

Background

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-169) establishes the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), now known as the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee Program), in amendment to section 477 of the Social Security Act. The Chafee Program provides states with flexible funding to carry out programs that assist youth in making the transition from foster care to a healthy and self-sufficient adulthood. The law also requires the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop a data collection system to track the independent living services States provide to youth and develop outcome measures that may be used to assess States' performance in operating their independent living programs. The law also requires ACF to impose a penalty of between one and five percent of the State's annual allotment on any State that fails to comply with the reporting requirements.

Overview

To meet the law's mandate, ACF published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on July 14, 2006, and a final rule on February 26, 2008. The regulation establishes the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and requires that States engage in two data collection activities. First, States are to collect information on each youth who receives independent living services paid for or provided by the State agency that administers the Chafee Program. Second, States are to collect demographic and outcome information on certain youth in foster care whom the State will follow over time to collect additional outcome information. This information will allow ACF to track which independent living services States provide and assess the collective outcomes of youth.

Pursuant to the regulation, States begin collecting data for NYTD on October 1, 2010, and reports data to ACF semiannually. The first submission of data to ACF occurred on May 15, 2011.

Information on NYTD Services

The regulation requires that States report to ACF the independent living services and supports they provide to all youth in eleven broad categories: independent living needs assessment; academic support; post-secondary educational support; career preparation; employment programs or vocational training; budget and financial management; housing education and home management training; health education and risk prevention; family support and healthy marriage education; mentoring; and supervised independent living. States will also report financial assistance they provide, including assistance for education, room and board and other aid.

Information on NYTD Outcomes

States will survey youth regarding six outcomes: financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive connections with adults, high-risk behavior, and access to health insurance.

Additionally, States collect outcomes information by conducting a survey of youth in foster care on or around their 17th birthday, also referred to as the baseline population. States track these youth as they age and conduct a new outcome survey on or around the youth's 19th birthday; and again on or around the youth's 21st birthday, also referred to as the follow-up population. States collect outcomes information on these older youth at ages 19 or 21 regardless of their foster care status or whether they are still receiving independent living services from the State. Depending on the size of the State's foster care youth population, some States may conduct a random sample of the baseline population of the 17-year-olds that participate in the outcomes survey so that they can follow a smaller group of youth as they age. All States collect and report outcome information on a new baseline population cohort every three years.

Information Describing the Youth

For every youth reported to NYTD, a State must use an encrypted identification number that is the same as the identifier used to report information on the young person to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). This enables ACF to analyze the information related to a youth's foster care experiences reported to AFCARS along with their service and/or outcomes information reported to NYTD. A State must also report to NYTD the youth's sex, race, ethnicity, date of birth and foster care status. When a State is reporting on independent living services, the State must identify the local agency responsible for the youth, whether the youth is a member of a Federally recognized Indian tribe, the youth's educational level, the youth's receipt of special education, and whether the youth has been adjudicated delinquent.

NYTD Data Reporting Standards and Penalties

For a State's data to comply with the NYTD standards, it must:

- Meet file format requirements and contain error-free information for certain standard demographic information;
- Contain information that is 90 percent error-free for other data elements (i.e., be free of missing information, internally inconsistent responses and invalid information);
- Provide full or partial outcome survey information on all 19/21 year olds in the follow-up population or sample, or indicate why the survey information was not obtainable (i.e., because the youth is incapacitated or deceased); and
- Garner the participation in the outcomes survey of at least 60 percent of 19- or 21-year-old youth in the follow-up population who are no longer in foster care. For youth who are still in foster care as described at 45 CFR 1355.20 at ages 19 or 21, the State must achieve an outcome survey participation rate of at least 80 percent.

If the State does not meet these standards, the State will have an opportunity to transmit corrected data by the end of the subsequent report period. If the corrected data still does not meet the standards, the State will be penalized between one and five percent of their annual Chafee Program allotment for each reporting period, depending on the standard that was not achieved. Education and Training Voucher funds (also authorized in

Section 477 of the Social Security Act) will not be subject to a penalty if a State does not comply with these standards.