

Independent Living Plan Tutorial Guide

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Purpose

This document provides general guidance and technical assistance to child welfare staff and caseworkers responsible for completing an Independent Living Plan (ILP) for youth 14 and older currently or formerly in foster care. If the youth is currently in foster care, this plan is part of the Out-of-Home Placement Plan. If the youth is no longer in care, the ILP is its own plan. This may be the only case plan utilized or it may be used in conjunction with other case plans. It is important for caseworkers to remember that every youth is different and case plans are developed with the youth to meet their individual needs.

Introduction

Although youth with lived experience in foster care face many challenges, they can succeed in life with the support of caring adults and communities. It is the caseworker's duty to help youth identify their strengths and acquire skills so that they can realize a future filled with promise ([Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.452](#)). The best practice guide "[Helping youth transition from out-of-home care to adulthood](#)" provides caseworkers with the information and resources to do this work effectively.

Development of the ILP is youth-driven and includes supportive adults as part of their planning team. The goals of the ILP are specific to a youth's age, needs, interests, and culture ([Social Security Act, Title IV-E, section 475](#); [Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subd. 1](#) (c) (12)).

The [ILP template](#) provides the required components of the plan, and includes the following objectives:

- Educational, vocational, or employment planning
- Health care planning and medical coverage
- Transportation, including (where appropriate) assisting a child in obtaining a driver's license
- Money management, including annual credit reports
- Planning for housing
- Social and recreational skills
- Establishing and maintaining connections
- Regular opportunities to engage in age-appropriate and/or developmentally-appropriate activities ([Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subd. 14](#)).

Developing and updating an Independent Living Plan

Youth steer development of their ILP. Schedule a meeting that includes youth and their current caregiver and individuals the youth has identified to be on their case planning team ([Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subd. 1 and 14](#)). Ask youth to list additional supportive people in their life who can help them carry out their goals. This list might include friends, parents, extended family members, teachers, religious leaders, employers, and neighbors, etc. Invite them to a meeting to participate in planning.

Base a youth's plan for independent living on assessments of life skills, both hard skills (tangible skills taught according to a learning plan) and soft skills (developed through social experiences). Youth and their caretaker might assess life skills differently, which can lead to a productive discussion.

Focus the initial meeting on the youth's strengths and start with the skills area they are most interested in working on. Base the ILP on the youth's goals over one, two, or five years, addressing steps needed to accomplish goals and overcome barriers. Goals and objectives are to be specific to the youth's age, individual interests, culture, gender identity and the region in which they live. Include some long-term goals, as youth may not see, for example, why they should attend school regularly.

Review monthly and update the ILP at least every six months. Youth may think of additional supportive people in their life to invite to meetings when updating their plan. Add new information to the plan. Add written goals and objectives specific to changes in assessment data, age, experiences, previously mastered goals, and maturity.

Independent Living Plan

Title Page

This section is where caseworkers provide general case information for the youth. The youth's identifying information is auto-filled from the set-up screen. Check assessments that were used to help develop the plan.

According to the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, to empower youth in the development of their own case plan, youth shall have the option to include up to two members of the case planning team who are chosen by the youth and who are not a foster parent of, or caseworker for, the youth. Youth may select one member of the case planning team designated as their advisor to advocate regarding the application of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard ([Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subd. 14](#)). List the individuals and who is designated to be the youth's advisor.

Record the date and whether all parties were given notice of extended foster care benefits at 17 ½, and if not, the reason why.

Individual goal areas

For youth in placement, this information, while some of it may be similar, is different than the "services to youth detail" in the out-of-home-placement plan. The Out-of-Home Placement Plan addresses the services provided to youth while in care to meet their safety and well-being needs. The ILP is youth-driven and future-focused with an emphasis on their successful transition to adulthood.

Each area of the ILP is based on a youth's strengths as well as their short-term and long-term goals, addressing steps needed to accomplish the goals and overcome barriers. Goals and tasks are specific to youth's age, individual interests, culture, gender identity and the community in which they live. Include persons responsible for task(s), timeline, and current progress.

Develop goals from information gathered from life skills assessments, and any other psychological, educational, or vocational testing a youth has undergone, as well as conversations with the youth and other case planning team members. There does not need to be a goal in each area. A youth may decide to focus on a certain goal area(s) and wait on others, or they may be proficient in some areas. The ILP should not necessarily be limited to the objectives listed in this guide. The plan provides for adding additional objectives.

The following offers samples of goals and objectives to be included in an independent living plan. There are also recommendations for caseworker practice when working with youth in these areas. For more ideas, see the [Helping youth transition from out-of-home care to adulthood Best Practice Guide](#).

