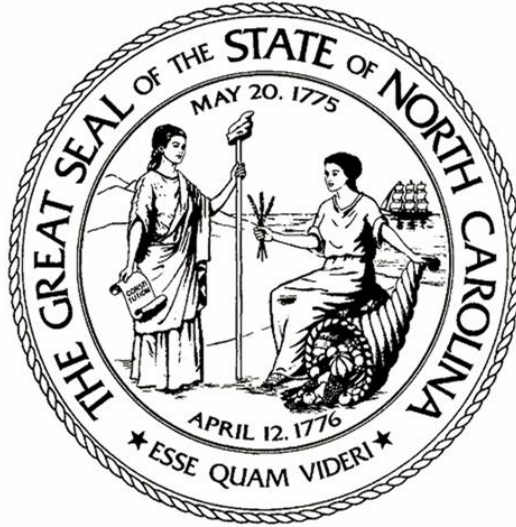


**Fostering Success/Extend Foster Care to 21 Years of Age –
Implemented Plan**

Session Law 2015-241, Section 12.C.9.(i)



**Report to the
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human
Services
and
Fiscal Research Division
by
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

March 1, 2017

State Law

North Carolina Session Law 2015-214 required the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (Division), develop a plan for the expansion of foster care services for individuals who have attained the age of 18 years old and opt to continue receiving foster care services until reaching 21 years of age.

Federal Law

P.L. 110-351, Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, provides states with the option to continue providing Title IV-E reimbursable foster care, adoption, or guardianship assistance payments to children up to the age of 21.

Eligibility Requirements for Fostering Success – Foster Care to 21 Program

An individual who has attained the age of 18 years and chooses to continue to receive foster care may enter into a voluntary placement agreement until the age of 21 years if the individual is:

- Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- Enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education;
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment;
- Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- Incapable of doing any of the above referenced due to a medical condition or disability.

The Division will continue to collaborate with county child welfare agencies to define placement settings for semi-supervised housing arrangements and determine the payment structure.

Administrative Office of the Courts

The Division continues participation in bi-monthly collaborative meetings with the Administrative Office of the Courts. This workgroup has engaged and communicated with the courts and child welfare agencies new changes to the Juvenile Code, N.C.G.S. § 7B-910.1 which requires that an individual with a voluntary placement agreement must appear in court within 90 days of agreement execution. The North Carolina Department of Justice attorney assigned for Child Welfare continues to provide technical assistance and training to the courts and child welfare agencies.

Contractual Agreement for Residential Services (CARS)

The Division and the county child welfare agencies will continue to honor CARS executed prior to January 1, 2017, until that agreement is terminated (when the participant obtains the age of 21 or requests termination). Young adults requesting services after January 1, 2017, are eligible for the Fostering Success – Foster Care to 21.

Update to Implement Fostering Success- Foster Care to 21 Program

The Child Welfare Policy Manuals were updated to include Fostering Success - Foster Care to 21 and published on the Department of Health and Human Services website on December 1, 2016.

The Division collaborated with the DHHS Information Technology Division to provide technical changes, timelines, and costs for the Child Placement Payment System and NC FAST. Modifications to the Child Placement and Payment System were completed and implemented on February 15, 2017. The system was modified to allow the Division to track and monitor participants in the program, including which program eligibility requirement each participant meets, and the type of placement for each participant. The modifications also allow reimbursements for foster care maintenance payments made to unlicensed placements, such as a landlord or relative. The Division is including children in Fostering Success – Foster Care to 21 for federal reporting through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS). The first report in AFCARS will be due in April 2017 and will include data on the first three months (January 2017 – March 2017) of implementation of the program.

The Foster Care Program Coordinator position was hired in June 2016. This position is responsible for identifying and developing communication strategies with stakeholders, including providing training and technical assistance regarding policy and legislative efforts. In addition, this position continues to work in conjunction with the Division of Social Services, Performance Management Section to ensure data is monitored for program performance. This position provides ongoing technical assistance to county child welfare agencies. Informational sessions regarding Fostering Success - Foster Care to 21 are scheduled for March 7, 2017 in Raleigh; March 8, 2017 in Greensboro; March 21, 2017 in Charlotte; and March 22, 2017 in Asheville. The purpose of these sessions are to educate private partners, Guardians ad Litem, and other stakeholders, and discuss how to work in partnership to best serve young adults in extended foster care.

A focus group of county child welfare staff will be developed to review implementation, policy, and forms in order to modify the program as needed. The Division of Social Services has also been invited to present on the Fostering Success - Foster Care to 21 at a variety of forums including Benchmarks Foster/Adoptive/Residential Committee Meeting, Social Services Attorney's Winter Conference 2017, NC Employment and Training Association Conference 2017, NCWorks Partnership Conference 2017, and a Learning Symposium hosted by Johnson C. Smith University.