

documented needs as detailed in the individual living skills plan, developed from the life skills assessment. Life skills training may emphasize a variety of teaching modalities, including hands-on activities, field trips, and group discussions. Group training provides positive peer interaction, a key development component for older adolescents.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth Programs

Specialized life skills classes, services, and placement options are provided to pregnant and parenting youth to meet their unique needs as parenting adolescents. Special emphasis is placed on addressing the needs of youth who as children have been removed from their parents, while acknowledging and supporting each youth's own parental role.

A Teen Parent Support Network, developed and contracted by DCFS, provides comprehensive services to pregnant and parenting youth in Cook and its collar counties, where approximately 950 of the Department's 1,200 pregnant and parenting youth reside. The Department also contracts with several agencies that offer services to high-risk pregnant and parenting teens living outside of the Cook County area.

Youth Employment

Gainful employment helps prepare youth for self-sufficiency and independence, and the Office of Education and Transition Services is responsible for providing participants with employment and

training opportunities to prepare them for such self-sufficiency. The Office partners with federal, state, local and private agencies and programs to provide young people, ages 16-21, with pre-employment workshops, career development courses, career counseling, and job placement assistance.

There is also a Youth In Employment transition program for individuals 17-20 years of age who are living independently. DCFS youth who have a high school diploma or GED and work 20 hours a week may be eligible for a monthly stipend of \$256.00 and a medical card. The length of program eligibility is the shorter of 24 months or the date on which the youth turns 21.

Legal Support Services

DCFS contracts with the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation (LOL) to provide legal support services to caseworkers, caregivers and youth served by the Department for special education and school discipline issues. Legal staff under this contract provides child-specific services (e.g. review of case records, discussions with caseworkers and caregivers, and attendance at school meetings) to resolve special education and school discipline problems. These support services, as well as training programs, are available statewide through subcontracts negotiated by LOL.

For more information, contact
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**Office of
Education and
Transition Services**

Office of Education and Transition Services

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Office of Education and Transition Services is responsible for ensuring that youth between the ages of 14 and 21, for whom the Department has legal or financial responsibility, are provided with specialized services to help them prepare to live independently after their emancipation.

The Office monitors programs that help these youth successfully transition to self-sufficiency, such as completing their education, developing life and job skills, and learning to live independently. Support is provided to youth who are pregnant or parenting. In addition, the Office offers training and information seminars to DCFS and Purchase of Services (POS) staff, and collaborates with other divisions to support opportunities for youth. Listed below are programs designed for youth in the Department's care.

Community College Payment Program

DCFS contracts with the Illinois Community College Board to facilitate the Department's payment of four semesters of tuition, books, fees and required supplies for youth up to age 21. These benefits are available to students attending an Illinois community college when such expenses cannot be covered through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Under this contract, youth are also eligible for other supportive services necessary to

ensure a successful educational experience. These services include career counseling, financial aid advice, tutoring, and job placement. This program does not cover out-of-district fees, and the expenses must incur during the Department's then current fiscal year.

Scholarship Program

Annually DCFS provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the Department or who have left Department guardianship through adoption or other private guardianship arrangements. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities. A monthly stipend and a medical card will also be provided to each recipient. This program ensures that participants have the opportunity to earn a Bachelor's degree.

Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are routinely due March 30th and award announcements are made by April 30th of each year.

Alternative High School Services

DCFS contracts with Alternative Schools Network (ASN) to provide educational and social services to Cook County DCFS youth who are ineligible for enrollment in Chicago Public Schools. ASN subcontracts with 16 alternative high schools throughout Cook County to allow eligible youth to attend a

school in their geographic area. Department youth can receive a high school diploma or GED via this program.

Youth in College/Vocational Training Program

DCFS manages the Youth in College/Vocational Training program that provides a monthly stipend to youth enrolled in a post secondary education program. This program helps participants attain a college or vocational education while paving the way to economic independence. Eligible youth may attend a vocational school, a four-year college or a junior college. Each student receives a \$444.85 monthly stipend for up to four years. Illinois participants also receive a medical card until their 21st birthday, as well as reimbursement for books not covered by financial aid.

Eligible students must be at least age 16 but not older than 21, must maintain full-time status, and achieve at least a "C" average each semester. A potential applicant should contact his or her DCFS/POS caseworker to complete a referral packet that includes an education and transition plan, as well as a clinical review.

Project STRIVE (Strategies to Rejuvenate Interest and Value in Education)

Project STRIVE is a program housed in Chicago Public Schools. It serves youth who are DCFS-involved or who reside in subsidized guardianship or adoptive living arrangements. The primary focus of STRIVE is to help DCFS students stay in school while they learn how to manage

changes in their lives and make successful transitions into high school and college.

To achieve its goals, STRIVE uses an experienced team of workers to improve youth academic performance; to reduce truancy, suspension and expulsions; and to enhance collaboration between schools, caretakers, and assigned workers.

There are currently 18 schools with Project STRIVE programs. They each have a social worker on site to help youth and their families navigate the road to academic success. Participating schools include: Alex Haley Academy, Austin Community Academy HS, Bowen HS, Calumet Career Preparation Academy, Clemente Community Academy, Corliss HS, Englewood Academy HS, Fenger Academy HS, Fredrick Douglass Middle School, Harper HS, Oglesby Elementary School, Parker Community Academy, Percy Julian HS, Perkins Bass Elementary, Phillips Academy HS, Robeson HS, and South Shore Campus.

Life Skills Classes

The objective of the life skills program is to provide activities and support services designed to enhance independent living skills development. Critical to the achievement of economic and social self-sufficiency is the acquisition of daily living skills. The first step toward this end is the life skills assessment process, which is designed to establish a base line for the life skills needs of each youth.

Quantitative services provided to each program participant will correlate with the