Educational, vocational or employment planning

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will complete an education/employment plan.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Attending education program regularly
- Completing homework and class work on time
- Asking for help when needed
- Identifying and applying to three post-secondary institutions
- Attending a job or career fair
- Completing and returning two job applications
- Learning about potential job interview questions by participating in a mock job interview
- Getting to work on time for scheduled shifts
- Demonstrating appropriate appearance at work by following dress code and maintaining clean and professional work clothing.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Staying focused on school stability and continuity – critical for educational success.
- Monitoring educational progress and planning of each youth — attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan meetings and providing informed input to ensure integration with youth's ILP.
- Coordinating planning with schools. Per [Minn. Stat., section 120B.125](#), school districts must assist all students by no later than ninth grade to explore educational, post-secondary, and career interests, aptitudes and aspirations. This includes developing a plan for smooth and successful transition to post-secondary education or employment.
- Ensuring collection of all educational records for youth.
- Encouraging extracurricular activities to help youth develop positive social skills and self-esteem.
- Becoming familiar with [Education and Training Vouchers](#) that help current and former foster care and adopted youth pay for post-secondary education.
- Becoming familiar with the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) and the application due date.
- Developing employment-based collaborations among business, social services, education, and employment agencies (i.e., internships, volunteering, and paid employment).

Transportation

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will be able to meet their transportation needs.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Identifying and using public transportation in their region.
- Demonstrating ability to read public transportation schedules and maps.
- Participating in classroom driver's education.
- Obtaining a learner's permit and practicing driving foster parents' car twice a week.
- Estimating the cost of owning and operating a car for a month/year.
- Demonstrating knowledge of auto loans and making car payments.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Arranging opportunities for youth to learn to use public transportation.
- Providing youth with bus cards.
- Planning with foster parents the steps necessary for youth to become a licensed driver.
- Explore STAY funding available to assist with the costs of driver's education and car expenses.
- Developing a plan with foster parents regarding driving privileges and financial responsibilities when the youth receives a driver's license.
- Helping youth learn basic car maintenance.
- Providing youth with a bicycle, if needed, for transportation to work or school.

Health care planning and medical coverage

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will live a healthy lifestyle.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Demonstrating how to make an appointment.
- Completing applications for [Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare](#).
- Demonstrating knowledge of what to do if a mental health crisis occurs.
- Identifying food groups that promote a healthy, balanced diet.
- Demonstrating regular medical and dental care.
- Making healthy choices about cigarette, alcohol, and drug use.
- Knowing how to prevent pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will practice good emergency and safety skills.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Demonstrating knowledge of smoke detectors and how/when to change batteries.
- Identifying common fire hazards.
- Identifying household hazards that may cause injury.
- Determining when to go to the emergency room rather than the family doctor or clinic.
- Demonstrating understanding of what domestic violence is and how to seek help.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Informing youth about eligibility for [Medical Assistance until age 26](#), if they leave foster care after turning age 18.

- Arranging comprehensive physical, dental, vision, hearing, mental health, and substance abuse screenings before youth leaves care.
- Educating youth about their mental health issues, sexual decision making, and constructive ways of dealing with stress.
- Helping youth learn to understand how to apply for insurance, accessing health care, and keeping appointments with health care providers.
- Assisting youth in consolidating and updating health records.

Planning for housing

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will locate and plan for appropriate housing.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Knowledgeable about their rights to remain in foster care up to age 21.
- Demonstrates knowledge of different types of available housing, and can calculate costs regarding each option.
- Identifies community resources that assist in locating housing.
- Demonstrates knowledge of tenant's rights and responsibilities.
- Develops a housing plan that includes a budget, furnishings needed, community supports, transportation and employment.

Sample goals and objectives. By June 2024, youth will demonstrate housekeeping and food management skills.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Demonstrates use of laundry equipment.
- Demonstrates use of dishwasher and doing dishes.
- Maintains a clean living space.
- Knows how to use a plunger and prevent sinks and toilets from clogging.
- Can do minor household repairs.
- Stores food appropriately.
- Demonstrates ability to plan a menu for a week, develop a grocery list, and carry out the grocery shopping on a limited budget.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Providing life skills training that teach youth how to live independently.
- Providing opportunities for youth to practice living on their own, including housekeeping, grocery shopping, budgeting, cooking meals, and working out disputes with roommates.
- Developing knowledge of housing issues and resources for youth aging out of care.
- Creating alliances with local housing providers.
- Ensuring that youth have a safe, affordable place to live when they leave care. Discharge to shelter care or homelessness is not an acceptable plan.
- Ensuring that youth received the [Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18](#); if they desire and meet eligibility criteria, maintain youth in care in an appropriate placement setting.

