, and research to ensure best practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas where regular data tracking systems need to be put in place or enhanced to ensure appropriate individual and systemic processes and outcomes are achieved. 	Intermediate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify knowledge gaps and seek out experts and other states that can provide feedback, strategies, and information. 		Short-term	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate a research component into programs and models that have not been previously rigorously researched to develop clear models and outcome expectations, and to ensure that state funds are being spent on effective and quality programs and services (i.e. examine service outcomes for sub-groups of youth). 		Short-term	

GENERAL - CROSS SYSTEMS - <i>continued</i>				
Goals	Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Status
Goal 2: Promote the work of the Office of Adolescent Services.	Objective 1: Ensure that service providers understand the role of the Office of Adolescent Services and view them as a resource and policy promotion office for adolescent services in the State.	▪ Ensure that the Office is adequately staffed, trained, and organized to meet its mission.	Current to 1 year	
		▪ Create a brochure and other communication materials to disseminate.	Current to 6 months	
		▪ Regularly tour service providers and attend regional meetings to present information.	Current and ongoing	
		▪ Complete strategic planning and then make changes/decisions to move forward.	Current and ongoing	
	Objective 2: Ensure that DCF staff and stakeholders are committed to the Mission, Purpose, and Principles of the Office of Adolescent Services and work with adolescents and young adults	▪ Incorporate OAS-Mission, Purpose, and Principles into all resource, marketing, and trainings materials related to Adolescent Case Practices	Immediate	
		▪ Require that all DCF contracted services serving adolescents and young adults include the OAS-Mission, Purpose, and Principles in their programs, services, and contracts	Immediate	

Timeline Legend

Current = 6 months or less

Short-term = 6 months – 1 year

Intermediate = 1 – 2 years

Long-term = 2+ years