

Independent Living



Pathways to Success

The South Carolina
Chafee Independent Living Program
And
Educational and Training Voucher Program
Guidelines for Services



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Introduction

Pathways to Success

South Carolina Chafee Independent Living Program

The journey to adulthood is a critical transition for youth in foster care. It is a time when young adults learn to take on the primary responsibility for their futures and the accompanying concerns of employment, education, healthcare, housing and home management, and maintaining significant relationships with those who will continue to support and encourage them beyond the transition to independence.

The **Chafee Foster Care Independence Program** was established with the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (PL 106-169). Chafee funds are intended to provide youth with opportunities to learn needed independent living skills and increase the likelihood of successful transition from foster care to independence. The **Educational and Training Voucher (ETV)** Program was established by the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act of 2001 (PL 107-133). This program provides resources for youth who are transitioning from foster care to meet their education and training needs.

Youth can be best prepared by learning about both the challenges and the opportunities in the following areas:

- A supportive relationship with an adult and/or interpersonal connections to help them achieve their personal goals
- Education and training that enable youth to obtain and retain steady employment
- Gainful employment with future possibility for career growth
- Safe, stable, and affordable housing and access to transportation for work and school
- Coverage within a managed care system for both physical and mental health

Approvals are based on IL funds availability and may not cover entire expense.

Purpose Statement

The South Carolina Department of Social Services and the Chafee Independent Living Program believes that youth should have the opportunities to reach and maintain successful self-sufficiency. For this purpose, the Chafee Independent Living Program provides services and funding needed to enhance opportunities to learn independent living skills necessary to become self-reliant.

8 Purposes of Independent Living Program

- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 transition to self-sufficiency by providing services
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions
- Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults;
- Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition into adulthood;
- Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education, to youth who have aged out of foster care;
- Provide services to youth who, after attaining 16 years of age, have left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption; and
- Ensure children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age have regular, on-going opportunities to engage in age or developmentally-appropriate activities

Engaging Youth in preparing for The Future

Establishing Youth-Centered Independent Living Goals

When a youth in foster care reaches the age of 13 or a youth enters care at age 13 or older, the case manager will assist the youth in completing a Life Skills Assessment. Sometimes, the case manager will work with the care provider to assist the youth with this assessment.

The Life Skills Assessment, such as Casey Life skills <http://www.casey.org/casey-life-skills-resources/>, Washington Life Skills Inventory Assessment Tool <http://transitionresponse.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Life-Skills-Assessment-Div.-Of-Children.pdf>, and Daniel Memorial Assessment <http://www.danielkids.org/>, are used to identify a youth's basic skills, emotional and social capabilities, strengths, and needs. The information gathered with this tool is used to create an individualized case plan based on the specific needs of the youth. Case planning should be a collaborative process involving the youth, the case manager, the care provider, appropriate family members, and other adults identified as being significant to the youth and willing to support and encourage the youth as he or she prepares to transition to independence.

Case plans should contain specific goals to include employment, education, housing, life skills, physical and emotional health, and spiritual development. The plan should include steps that must be taken to achieve these goals. A Life Skills Assessment is re-administered on a yearly basis. Case plans should be revised as the youth develops and his or her needs change.

SMART Goal-Setting Worksheet (Adapted from SparklePeople.com)

STEP 1: Write down your goal in as few words as possible:

My goal is to: _____

STEP 2: Make your goal detailed and SPECIFIC: Answer who/what/where/how/when

HOW will you reach this goal? List at least 3 action steps you'll take (be specific):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP 3: Make your goal MEASUREABLE: Add details, measurements and tracking details.

I will measure/track my goal by using the following numbers of methods:

I will know I've reached my goal when _____

STEP 4: Make your goal ATTAINABLE: What additional resources do you need for success?

Items I need to achieve this goal: _____

How I'll find the time: _____

Things I need to learn more about: _____

People I can talk to for support: _____

STEP 5: Make your goal RELEVANT: List why you want to reach this goal.

STEP 6: Make your goal TIMELY: Put a deadline on your goal and set some benchmarks.

