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**Report to  
The Vermont Legislature**

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**REPORTING TRANSITIONAL SERVICES OUTCOMES**

**In Accordance with H.449  
Act 74: An Act Relating to Foster Care Services and Supports**

**Submitted to:** Senate Committee on Health and Welfare  
House Committee on Human Services

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## The Stories Youth Tell

Since the passage of Act 74 in 2007, the lives of many young people have positively been affected by the availability of additional supports to ease their transition to adulthood. Here are just a few anecdotes.

“I have had an interesting couple of years in college. I am quite glad that I have been getting support from the state, though sometimes I seem to need a little more than I receive. This is not to say that I don’t appreciate the help I have gotten in the last few years. In fact, I always have a nice house with food to eat available to me because of the generosity of the state...’the Adult Living Program has definitely been very beneficial to me and my career. I have been housed over various school vacations, including the summer between the spring and fall semesters and I needed this very much. The help I have been given over the last few years has inspired me to try to help others. I am truly thankful to the state and all those who have assisted in my education.’ I am certain of where I want to go with my life, and the State of Vermont is helping me get there.” ~Male Youth, Age 19, Johnson State College

Another young woman whose youth development coordinators assisted with filling out applications with her states, “This program has helped me better myself, I actually feel like a regular kid instead of a foster kid in care being bounced around. And the best part is that I finally have a place of my own to live, it’s just a dorm room...But it is mine!!!!” ~Female Youth, Age 18, Freshman at the College of St. Joseph STEPS Program Rutland, Vermont

The following are summaries of utilization of the driver’s education funds in two regions of the state:

“In Burlington, 18 youth signed up to take the driver’s education class with LTD Driving School (Learning to Drive Driving School). I think 14 will be completing this class. I know some have dropped out due to being placed in Woodside, going on run, broke an ankle, etc. but so many youth have completed this huge step which will help them get their licenses. We also have two youth who are being helped to complete all 40 hours of driving time with a couple of volunteers who are allowing their cars to be used. This is really huge! When the class started about 9 have them had their permits, the other 9 didn’t. Within the first month of class each youth who didn’t have their permit, got it. The teacher is meeting with youth individually and helping them complete their hours along with teaching them for 15 weeks driver’s education. This is a really big accomplishment because so many of our youth can get distracted from completing their goals but it is working out really well.” ~Beckie Taylor, Spectrum Youth Development Coordinator

In Rutland 16 youth have accessed the driver’s education funds; “Six youth we helped get their permits to date...as some took their tests and failed, so are still working toward this goal. 7 youth attended driver’s education class or used funds for driving time and 3 successfully to date have obtained their licenses.” ~Kerri Rappaport, Vermont Achievement Center Youth Development Coordinator

## Evaluating Outcomes of Transitional Services

Act 74, the Youth in Transition Law required the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to develop a “method for measuring, evaluating, and reporting outcomes of transitional services provided under this section to the house committee on human services and the senate committee on health and welfare annually by January 15.”

In 2008, DCF filed a report describing that how the department would measure and evaluate outcomes. While the measures were not fully implemented last year, preliminary results were provided for a portion of the year.

This report contains updated information about the outcomes of services provided under the Act. These measures have been integrated with those required by the federal government under the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Act which also funds transitional services for youth.

The report also contains information on related activities conducted by the department to support post-secondary education for former foster youth with state and federal funds in partnership with Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC).

DCF Family Services collects data to ensure:

- Program approaches used by contracted providers are consistent with best practice and meet the requirements of state and federal mandates;
- Outcomes targeted by the program and its components are achieved;
- Services are consistent with requirements of state and federal statutes;
- Funds allocated for specific purposes are expended accordingly and are reaching intended populations; and
- Costs are managed within budgets.

Presently, our goals have focused on outreach, and serving young adults much more comprehensively. As such, our data collection presently centers on counting youth served, services delivered, etc. Over time, we are committed to getting at true outcome evaluation, such as incarceration rates, pregnancy rates and economic stability. New federal reporting requirements, described at the end of this report, will assist us in meeting this goal.

