

Exit Plan Hearing Questions

PRESENT CUSTODY STATUS

- Is the youth in foster care, group/residential, other placement?
- What is the custody expiration date?

EDUCATION STATUS & GOALS

- Refer to Education Checklist
- What is the youth's education goal (high school diploma, GED, vocational or technical school)?
- What does the youth need to achieve the goal?
- Does the youth have transportation necessary to pursue education goals?
- What are the youth's goals beyond high school?
- Is the Native youth eligible for Indian education scholarships or grants?

EMPLOYMENT GOALS

- What is the youth's current employment status?
- What are the youth's employment goals?
- Does the youth have transportation to pursue employment goals?
- What else does the youth need to achieve these goals?

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- What are the youth's current sources of income?
- What additional financial support is needed?
- What is the plan for PFD or other trust funds being released?
- Does the Indian youth have an Individual Indian Money (IIM) account with BIA?
- Is SSI applicable; has it been applied for; who would be the representative payee?
- Is youth eligible for other public benefits or entitlements? Have they been applied for?
- How will the youth access the funds to support independent living?
- What special expenses are anticipated in adulthood (e.g., services needed)?

HOUSING

- Where will the youth live after leaving care?
- What else is needed to insure adequate housing?

HEALTH CARE

- Are the youth's health needs being met?
- Will medical insurance coverage continue beyond the expiration of custody?
- What is the plan for addressing medical/mental health needs in adulthood?
- If substance abuse counseling is needed, how will it be provided?
- Is the Native youth signed up or registered with the Indian Health Service?

SUPPORT SYSTEM

- Does the youth have supportive adults to rely on after expiration of custody?
- If youth has been in non-relative foster care, does youth know how to contact relatives?
- Has youth been counseled about the benefits of remaining in custody past age 18?
- Should an attorney be appointed for the youth?

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

- Does the plan cover cultural activities or ties?
- Does the Native youth have a Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) from the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- If youth needs a guardian or conservator, has petition been filed?
- Have youth's current mental health providers met with the adult mental health providers?
- If the youth is SSI eligible, has the application for adult SSI been completed?
- If the youth has a large PFD trust, has the Miller Trust/Medicaid Trust been established?
- Does this youth have a Developmental Disability Waiver or FASD Waiver? If so, what agency will provide services?

YOUTH PLACED AT RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES

- Has the discharge plan been discussed with the youth?
- Has the facility been working with the youth on life skills training?
- Have the residential care facility and the next placement for the youth developed a plan?

Exit Plan Hearing Guide

Purpose of Exit Plan Hearings

The purpose of these questions is to address the unique issues facing older youth who are “aging out” of foster care and whose permanent plan is a planned living arrangement (as opposed to adoption, guardianship or return home). Judges are encouraged to hold hearings to address the questions on the foregoing page.

When to Hold Exit Plan Hearings

The exit plan hearing may occur at any permanency hearing involving youth who are 16 years of age or older. In addition, judges are encouraged to set hearings on any request by OCS to release custody of these youth (rather than approving the release on paper). Depending on the stage of the case, it may be necessary to set additional review hearings to monitor the exit process. Additional hearings will insure a well planned and orderly release from foster care.

Documents to Review

The permanency report filed by OCS, and the current exit plan (CPS Manual Policy 3.14.2.1 requires an Exit Plan to be developed for every 16-year-old youth in custody). If properly completed, the exit plan should address most if not all of the issues contained in this checklist. The court is encouraged to hear directly from the youth on many of these issues and goals.

Helpful Definitions

SSI: Supplemental Security Income is a federal program that makes monthly payments to blind or disabled people with low income and limited resources. A child younger than age 18 can qualify if she has a condition that results in “marked and severe functional limitations” for at least 12 continuous months. A low-income adult can qualify if the condition “interfere[s] with basic work-related activities” and “has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months.” Potentially qualifying conditions include mental and developmental disorders.

Developmental Disability Waiver/FASD Waiver: AS. 47.80.900(7) defines “developmental disability;” the so-called “DD Waiver” program allows developmentally disabled people who would otherwise need an institutional level of care to live in their home/community and receive the care they need. Qualifying conditions in Alaska include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, among others.

Miller/Medicaid Trust: An irrevocable trust into which a Medicaid recipient diverts that portion of her monthly income that would exceed the Medicaid cap, thus allowing her to continue to qualify for Medicaid. Upon the person’s death, the diverted funds revert to the State.

Individual Indian Money Account (IIM): A trust account (managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs) containing the Indian beneficiary’s assets such as income from land leases, royalties, or tribal payments. These funds usually are released when the youth turns 18.