I will reach my goal by (date): ____/____/____

My halfway measurement will be _____ on (date) ____/____/____

Additional dates and milestones I'll aim for:

National Youth Transition Database NYTD

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) project is a national research study that tracks the independent living services and outcome measures of youth aging out of foster care in each state. The survey measures financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive connections with adults, high-risk behaviour, and access to health insurance.

The **National Youth in Transition Database** is a national database that (1) surveys youth about their thoughts and experiences of foster care services and (2) tracks the independent living services that youth receive. The South Carolina Department of Social Services and The Center for Child and Family Studies at the University of South Carolina are partners in this study, which is required by the US government.

This database is used to document, track and evaluate services provided for youth in foster care. A NYTD service requires action from the provider or Case Manager - specifically for preparing a youth for independence, education, housing, life skills, employment, etc. All Independent Living services funded by Chafee and ETV must be reported as NYTD services in the *child welfare management and adult protective services information system* (CAPSS). It is a federal requirement to record and update NYTD services in CAPSS under the “NYTD” tab (at least monthly).

Case managers and care providers communicate at least once per month (Utilize **Monthly NYTD Tracking Form 30254** & keep copies in youth’s case file). Provide the care provider with access to the NYTD Services Booklet (Booklet 30255) to understand 14 NYTD categories. Missing or inaccurate information will result in a classification of non-compliant when reporting information to the federal government. Non-compliance could result in financial penalties placed on Chafee funds.

Transition Planning

The Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 made it a requirement that, beginning at age 17, a youth in foster care must begin to develop and implement a transition plan. The South Carolina Department of Social Services uses the Transition Plan Meeting form 30206 (formerly known as P.A.T.T.Y) for this purpose. **This plan must be formalized within the 90 days prior to the youth's 17th birthday. This form is used again at the formal transition planning meeting that must take place 90 days prior to a youth turning 18 and/or leaving care.** The Transition Plan Meeting form is used to identify areas in which services and skills are needed in order to make a successful transition to independence. Assisting the youth to identify and engage individuals in his or her support system is essential. Service providers, foster parents, family members, and any other individuals with whom the youth has a positive connection should be invited to participate in the transition planning meeting to develop the transition plan.

Progress is evaluated monthly and the transition plan is updated as needed until the youth leaves care and for a minimum of 6 months after the youth leaves care and continuing as long as the youth is receiving IL funding. Progress should be documented in after care line dictation.

The Transition Plan Meeting form is also used when youth ages 18 – 21 who have left foster care request aftercare services.

Why is the Transition Plan Important?

It is important for youth to understand the process that needs to take place as they prepare for adulthood. They should be encouraged to use their voices by actively participating in the development of this plan. Youth should be assisted in identifying their future goals and the steps necessary to achieve those goals. Youth in foster care have the right to invite others to their transition planning meeting who are significant to them and will continue to support them as they prepare for independence and beyond.

Youth must also assume their responsibility in making the transition successful. This relies heavily on the youth's ability to make appropriate decisions and follow through on the objectives identified in the transition plan.

Annual Credit Reporting for Youth In Care

In order to be and remain in compliance with Public Law 113-183, "child welfare agencies must ensure that youth in foster care receive a copy of any consumer report, commonly called "credit report", annually until discharged from care, and that they be assisted in interpreting the credit report and resolving any inaccuracies." These reports will be obtained from three nationwide credit agencies (Transunion, Experian, and Equifax) each year the youth remain in foster care until age 18, and if they remain in care beyond age 18.

The Identity Theft Coordinator (ITC), a member of the Independent Living Program Unit, will submit a credit report history request for each youth age 14 and older who are in foster care annually and document the request for each youth's credit report history in CAPSS. If no credit report history is found, then youth and case manager will receive notification.

Who is Eligible for Chafee and ETV funds?

Criteria for Chafee and ETV Recipients (5 categories)

Approvals are based on IL funds availability and may not cover entire expense.

