

# Connecticut Department of Children and Families

## Policy Manual

### Adolescent Services

#### Overview 42-1

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# Connecticut Department of Children and Families

## Policy Manual

### Support Programs and Services

### Post Secondary School Education Expenses

### Policy 42-20-20

#### Policy -

The Department of Children and Families may provide financial assistance for post-secondary school education (PSE) expenses within available DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with this policy. Students pursuing a post-secondary school program may be eligible up to age 23 or the end of the academic year during which his or her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday occurs.

#### Definition -

" **Post-secondary education program**" means college, technical school or a state-accredited job training program.

#### Admission Criteria -

To be eligible for assistance for post-secondary school education expenses, the proposed student must:

- be adjudicated neglected, abused or uncared for and committed to DCF by the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters at the time the child turns 18 years old;
- have obtained a high school diploma or received an approval prior to completion of a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- exhibit adequate social skills and demonstrate appropriate behavior, as assessed by the adolescent Social Worker and the case history;
- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority," prior to his or her 18th birthday in order to continue receiving services beyond age 18;
- maintain compliance with the Department through an individual post-majority contract;
- begin full-time post-secondary education for the first semester/trimester/quarter (excluding summer sessions) immediately after receiving his or her high school diploma or GED; and
- must have an approved post-secondary education plan.

**Legal reference:** Conn.Gen.Stat. §46b-121 and §46b-129.

#### Part-Time Admission Criteria -

Students may attend courses on a part-time basis each semester with the approval of the Commissioner if:

- the student presents with or develops a health or mental health need;
- the student has been identified as special education and/or the student has had a 504 Accommodation Plan and continues to need special accommodations; or
- the Commissioner has approved a special exception;

**Post-Secondary Education Consultant:**

- CAPT scores;
- SAT and ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED students, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent 504 Plan, if applicable;
- proposed educational plan that identifies the type of program, length of program and area of study (e.g., "associate's degree, 2 years, criminal justice;" "bachelor's degree, 4 years, psychology"); and
- list of schools to which the student intends to apply or has applied.

For students who are identified as special education students, the following additional materials shall be provided with the packet:

- most recent Individualized Educational Plan (IEP); and
- other current evaluations conducted within the past three years, including psychological and achievement testing.

A Post-Secondary Education Consultant shall review the packet and provide feedback to the Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor as to the appropriateness of the plan or suggested modifications to the plan.

If a proposed educational plan is not approved by the PSE Consultant, a case conference is required between the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff. Disagreements shall be resolved by the Director of Educational Services or designee, in consultation with the Regional Administrator, and the decision shall be final.

**General Education Diploma (GED) -**

Social Workers shall encourage all students to remain in and graduate from high school. GED students are eligible for post-secondary educational programs only if an exception is granted by the Commissioner.

To apply for an exception, the Social Worker shall prepare a memorandum for the Commissioner which shall be approved by the Area Office Director and the Regional Administrator. The following shall also be submitted:

- all school transcripts and testing scores up until the time the student left high school;
- GED scores, when they become available;
- any practice reports or progress completed towards the GED; and
- the anticipated post secondary education plan.

**Continuation Requirements -**

Following the first year of study, a student in a post-secondary education program is expected to complete a minimum of 24 non-remedial credits in each consecutive 12-month period, while maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0 (unless the student is on a pre-approved reduced schedule or has taken remedial courses during the 12-month period). Students taking remedial courses are expected to complete a minimum of 24 credits during any consecutive 12-month period and to maintain a 2.0 GPA for those credits.

If a full time student does not maintain at least a 2.0 GPA for an average of at least 12 course credits per semester/trimester/quarter, an educational consult shall be held between the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff. If appropriate, the student may be given a second chance to re-enroll or select and enroll in a new program. If the student does not succeed in the second enrollment or program, he or she shall no longer be eligible for post-secondary education funds.

## DCF Funding Limits Until 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday -

DCF funding for the costs of attendance at a post-secondary educational institution is limited to an amount not to exceed the maximum cost of attendance at a Connecticut State University. Students who choose to attend vocational programs or colleges that exceed the DCF funding limit shall be solely responsible for any and all additional funding costs.

A student who is residing in a congregate care setting or a foster home is not eligible for the room and board portion of the costs of attendance because the room and board portion shall be paid to the congregate care provider or foster home.

**Note:** At the time this policy was promulgated, the maximum funding for cost of attendance is based upon Central Connecticut State University's "Financial Aid Cost of Attendance Budget" for an undergraduate, in-state, full-time, on-campus student for the current state fiscal year. Contact the Central Office PSE team for the current maximum funding available.

Costs of attendance include:

- tuition and fees;
- room and board (on campus); and/or CHAP rent and stipend (off campus);
- books, equipment, supplies and materials required of all students in the same course of study.

