

Guidelines on How to Complete the Transition Plan (OCFS-4922)

In order for the transition plan to be effective and useful to the youth, it must be a result of collaboration between the worker and the youth. It is also recommended that the agencies involved in the youth's life and those that will be involved in the future, such as education systems, mental health agencies, and juvenile justice systems, participate in the youth's transition plan, as they can provide valuable information and insight into the development of the plan. Each person who participated in the development of the youth's transition plan must be documented in the plan.

OCFS-4922 is divided into sections I-X, each of which leads the discussion of a different topic. Each section is further divided into a discussion section (in white) and a 90 day transition plan update section (in gray).

While the discussion section prompts discussions between the worker and youth about the issues that need to be addressed in the youth's transition plan, the 90-day transition plan update section covers the substantive necessities of the transition plan. It provides a comprehensive snapshot of the youth's decisions for the specific topic and lists any actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge.

Step-by-step guidance on completing the OCFS-4922 form

1. OCFS-4922 begins by asking the worker to list specific identifying information about the youth: name, case ID number (CIN), date of birth, the date the youth entered foster care, county of origin, date of current placement, placement type, permanency planning goal, scheduled discharge date, date of last life skill assessment, immigration status, and whether the youth is an expectant/parenting youth. Specific dates must be documented: the youth's scheduled discharge date, the date the worker began to discuss transition planning with the youth, the date the 90-day notice was provided to the youth, the date the 90-day transition plan update is due, and the date the 90-day transition plan update is completed.
2. The discussion section (in white) consists of questions that are used to lead discussions with the youth around specific topics and must be started with the youth at least 180 days (six months) prior to the youth's 18th birthday (age 17 ½) and must be completed 90 days (three months) prior to the youth's 18th birthday.
3. 90 days (three months) prior to the youth's 18th birthday, the youth and worker must return to OCFS-4922 and complete the 90-day transition plan update section (in gray) for sections I-X. In this section the worker **must** document what the youth's final decision is for each topic under "decision." The worker must also list what actions are needed by the worker, youth, and/or any individual involved in the youth's transition in order to implement the youth's discharge plan under the "actions needed prior to discharge."
4. When OCFS-4922 is completed, at least 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday, the form must be signed and dated by the youth, case manager/case planner/youth's case worker, and the supervisor. If the youth does not sign the form, a note must be entered in the space for the youth's signature regarding the circumstances (for example, youth refuses to sign). The youth must be given a copy of the completed OCFS-4922, and a copy must be placed in the case record.

Breakdown of Each Section of the Transition Plan:

Section I: Trial Discharge/Final Discharge and Re-Entry into Foster Care:

It is important that youth leaving care at age 18 or older are aware of re-entrance options, should they find themselves in need of additional support.

Section I of the Transition Plan form asks whether the youth was offered trial discharge, how the youth responded to the offer, and whether the youth was given written notice that he or she has the right to apply to the district or court to re-enter foster care within 24 months of his/her final discharge, as long as the youth meets the required conditions.^{1,2}

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for trial discharge/final discharge and re-entry into foster care plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section II: Housing

Workers should assist youth with identifying possible housing plans and the viability of such plans, discuss the steps the youth **must** take to procure an apartment or other housing arrangement, and encourage the youth to come up with alternate plans in the event that his or her original plan falls through.

Section II of the form begins by asking questions in order to explore housing options with the youth that are safe, appropriate, and stable. It also asks for the plan identified by the youth in regards to where he or she is going to live, and what emergency housing plan has been discussed in case the youth loses his or her housing.³

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for housing plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section III: Health/Health Insurance/Health Care Proxy

Assisting youth in understanding their health and other conditions and how to utilize their health insurance is essential to helping those youth maintain their health.

¹ Family Court Act, §1091

² 11-OCFS-ADM-02, *Re-entry into Foster Care by Former Foster Care Youth between the Ages of 18 and 21*.
http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/OCFS_2011/

³ 18 NYCRR §430.12 (f)(3)(i)(c)

Section III asks questions about the youth's medical needs and plans: the date of the youth's last medical exam and whether one will be needed prior to discharge, the date of the youth's last mental health appointment (if applicable), and what the youth's plan is for meeting future mental health needs. If the youth does not have a mental health diagnosis, it is still important that the worker discuss with the youth and document in this section where he or she can go for help if the need arises. Other questions that are asked are what steps the youth must take to follow up with any medical conditions, the date of the youth's last vision and dental examinations, and the plans for meeting future vision and dental needs. If a youth is taking prescription medications, the medication, how often the medication is taken, and where and when the prescription should be refilled must be listed. This section also asks specific questions regarding medical insurance, including whether Medicaid coverage has been explained, as well as whether the youth is aware of processes and procedures related to maintaining Medicaid. It also asks about the youth's awareness of managed care plans, identifying providers who accept his or her health insurance plan, and asks what specific health care options the youth has explored. Lastly, it asks for the status regarding a health care proxy. Youth may or may not be able to answer these specific questions and may need assistance from their worker or to be referred to someone who can assist them on what their options are and how to decide what is best for their circumstances.

