

CHANGE NOTICE FOR MANUAL

DATE: December 1, 2016

MANUAL: SECTION 1201 – Child Placement Services, Number XII

CHANGE NO: 04-16

TO: COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS
CHILD WELFARE SOCIAL WORKERS

RE: FOSTER CARE 18 TO 21 POLICY

EFFECTIVE: JANUARY 1, 2016

I. BACKGROUND | CHANGE INTENT

Effective January 1, 2017, the new policy regarding Foster Care 18 to 21 services shall be used for all young adults who have aged out of foster care and opt to continue receiving foster care services. The 2008 Foster Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act allows states to receive federal Title IV-E reimbursement for costs associated with supports for young adults to remain in foster care up to age 21. In 2015, the North Carolina General Assembly revised N.C.G.S. § 108A-48 to extend the provision of foster care benefits to young adults who age out of foster care in North Carolina.

The Foster Care 18 to 21 Program allows young adults who have reached their 18th birthday, to continue receiving foster care benefits and services up to their 21st birthday, as long as the young adult is meeting participation requirements, living in an approved placement, and meeting other eligibility requirements as outlined in policy. County child welfare agencies are responsible for providing services, supervision, and ongoing efforts to help prepare young adults in the program for a successful transition into adulthood. This new policy is intended to provide a general description of the Foster Care 18 to 21 Program, including the legal basis for providing services, program eligibility requirements, court requirements, county oversight, and placement options for young adults receiving services.

II. SPECIFIC CHANGES

Foster Care 18 to 21 is a new program being offered to young adults who exit foster care at age 18. The program allows young adults the opportunity to voluntarily receive foster care services beyond their 18th birthday, if they are meeting the requirements of the program. County child welfare agencies are required to provide services to eligible young adults upon their request. Young adults will enter the program through a Voluntary Placement Agreement for Foster Care 18 to 21 with the county child welfare agency. The young adult is an equal party in the contractual agreement and must agree to the provisions of the agreement. The Voluntary Placement Agreement for Foster Care 18 to 21 is a new form that has been developed specifically for the Foster Care 18 to 21 program. Upon signing a Voluntary Placement Agreement, an initial court hearing shall be held within 90 days. Additional hearings can be held upon the written request of the young adult or county child welfare agency. The court may also schedule additional hearings to review the young adult's progress and placement. County child welfare agencies, in partnership with the young adult, will be responsible for developing and maintaining the young adult's Transitional Living Plan. This shall be done through Transitional Support Team (TST) meetings. The Transition Support Team is a team of supportive adults who will assist the young adult with developing goals, identifying services, and achieving independent living skills. The Transitional Living Plan (Part A-D) has been developed and includes a 90-Day Transition Plan, and Helpful Resources for Young Adults. This form will replace the existing Plan for Emancipation from Foster Care Custody. County child welfare agencies will also be responsible for approving an eligible placement setting for the young adult and providing ongoing supervision, including monthly contacts and quarterly in-home assessments. A Monthly Contact Record for Foster Care 18 to 21 has been developed and shall be used to document the monthly contacts and quarterly in-home assessments. Eligible placement options are defined in the Foster Care 18 to 21 policy.

Young adults who exit foster care at age 18 may re-enter the program at any time, as many times as they wish, if they meet eligibility requirements for Foster Care 18 to 21, and have not yet reached their 21st birthday. Foster Care 18 to 21 services and benefits shall be terminated when the young adult has reached his/her 21st birthday, the young adult no longer meets the eligibility requirements of the program, the young adult wishes to terminate the agreement, or the court determines the young adult has violated the agreement. County child welfare agencies are unable to terminate services prior to the court authorizing the termination.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

The new Foster Care 18 to 21 policy can be found in Section 1201 – Child Placement Services, XII. Foster Care 18 to 21 Services for Young Adults. Information regarding funding for this program can also be found within Foster Care 18 to 21 policy. This new policy is effective January 1, 2017.

If you have any questions regarding the Foster Care 18 to 21 program, please contact Erin Baluyot at (919) 527-6369, or erin.baluyot@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "K" and a long, trailing "y".

Kevin Kelley, Section Chief
Child Welfare Services