Post-secondary education students who meet the criteria and have exceeded the funding amount may, within available appropriations, be eligible for the following with Area Office Directors approval

- where appropriate, a computer;
- accommodations related to a student's disability that are not funded by another source; and
- 2 round-trip transportation expenses to be used to visit caregivers during educational breaks if attending an out-of-state institution.

**Note:** Students who have not exceeded the tuition funding limit for that academic year and wish to take additional courses during the winter or summer sessions may do so with the Area Office Director's permission.

**Note:** Students are also eligible for case management services and health care coverage as approved by a DCF Health Care Advocate to age 21 under the terms set forth in DCF Policy 42-20-30.

Students and Social Workers shall work together to pursue an appropriate educational plan that meets the student's educational needs and goals. Students shall be made aware of the funding limits for post-secondary education programs and encouraged to keep this in mind as they select a program.

**Note:** A post-secondary education student who is the custodial parent of a child may be eligible for additional subsidies.

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 42-20-40, "Adolescent Parents' Program."

## Requesting Financial Assistance -

The Social Worker shall complete the DCF-632, "Financial Assistance Required for Post-Secondary Education." The DCF-632 shall be submitted with a copy of the financial aid award letter from the school to which the student applied and was accepted, and the student's Student Aid Report (SAR).

The Social Worker shall submit the form for signature to:

- the Social Work Supervisor;
- the Program Manager; and

A student receiving post-secondary education expenses from the Department shall retain basic responsibility for maintaining eligibility by continuing to meet the requirements for financial assistance. Students who fall out of compliance with this policy shall immediately be issued a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuance of DCF Benefits" by the assigned Social Worker.

**Legal reference:** R.C.S.A. §17a-90-1 through -13.

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 22-4-3, "Fair Hearings."

**Subsidies During Academic Breaks -**

A post-secondary education student may be eligible for an additional subsidy for housing and other living expenses from DCF during academic breaks when other housing is not available, including summer months. A student is not eligible for this additional subsidy during academic sessions. This subsidy is an additional stipend which shall be prorated based upon the number of days the student is on an academic break and requires housing. The daily prorated amount is 1/30th of the total monthly funding limit.

**See chart below for maximum subsidies.**

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 42-5-3, "Community Housing Assistance Program."

**Housing and Living Subsidy  
During Academic Breaks**

TYPE OF SUBSIDY	MONTHLY AMOUNT
CHAP boarding arrangement	\$278
Apartment rental reimbursement including heat (1 bedroom apt.)	\$754 - \$1,314*
Food	\$240
Utilities (excluding heating costs and including water, gas and electricity costs that are not for heating)	\$60
Telephone	\$35
Transportation	\$60
Clothing	\$54
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,272 - \$1,813*</b>

\*Depending on

geographic region; see next section.

**Note:** If actual costs are less than maximum subsidy amounts, the student is eligible only for the actual costs.

If heat is not included in the student's rent, the amount for heat and rent combined may not exceed the allowable rental reimbursement rate.

A student may share housing with one or more roommates who have been approved by both the Social Work Supervisor and Program Manager. In such a case, the subsidy shall be pro-rated based on the regional rent allotment for the appropriate number of bedrooms.

The Department may provide an eligible student with a one-time payment voucher or a direct payment to a vendor not to exceed \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items only.

**Criteria for Eligibility after 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday through 23<sup>rd</sup> Birthday -**

A student reaching his or her 21st birthday may be deemed eligible to continue to receive financial assistance for post-secondary education until his or her 23rd birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23rd birthday occurs, if the student meets all other requirements of this policy including admission criteria.

In order to be eligible, the student must:

- already be attending an approved post-secondary education program;
- have a GPA of 2.0 or better; and
- have earned 12 credits per semester/trimester/quarter.

**Note:** Students who are eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) may receive educational funding through DCF if they meet the requirements set forth in this policy.

Post-secondary education funding after age 21 is limited to the maximum costs of attendance (tuition, room, board, fees) as set forth in this policy, housing during academic breaks and start-up household expenses, if not already exhausted. The student may also be eligible for medical coverage.

**Waivers for Extraordinary Educational Experiences -**

A student who will otherwise be unable to participate in an extraordinary educational experience because the cost exceeds that maximum funding permitted under this policy may apply for a waiver from the funding limits.

The Social Worker shall submit the following documentation to Regional Administrator for approval:

- a concise summary of the rationale for requesting the waiver;
- the student's school transcript; and
- a description of efforts to seek funding from other sources.

If the Regional Administrator approves the waiver, it shall be forwarded to the Commissioner or designee for the final decision.