## Act 74 Rules

Act 74 also required the commissioner to “establish by rule a program to provide a range of age-appropriate services to youth to ensure a successful transition to adulthood, including foster care and other services provided under this chapter to children as appropriate, housing assistance, transportation, case management services, assistance with obtaining and retaining health insurance, or employment and other services. Rules were approved by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on 8/22/2008. They are available on the public web site of the Family Services Division at:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/rules/Transition\\_Age\\_Youth.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/rules/Transition_Age_Youth.pdf)

The Rules established financial support for former foster youth completing their high school diploma, those living with caring adults, and those establishing their own residences. Table 1 contains the numbers of youth served in each of these areas during the first year of implementation.

<b>Table 1: Extended Care</b>	<b>7/1/07-6/30/08</b>
Support for Secondary Education	43
Adult Living Partners	44
Housing supports	233
<b>Total Youth Served</b>	<b>320</b>

## Youth Development Program

DCF Family Services provides case management services to support youth exiting foster care through contracts with youth serving agencies in each of its twelve district office regions. Youth served by the program receive a formal assessment of their level of preparation for living on their own. Based on this assessment, they receive life skills instruction and support to pursue housing, health care, employment and other community services. Housing support resources provided through Act 74 are accessed through this program and its staff.

A critical need for youth entering adulthood successfully is the long term support of caring adults. Act 74 provides funds for that through the Adult Living Partners component of the program. The Youth Development program is complementing that through the implementation of a research-based methodology designed to assist youth in establishing and maintaining connections with caring adults who can have a supportive relationship with them into adulthood. Frequently, this involves re-establishing relationships with relatives, foster parent, teachers, etc. who may still care about the youth and be willing to provide emotional connections. This is a long term, staged effort, but at this time 297 youth are at some point in the process.

Since passage Act 74, DCF Family Services has shifted the emphasis of the Youth Development Program to provide increased support to former foster youth ages 18-22. The program still provides support to youth 15-18, but most of this work is done through consultation with DCF social workers, foster parents and residential programs. DCF has developed a formal life skills curriculum that has been piloted and will soon be delivered to youth residing in residential programs.

Table 2 contains the number of youth formally enrolled in the Youth Development Program. This does not include all eligible youth. Some former foster youth do not elect to participate; many participate at various times during their period of eligibility, but not continuously. Some receive independent living skills through other programming.

There are 16 FTE Youth Development Coordinators working around the state. This includes the 1.5 FTEs that were added as a result of the additional funding provided in 2007.

<b>Table 2: Youth Served by Youth Development Program Ages 15-22</b>	<b>Monthly Average</b>
Open Cases	411
Active Cases	311
New Referrals	34
Transferred/Out of District	6
Closed	29
Return for After-Care Service	15

Table 3 contains data on the number of youth participating in various program components linked to Youth Development Program case management and is used to monitor case flow and patterns of youth access to services. The numbers represent monthly activities.

<b>Table 3: Service Coordination Activities</b>	
Individual Sessions w/ Youth	401
Youth completing Independent Living Assessments	79
Youth Participating in Life Skill Classes/Groups	230
Youth with Transition Goal/Plans Established	97

## **Secondary Education and Training**

DCF Family Services receives approximately \$120,000 per year from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act Education and Training Vouchers program to provide financial support for youth attending post-secondary educational programs. Former foster youth also receive funding support through Emily Lester Scholarships funded by the legislature. DCF Family Services and the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) established a partnership to distribute these funds to former foster youth pursuing post-secondary education.

In preparation for Act 74, DCF, VSAC, the Vermont State Colleges, UVM, CCV and others took an in-depth look at barriers to youth in foster care attending college and how they might be addressed. Following passage of the bill, this work has continued and significant progress is being made.

During the 2007-2008 school year, 45 former foster youth received Chafee ETV funding for college. In 2008-2009, that number is 92. These youth also received Emily Lester scholarships, Pell grants and Stafford loans during school year 2007-2008.