As of January 1, 2014, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) (P.L. 111-148) allows young adults under the age of 26 to stay on their parent's health insurance, and includes a provision for young adults who are discharged from foster care to remain on Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income or resources. To maintain Medicaid eligibility, the youth must have been in the custody of a commissioner of an LDSS or the commissioner of OCFS on his or her 18th birthday **and** the youth **must** have been in receipt of Medicaid on the date of his or her final discharge on or after the youth reaches age 18.

The 90-day update section (in grey) **must** be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for health/health insurance/health care proxy plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section IV: Educational/Vocational

A well-constructed transition plan and awareness of the risk factors that contribute to youth in foster care dropping out of school can markedly reduce negative educational outcomes for youth.

Section IV of the form asks about the youth's education/vocational needs and goals, and asks what steps have been taken to maintain the current program status. Additionally, it asks whether the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program has been discussed with the youth, and whether there are any other financial resources available to support the youth's educational/vocational plans. It then asks for a specification of what educational/vocational program the youth is pursuing and what steps need to be taken prior to discharge to allow the youth to continue this program.

Section 477 of the SSA provides resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. Under the ETV program, eligible youth may receive up

to \$5,000 per year to attend a post-secondary education or vocational training program. The law specifies that youth eligible for vouchers under this program include foster care youth and former youth in foster care who have not yet attained the age of 21 years and who are eligible for services under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), and youth adopted from foster care or who were discharged to a Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) arrangement after the age of 16. If a youth is participating in the ETV program when he or she is 21 years of age, the youth may remain eligible until 23 years of age.⁴

In addition to the ETV program, workers should assist youth in researching and applying for grants/scholarships to fund their educational/vocational programs. For example, a youth who was in foster care, legal guardianship or was adopted from foster care may be considered an independent student when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) to apply for financial aid. If the youth is considered an independent student, he or she does not need to list the income or household size information for his or her foster parents, legal guardians or adopted parents on his or her FASFA; therefore, potentially increasing the amount of aid he or she may be awarded.⁵

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for educational/vocational plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section V: Opportunities for Adult Permanency Resource(s) or Mentor(s)

For youth transitioning out of foster care, having a permanency resource or mentor can provide a source of guidance and a sense of security.

Section V asks whether the youth has been given an opportunity to identify an adult permanency resource or mentor, what options have been explored, and who the resource or mentor is. Youth with another planned living arrangement with a permanency resource (APPLA) permanency planning goal (PPG) must have an adult permanency resource identified in order to assist the youth in his or her transition to self-sufficiency. Regulations define an adult permanency resource as "a caring, committed adult who has been determined by a social services district to be an appropriate and acceptable resource for a youth and is committed to providing emotional support, advice and guidance to the youth and to assist the youth as the youth makes the transition from foster care to responsible adulthood."⁶ Although regulations only require having a permanency resource identified for youth with APPLA goals, it is important for workers to assist all youth, regardless of PPG, with identifying the person(s) in the youth's life that he or she can turn to when they need support. Workers and youth should actively seek people in the child's life who may be a resource. Locating and maintaining relationships with a youth's family members can provide important connections and supports for youth. Involving youth in activities, such as job fairs, teen conferences, employment mentoring, and life skill groups may also provide opportunities for youth to meet caring adults who might become

⁴ <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/ddps/adolescent/etv.asp>

⁵ <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

⁶ 18 NYCRR 430.12 (f)

permanent connections.⁷ When the permanency resource is identified, having meetings with the resource(s) and the youth to discuss the relationship and to establish boundaries can be helpful to maintain the relationship.

The 90-day update section (in grey) **must** be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for opportunities for adult permanency resource(s) or mentor(s) plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section VI: Continuing Support Services

Providing youth with information regarding available services related to health, mental health, and self-sufficiency can be a very valuable preventive mechanism to minimize the risk of unemployment, incarceration or other challenging situations for youth discharged from foster care.

Section VI of the form asks about current support services, the service-related needs expressed by the youth, and whether a service needs assessment has been done. Based on that information, this section asks what support services have been identified as necessary and whether or not the process of locating and securing necessary services has been explained to the youth.⁸ To the extent possible, support services should be in place before the youth is discharged so he or she can continue on post-discharge, but the youth should also know how to access new services if the need arises.

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for continuing support services plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section VII: Important Documents/Access to Case Record

Having access to specific essential documents is crucial to promoting self-sufficiency and responsibility in daily life for youth in foster care. These documents are necessary to obtain jobs, benefits, and other documents, such as a passport. Learning how to use the documents and how to replace them will be critical as the youth transitions out of foster care and into adulthood.

