

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES



MEMORANDUM

To: All Staff
From: Trista D. Piccola, Director
Date: June 9, 2017
Subject: Extended Care for Youth

I want to call attention to an issue of concern. As you may be aware, on average over a hundred youth leave our care each year not having achieved permanence with a family. I know this is as distressing to many of you as it is to me. We do offer extended placement services to our youth with serious emotional and mental health issues and youth who have developmental disabilities up to the age of twenty-one. We also work with our partners at Foster Forward to refer our kids exiting care to receive extended services from them.

There is much conversation happening now about renewing a commitment to providing extended placement services to all youth who are in need and in agreement with these services and draft legislation has been submitted. We are very aware of the challenges this poses currently, but also understand the adverse outcomes for our youth if we do nothing while we try to position ourselves to ensure the success of all older youth as they leave the care of the Department.

I want us to take a step toward better service for older youth, particularly those who are working to obtain a high school diploma, GED, or other diploma alternative. Effectively immediately, no child in the custody of the Department who is enrolled in high school or working on a GED is to be terminated from care upon his or her 18th birthday without direct approval by me or my designee. The expectation is that every youth can finish their education and that an appropriate transition plan will be in place as they leave care.

As a reminder, state law requires the Department to present to the Family Court a description of transition services to include a plan for the child's housing, health insurance, education and/or employment, available mentors, and continuing support services (including workforce supports and employment services), six months prior to the youth's 18th birthday. (RIGL §14-1-6).

Federal law requires the Department to begin transition planning with youth in care when the youth turns age 14. Effective transition planning includes identifying ways the Department can help youth graduate high school or obtain a GED or other diploma alternative on time. As this plan is required to be updated every 6 months, it is a great opportunity to measure educational progress and modify the educational plan as necessary.

If you have questions regarding transition or discharge planning requirements, or need assistance with planning for the educational support of older youth on your caseload, please contact Mike Burk at 401-528-3576 or mike.burk@dcyf.ri.gov.