



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

**Chapter 11:** Older Youth Services

**Section 07:** Voluntary Older Youth Services

**Effective Date:** September 1, 2023

**Version:** 4

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### POLICY OVERVIEW

Voluntary Older Youth Services (OYS) provide guidance on financial issues, assessment services, housing, health care, counseling, employment, education opportunities, and other support services as identified in the OYS Service Standards to prepare the youth for adulthood.

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### PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will ensure that Voluntary OYS is accessible through contracted OYS service providers in every county in the state. Voluntary OYS are available to youth who:

1. Are 18 years of age up to the day before the youth's 23rd birthday;
2. Were formerly in foster care; and
3. Meet additional criteria outlined in policy 11.02 Eligibility for Older Youth Services.

If the youth moves to a region other than the region where the youth was a Child in Need of Services (CHINS), Juvenile Delinquent/Juvenile Status (JD/JS), or Collaborative Care (CC) youth and chooses to access Voluntary OYS, the youth or OYS provider must notify an OYS team member. The OYCM or Independent Living (IL) Specialist will create an appropriate Voluntary OYS service referral.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) or Older Youth Case Manager (OYCM) will refer all eligible youth for Voluntary OYS, and the OYCM will assist in the referral of youth who were wards or in the custody of another state once eligibility is established through contact with the other state.

The IL Specialist will:

1. Provide follow-up with the OYS providers to ensure appropriate services are provided to youth who are eligible for voluntary services and request services according to the OYS Service Standards; and
2. Provide assistance to all OYS providers regarding eligibility for youth referred for Voluntary OYS.

### **Closure of Voluntary Services Cases**

Voluntary OYS will end when the youth:

1. Has achieved interdependence to the extent that financial support and social service support are no longer needed;
2. Has made a voluntary decision not to participate in the program;
3. Has been adopted and no longer desires to continue in services;
4. Has consistently demonstrated unwillingness or inability to participate in services or follow the terms of the voluntary agreement; or
5. Turns 23 years of age.

**Note:** An OYS provider shall not refuse OYS to any youth without approval from the IL Specialist, after staffing with the IL Specialist's supervisor.

### **Previously Discharged Youth**

Youth who have been previously discharged from Voluntary OYS, either voluntarily or involuntarily, may contact their previous OYS provider to reinstate services without a new referral unless the previous Voluntary OYS referral has been closed. The OYS provider will notify the IL Specialist if a new referral is needed.

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## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **Definitions**

#### **Older Youth Services**

The purpose of OYS is to:

1. Assist identified youth who are expected to remain in foster care until their 18th birthday or after in making the transition to self-sufficiency;
2. Help identified youth receive the necessary education, training, and services to overcome potential barriers to employment;
3. Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary education and/or training programs;
4. Provide personal and emotional support for youth aging out of foster care;
5. Assist youth in locating and identifying community resources that will be available to the youth after DCS involvement has ended; and
6. Encourage positive personal growth in older youth through "teachable moments".

### **Forms and Tools**

- [OYS Service Standards](#)

### **Related Policies**

- [11.02 Eligibility for Older Youth Services](#)

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## **LEGAL REFERENCES**

- [42 USC 677 John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 11.07

*Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.*

### **Voluntary Participation**

Older Youth Service (OYS) service standards require youth leaving foster care or former foster youth requesting Voluntary OYS to participate on a voluntary basis with the service provider for case management services. This agreement outlines the services to be provided, the length of time expected for the service, and the plan for the youth's contribution. In addition, the IL Learning Plan must include an operational plan describing how the young adult is going to assume responsibility once assistance ends.

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