Section VII asks which essential documents have been received by the youth, which documents the youth still needs, and whether or not the youth has been made aware of the steps he or she needs to take to replace lost documents or obtain his or her foster care records.⁹

⁷ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Enhancing permanency for youth in out-of-home care*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/enhancing.pdf> .

⁸ 18 NYCRR 430.12 (f)(3)(i)(a)

⁹ 18 NYCRR 428.8 & 430.12(l)

P.L. 113-183 requires that any youth who has been in foster care for at least six months and is leaving foster care due to reaching the age of 18 or older **must** be provided with, if eligible, an official or certified copy of his or her United States (U.S.) birth certificate, social security card, medical records, health insurance information, and driver's license or identification card issued by the state before the youth is discharged. The provision of these documents is dependent on the youth's eligibility for them (immigration status may affect eligibility for some of these documents).

OCFS recognizes that LDSSs and VAs may have an extensive amount of a youth's medical records that have been acquired. When the youth is discharged, LDSSs and VAs must provide the youth, at minimum, with a copy of the youth's last physical exam, a list of immunizations that have been completed, and information on any current medical issues the youth may have. The youth must also be advised that the youth has the right to his or her entire medical record, and he or she must be provided with the entire medical record if he or she requests it.

Although the Act does not require LDSSs and VAs to provide birth certificates and social security cards to youth who are not eligible for them, access to these documents or comparable documents is crucial for all youth to successfully transition out of foster care; therefore, a worker should attempt to locate and/or apply for the documents on behalf of the youth. [11-OCFS-ADM-01, *Special Immigrant Juvenile Status \(SIJS\)*](#), outlines the steps that LDSSs and VAs **must** do with youth in foster care who are not U.S. citizens and do not have documentation of lawful residence (such as a valid green card) in order to determine whether they are eligible for SIJS status. If a youth receives SIJS status and obtains a green card, it allows the youth to become a lawful permanent resident and with it the ability to live permanently in the U.S., work legally, get financial aid for college, be eligible for limited public benefits, and apply for U.S. citizenship within five years.

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for important documents/access to case record plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section VIII: Workforce Supports and Employment Services

Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences. Transition planning that provides youth with both an understanding of, and experiences in, the application of academic skills to their career goals, empowers youth to make informed and realistic career and life choices.

Section VIII of the form asks about the youth's career goals, whether he or she has been exposed to various career opportunities, and what ideas and supports have been explored by the youth related to career goals. Some ways workers can assist youth in thinking through their job strengths and career interests is utilizing school based supports that promote job shadowing and career aptitude tests, helping the youth explore job training programs and vocational programs, and encouraging the youth to apply for and work at a part-time job while he or she is in foster care.

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for workforce supports and employment services plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate this decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section IX: Expectant/Parenting Youth (If Applicable)

Generally, young parents face many challenges such as educational attainment, poverty, child well-being, and health issues. Thus, housing, healthcare, and many other supports are necessary in order for the teen mother or father to be on a positive trajectory.

Section IX asks about the needs of an expectant or parenting youth, the names and birth dates of the youth's children, and whether various needs and services have been explored by the youth.

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for expectant/parenting youth plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate his or her decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Section X: Other (Safety)

The purpose of this section is to address any identified safety concerns regarding the youth and his or her discharge from foster care. Factors such as drug use, disabilities, mental illness or other vulnerabilities should be taken into consideration when developing plans to promote the safety and well-being of the youth. It is also critical to watch for signs, potential vulnerabilities or risk factors for human trafficking or sexual exploitation.

In this section the youth and worker need to identify the safety concern(s) and how they will be addressed. This section should also address a safety plan for the youth that he or she can use if he or she finds him/herself at risk in the future. The safety plan should include resources he or she can use when encountering unsafe situations or if his or her living situation changes and he or she is in need of assistance. This plan can include the option of returning into care if the youth meets the requirements to do so, as well as other services he or she may qualify for to support remaining out of care.

The 90-day update section (in grey) must be completed at least 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This section asks the youth what his or her final decision is for safety plans. The youth may have had a tentative plan for when he or she is discharged, but by 90 days prior to discharge, the youth must have a final decision for this topic. This final decision is recorded under "decision." There may be other actions that need to be completed prior to the youth's discharge to facilitate his or her decision. If there are actions that are needed, they must be recorded under "actions needed prior to discharge."

Signatures

The transition plan provides for the signature of the case manager/case planner/caseworker, the supervisor, and the youth. When a youth does not sign his or her transition plan, a note **must** be entered in place of the youth's signature indicating the reason that the youth did not sign it. For example, it might be noted that the youth refuses to sign. Whether or not the youth chooses to sign, he or she **must** be given a copy of the completed transition plan, and a copy **must** be placed in his/her case record. In addition, when the youth is discharged from care, the worker should inquire whether the youth still has the copy of his or her plan, and provide a copy if the youth says that he or she does not.