Money Management

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will demonstrate money management skills.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Develops knowledge about credit reports and resolves inaccuracies or issues in credit reports.
- Develops realistic short- and long-term budgets.
- Obtains information about opening a checking and savings account.
- Knows how to read a paycheck stub (i.e., gross and net pay, income taxes and other deductions).
- Knows how to complete state and federal tax forms.
- Saved enough money for an apartment damage deposit, first and last months' rent.
- Has a list, including costs, of what they will need when moving out on their own.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Federal law requires that all youth ages 14 and older in foster care receive a copy, without cost, of all consumer credit reports annually until discharged from foster care and are assisted in interpreting credit reports and resolving inaccuracies. The following guidelines apply:
 - The Minnesota Department of Human Services is responsible to submit quarterly batch reports on youth ages 14 to 17 who had birthdays during the quarter and were in a continuous foster care placement of 30 days or longer.
 - County and Initiative Tribal agencies are responsible for assisting foster care youth ages 18 and older in obtaining annual credit reports until discharged from foster care, and documenting when youth refuse to cooperate. It is important to request reports from all three credit agencies, as fraud and/or identity theft might appear only on one agency report.
- Engage foster parents or other caretakers in teaching money management skills.
- Help youth create a monthly budget and open a savings account.
- Involve youth in a life skills training group that includes money management in the curriculum. (A survey of youth who completed life skills training revealed that money management was the most helpful thing they learned.)
- Involve youth in learning money management skills online.

Social and Recreational Skills and Cultural Activities

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will demonstrate good personal appearance and hygiene.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Bathes regularly at appropriate intervals. Uses soap and shampoo.
- Demonstrates proper care of skin, hair, nails, and teeth.
- Regular use of deodorant and other toiletries.
- Complies with school and work dress codes.
- Dresses in a culturally appropriate manner in free time.

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Identifies several characteristics of positive relationships.

- Demonstrates assertiveness when solving real-life problems.
- Identifies and demonstrates strategies to resolve conflicts.
- Demonstrates respect for people of different races, cultures, religions, class, political party affiliation, diverse belief systems, or sexual preference.
- Identifies effects of peer pressure and practices how to say “no.”
- Identifies healthy boundaries and how to avoid becoming exploited.

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will have successfully participated in three social/recreational activities.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Attending YMCA summer camp.
- Attending a youth group retreat.
- Taking guitar lessons once per week.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Train caregivers how to respond to “teachable moments” to assist youth in healthy identity formation.
- Provide activities that support youth in developing a positive sense of self and normalcy.
- Acknowledge and support youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning/queer, and help them find information and resources. See the [LGBTQ best practice guide](#) for more information.
- Help youth develop their racial and ethnic identity.
- Provide a life skills training group or refer youth to one and ensure that transportation is provided.
- Connect youth with a mentor.

Establishing and Maintaining Healthy Connections

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will access community resources.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Identifies names, addresses and telephone numbers of community agencies such as health clinics, employment services, public assistance, housing, and motor vehicle divisions.
- Knows who to contact if lost, frightened, depressed, anxious, sick, injured, out of food and money, utilities get disconnected, or heat goes out.
- Knows names, addresses and telephone numbers of supportive adults to contact after discharge from care.
- Knows how to contact siblings and other birth relatives.
- Demonstrates knowledge of community emergency medical response system.
- Identifies public transportation options.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Become familiar with the Permanency Pact, Youth Connections Scale, Family Finding and/or other permanency resources for older youth.
- Provide assessments, services, and activities that address cultural needs.
- Ensure youth knows why they are in placement.
- Help youth identify and connect with birth family members with whom they can maintain a safe and appropriate relationship.

- Ensure someone is teaching youth how to find community resources needed when they age out of care.

Disability income assistance and other services and supports

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will obtain disability income assistance for which youth is eligible.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA).
- Apply for adult services.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Consult with Adult Services about whether youth will be eligible for adult services upon leaving care, including housing supports. This should be done prior to discharge.
- Re-assess youth for disabilities, if necessary.
- Assist youth with SSI or disability applications prior to discharge from foster care.
- Assist youth with accessing housing and other services available to disabled populations, if applicable.
- Help youth learn to understand how to apply for disability insurance, access mental health care, and keep appointments with health care providers.

Vital documents

Sample goals and objectives: By June 2024, youth will possess all vital documents, and have a secure place to keep them.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Obtaining birth certificate, picture I.D. and Social Security card.
- Obtaining siblings' contact information.
- Obtaining a lock box, file folder, or other means of organizing and saving vital documents.

Caseworker practice recommendations include:

- Some documents, such as immunization records or birth certificates, can be difficult to obtain, so youth will often need help with writing to request documents or paying fees. [Minnesota Statutes, section 171.04, subd. 1, 2 and 3](#) give foster parents and directors of transitional housing programs authority to approve (i.e. sign) driver's license applications for 16- and 17-year-olds who reside in their home or facility.
- Prior to discharge at age 18 or older, provide youth with:
 - Social Security card
 - Birth certificate
 - State identification or driver's license
 - Tribal identification (if applicable)
 - Green card or school visa (if applicable)
 - [Proof of foster care](#)
 - Health care information
 - School, medical, and dental records
 - Sibling contact information, if siblings are in foster care ([Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.452, 4\(c\)](#) and [Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.219, subd. 5](#)).

- Engage foster parents or youth service providers to gather vital documents.
- Become familiar with documents required for the 180-day transition plan, including the health care directive.

Independent Living Plan signature page

This section is where you capture the signature of all individuals who participated in the development of the case plan. The plan should be signed by the youth and social worker. The youth and foster parent(s) or caregiver(s) should be given a copy of the plan.