Most students are attending CCV, state colleges, or UVM. The College of St. Joseph in Rutland has also opened a year round residential college program for former foster youth. Three youth attended in Fall 2008. Three additional students have enrolled for the spring semester with a number of other students in application.

In addition to direct financial support for college, VSAC and DCF are working on recruitment and retention efforts to help more youth currently in foster care consider college and those who apply and enroll complete their studies. Youth in foster care are being specifically targeted by VSAC outreach counselors to assist them with career exploration and preparation for college. VSAC is currently serving 148 youth in foster care through their outreach programming.

## **Health Care**

The Youth Development Program is putting increased emphasis on youth securing health insurance coverage and accessing healthcare, but at this time we do not have reliable data on the results of this effort.

Efforts will continue at the casework level with individual youth to access services and with Economic Services and the Office of Vermont Health Access to expand eligibility and collect data.

## Driver's Licenses

Youth involved in the focus groups which prepared for Act 74 identified help for getting their driver's license as an important need. Funding was provided to help driving classes and other costs associated with getting a license. Since the last legislative report, 35 youth have accessed these funds and 46 youth served by the Youth Development Program have successfully obtained their driver's license. This effort is particularly important as the program has been shifted to older youth most of whom do not have access to schools for this purpose.

<b>Table 4: Transportation Self Sufficiency</b>	<b># of Youth</b>
Obtained driver's permit	109
Enrolled in Driver's Education	34
Completed driver's Education	37
Obtained driver's license	46
Developed a price sheet/budget for purchasing a vehicle	30
Owns a vehicle & is insured	27
Demonstrates how to travel independently	91

## Successful Employment

The Youth Development focused on employment skills for the youth it serves. On an average month, for youth served, employment skills are assessed as follows:

<b>Table 5: Employment Skills</b>	<b># of Youth</b>
Demonstrates the ability to search for employment	170
Can complete a job application	168
Developed a resume & Cover letter	45
Demonstrates the skill sets to interview for a job	139
Has a job	101
Is able to maintain a job	89
Understands how to transition to a new job appropriately	74
Knows how to access and engage in employment resources (JOBS, DOL, Voc. Rehab., Job Corps, etc.)	113
Other	38

## Housing Education and Skills

The Youth Development Program also focused on the skills necessary for youth to obtain and maintain safe and adequate housing. On an average month, youth served by the program are assessed as follows:

<b>Table 6: Housing Education</b>	<b># of Youth</b>
Can articulate the housing options available in the community	98
Knows how to apply for housing assistance	44
Developed a budget/plan for independent living.	53
Knows how to and is able to inspect an apartment before moving in	42
Understands how to complete a rental agreement or lease	38
Has stable housing	169
Understands the importance of roommate agreements	29
Other	35

## Future Data Collection

The federal government has finalized regulations for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). NYTD will collect case-level information on youth in care as well as the outcome information on youth who are in or who have aged out of foster care.

States will report on independent living services and supports in eleven broad categories:

- independent living needs assessment;
- academic support;
- post-secondary educational support;
- career preparation;
- employment programs or vocational training;
- budget and financial management;
- housing education and home management training;
- health education and risk prevention;
- family support and healthy marriage education;
- mentoring; and
- supervised independent living.

States will survey youth regarding six outcomes: financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive connections with adults, high-risk behavior, and access to health insurance.

States must collect baseline information by conducting a survey of youth in foster care on or around their 17th birthday. Then, states must track these youth and conduct a new outcome survey on or around the youth's 19th birthday; and again on or around the youth's 21st birthday. This follow-up is required regardless of whether the youth is receiving services to support independence.

All States will collect and report outcome information on a new cohort of youth every three years. States must develop and implement a data system to record and track data. Baseline information must be collected by 10/1/2010 and reported by 5/15/2011. States will collect outcomes data on a cohort of youth, with a new cohort beginning every three years.

The development of this system will allow DCF to report in a much more comprehensive way on the outcomes associated with Act 74.