**Discontinuation of Services and Transitioning from Care -**

Students who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing post-secondary education benefits shall be given written notice through the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits." The DCF-800 shall be issued to the student as soon as the student is deemed to be out of compliance by the Social Worker. If the student requests a Fair Hearing, DCF shall continue to pay expenses until a Final Decision is issued.

When a student is discontinued from benefits or voluntarily chooses to leave DCF care, the Social Worker shall make reasonable efforts to assist him or her with the transition. This includes scheduling an Administrative Case Review Conference for the purpose of helping the young adult review and finalize a transition plan as required in DCF Policy 36-5, "Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan."

# Connecticut Department of Children and Families

## Policy Manual

### Independent Living Program

#### Supportive Work, Education, and Transition Program (SWETP)

(Formerly: Preparation for Adult Living Settings or PALS)

42-5-2

#### Purpose

The purpose of the Supportive Work Education (SWETP), Transition Program and Transitional Living Apartment Program (TLAP) is to prepare youth for adult living settings.

#### Admission Criteria

The target population is DCF committed (abused, neglected, uncared for) youth age sixteen (16) and over whose treatment plan goal is other than Reunification or Transfer of Guardianship.

Youth who are currently in residential care, group home, or foster care, and are prepared for involvement in a less restrictive setting, but are not yet ready for living independently in the community, are eligible for consideration.

**Note:** A DCF-779 – Notice at Age of Majority form is required for all youth prior to their 18th birthday indicating youth's desire to continue to receive services.

#### Exclusionary Criteria

Exclusionary criteria include

- youth who are married
- youth who are in active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States
- active psychotic behavior
- violent/assaultive behavior, and
- active substance abuse that interferes with group process and interaction.

#### Community Group Living

Community group living situations will prepare youth for adulthood, develop safe, secure and permanent family relationships and create linkages for youth within existing community networks.

A group living setting shall be established to support continuing education by teaching skills within the context of normal daily activities.

In addition, this group setting shall provide the youth with the necessary support, structure and supervision to help with the transition from substitute care, without being too restrictive as to prohibit the youth's development towards more self reliant characteristics.

Youth entering this setting are not ready for life on their own and are in need of the specialized services this program provides as well as a strong family and support community system to promote successful independent living skills.

#### Life Skills Curriculum

- housing
- transportation
- educational planning
- job seeking skills and maintenance skills
- emergency and safety skills
- knowledge of community resources
- interpersonal skills, and
- skills related to handling personal legal matters.

### **Individual Competencies**

Using the aforementioned life skills assessment, the program shall develop realistic plans and goals with the youth, that will lead to increased knowledge and competency and, ultimately, to self reliance and self sufficiency. Inter dependence and inter connectedness will also be a focus. The plan shall be consistent with the DCF Independent Living Plan.

### **Goal of Community Housing**

The program shall:

- work cooperatively with the DCF Adolescent Specialist in formulating discharge plans
- develop a transition plan with the youth, with the goal of community housing.

### **Contract**

A written contract, signed by the youth and program staff, shall be developed with each youth, and it may include but shall not be limited to:

- clarification of roles for the youth, program, and DCF
- assignment of responsibilities and timeframes for the youth, program, and DCF
- establishment of expectations for the youth, program, and DCF
- goals which must be attainable
- a statement regarding action to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements.

### **Reporting Requirements**

The program case manager is expected to submit monthly written reports and a quarterly action discharge plan to the Adolescent Specialist regarding the youth's progress in the program.

Cross Reference: Policy 36-15-2, Responsibilities of Service Providers and form DCF-2164.

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save all canceled checks and receipts for said expenditures, and the Adolescent Specialist and community case manager shall monitor these items to assess the youth's compliance with his/her budget.

The CHAP subsidy must be processed in LINK by the fifth (5th) day of the month in order to cover expenses for the following month. The Link payment request should show the 5th of the month as the Request Date and the last Friday of the month as the Scheduled Date. In order for a youth to enter CHAP, the Adolescent Specialist must establish a provider number for the youth at least twenty-one (21) days prior to placement.

The Adolescent Specialist shall enter the first month's CHAP stipend in care of the CHAP program's main office. Any required security deposits shall also be processed at this time. Subsequent CHAP stipends shall be sent directly to the youth unless the Area Office staff has determined this is not in the youth's best interest.

The following details the basic cost of living standard with a **maximum** subsidy of **\$1,813**.

**\*Area Office Rent Allotments** (for a one-bedroom apartment with heat.)

Rent	\$773-1,314	*(area office)
Food	180	
Utilities (includes water, gas, and electricity, but not heat, as it is included in rental allotment)	60	
Heat (if not included in the rent)	50	
Telephone	35	
Transportation	60	
Clothing	54	
Miscellaneous	60	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,272 -1,813</b>	<b>(maximum)</b>

The subsidy may be below the \$1,813.00 limit. If heat is not included, the amount for heat and rent combined cannot exceed the limit for rent for that area office. For youths sharing housing costs with a DCF approved roommate, the subsidy would be pro rated based upon the regional rent allotment for the appropriate number of bedrooms, according to his/her percentage of monthly costs (rent, utilities, and phone). For example: sharing with one person 65%, sharing with two persons 50%, sharing with three persons 40%, sharing with four persons 35%, etc. The Department has the right to approve/disapprove a CHAP participant's roommate.

The rental reimbursement rate shall be set based upon the physical address of the apartment and not according to the area office with which the youth is affiliated.

Area Offices	Rent Amount (Maximum)
Stamford and Norwalk	\$ 1,314
Danbury	1042
Meriden, Middletown, New Haven	875
Bridgeport	873
Norwich	769
Hartford, New Britain, Manchester	798
Willimantic	769
Waterbury	754
Torrington	773

#### Earned Income

- federal financial aid standards
- sign forms authorizing the release of information, as requested, and
- provide the Department documentation of
  - enrollment/registration
  - applications for school financial aid, including FAFSA
  - grades/report cards within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt.

### **Requirements for Vocational/Training Programs**

Youth enrolled in vocational or training programs shall be eligible for continued services until the end of the school year in which the youth turns twenty-one (21) years of age, or until completion of the transitional period required by this policy, whichever is later.

### **CHAP Contract**

A CHAP contract shall be written and reviewed quarterly by each youth, the Department and the case manager (if applicable), and shall include but not be limited to the following:

- agreed upon place of residence
- role and responsibilities of the youth, DCF, and community case manager
- plan for full-time educational and/or vocational training program
- financial arrangements (e.g. budget, client contribution, etc.)
- statement regarding a proposed time line to attain self sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management
- statement regarding the youth's successful completion in a DCF approved Life Skills Program or other recommended programming
- statement regarding actions to be taken if the youth does not comply with the terms of the contract or program requirements, and
- the right of DCF to approve/disapprove the CHAP participant's roommates.

### **Discharge From Participation**

A youth may be discharged from the program if he/she has

- made a voluntary decision to no longer participate in the program
- passed from care or has had commitment revoked by the court, or
- demonstrated an inability to meet the requirements of the program or terms of the contract, and DCF decides to discharge the youth from program participation.

### **Transition from DCF**

A transitional period shall be offered to youth as

- an incentive to complete educational programs
- assistance to youth in becoming self-sufficient, and
- an opportunity to further consolidate employment skills set

The transitional period shall be provided for three (3) months. For youth who have completed a college degree the transitional period shall begin immediately and will continue for three months or up until the youth's twenty-third (23) birthday, whichever comes first. For youth completing a vocational training program, the transitional period shall begin immediately and will continue for three months or up until the youth's twenty first (21) birthday, whichever comes first.

The purpose of this transitional period is to guard against risk factors and prevent negative outcomes such as homelessness, need for programs such as General Assistance, and/or lack of appropriate medical coverage.

# Connecticut Department of Children and Families

## Policy Manual

### Independent Living Program

### Community Life Skills Program

42-5-1

#### Admission Criteria

The admission criteria for the Community Life Skills Program is as follows:

- target population is DCF involved youth
  - age fifteen (15) to twenty-one (21) (twenty-first birthday)
  - residing in out of home placement within the community (excluding those youth residing in SWETP and PASS)
- priority shall be given to DCF committed (abused, neglected, uncared for) youth.

DCF referrals to the program shall be forwarded by the Adolescent Specialist to the Life Skills Program Coordinator.

#### Exclusionary Criteria

Exclusionary criteria include:

- active psychotic behavior
- violent/assaultive behavior
- active substance abuse that interferes with group process and interaction.

#### Community Based Service Model

The Community Based Service Model for life skills training is one of the components of the Community Life Skills Program.

The central focus of the community-based program is the development and/or enhancement of the participant's knowledge of essential life skills to promote preparation for adulthood and self reliance.

Through program design and content, it provides youth with the opportunity for learning, problem solving, and enhancement of self esteem.

#### Life Skills Curriculum

Another component is the implementation of a core life skills curriculum for program participants.

The Community Life Skills Program shall utilize the DCF Life Skills Curriculum as an educational model for program participants. The curriculum is based on the hard, tangible skills with components covering employment, housing, money management, consumerism, transportation, health, leisure time, and the environment.

Components also include intangible or soft skills, such as personal decision-making (drugs/alcohol, and sexuality), self esteem, separation and loss, interpersonal and communication skills, decision making, goal setting, and problem solving.

Using the core curriculum as a model, the program shall develop additional educational and training materials.