- Youth in foster care (from age 13 until the 21st birthday) are eligible for all Chafee funding and up to \$5,000.00 in ETV funding for post-secondary schooling (college).
- Youth age 18 and older in a voluntary aftercare placement who have not yet reached age 21 are eligible for all Chafee funding and up to \$5,000.00 in ETV funding for post-secondary schooling (college).
- Youth who have left foster care or a voluntary aftercare placement after age 18, but have not yet reached their 21st birthday are eligible for all Chafee funding and up to \$5,000.00 in ETV funding for post-secondary schooling (college). An aftercare line must be opened and monthly contacts documented as long as aftercare youth are receiving funds.
- Youth who leave care to positive permanency (adoption/kinship/guardianship/reunification) at or after age 16 are eligible for ALL Chafee funding *EXCEPT* housing funds. Youth who leave for positive permanency must have been in foster care for a minimum of 6 months. They are also eligible for up to \$5,000.00 in ETV funding for post-secondary schooling (college).
- Youth who are in post-legal Adoption Preservation Placement (from age 13 until the 21st birthday) and are case managed by SCDSS are eligible for ALL Chafee funding *EXCEPT* housing funds *while they are in Adoption Preservation Placement*. They are also eligible for up to \$5,000.00 in ETV funding for post-secondary schooling (college) *while in placement*.

Additional notes for Criteria of Chafee and ETV Recipients:

- **Note: Requests for reimbursement must be received and approved by IL within 6 months of the service date AND**
For 13-15 year olds, before the foster care service line “closed” date
For 16-23 year olds, before the aftercare service line “closed” date (maintain aftercare service line for monitoring 6 months after leaving care and as long as funds are in county IL account). This includes cases with positive permanency and age of majority closure codes.
- **Youth with special needs** qualify for IL services that may not be listed in this booklet and are reviewed and approved on a case by case basis. Please submit IL Funding Requests (form 30198) for any needed services that will assist youth with special needs in gaining developmentally appropriate IL skills.
- Court Ordered Unlicensed Parent placement is not considered foster care and disqualifies the youth from receiving IL services regardless even if there is an open foster care line. Youth must have been in foster care placement (provider receiving DSS board payment) for at least 6 months prior and be 16 or older to still be legible for services.
- Youth who are undocumented must have Green Card to qualify for IL services.
- Youth are eligible to receive ETV up to age 23 if the youth started receiving ETV prior to the 21st birthday.
- Youth who are incarcerated are not eligible for Chafee or ETV funding or eligible to sign the Aftercare Agreement for Voluntary Placement for Young Adults 18-21 Years Old (DSS Form 30136) during the time they are incarcerated (includes DJJ youth behind the fence).
- Youth from South Carolina but currently residing in another state are eligible for services. The new/receiving state may ask for a breakdown of all Chafee funds approved for the youth in order not to duplicate the same service in that state.

Please see “Federal Guidelines: Resident Status and State Reasonability to Pay Chafee and ETV” in Appendix C.

- Youth who are ICPC (regardless of where they live, youth who are under the case management responsibility of South Carolina) are under normal eligibility for Chafee and ETV as a South Carolina resident. The new/receiving state may ask for a breakdown of all Chafee funds approved for the youth in order not to duplicate the same service in that state. Please see “Federal Guidelines: Resident Status and State Reasonability to Pay Chafee and ETV” in Appendix C.
- The link for IL contacts in all states is:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=145

Youth ages 18 and older

- All youth 18 and older who are in care must have both foster care line and aftercare lines open to receive IL funding.
- Those who age out of care and are not in placement must have aftercare lines for a minimum of 6 months or as long as the youth is receiving IL services.
- All youth 18 and older who are receiving IL services (including ETV and Housing Assistance) must have monthly documented contact with assigned case manager.
- Youth who have been in foster care in the past and currently need aftercare placement should apply at the DSS office of their county of residence for Aftercare placement. Youth are eligible if they are in school, working, or have a disabling condition. The county of the youth’s current residence should contact the county in which the youth was in foster care to verify the date the youth exited care and to gather information about any connections the youth may have had with adults in that county.
- **The county of current residence should serve the youth in assisting with application for aftercare IL services as necessary.**

How to Apply for Chafee Funding

Funding requests for Chafee Independent Living Funds are submitted to the Regional Independent Living Advocate on DSS Form 30198. Please include the required documentation for each item checked on page 2 of the form 30198 (see appendix A). Applications are sent to the Regional Independent Living Advocate designated for the county or regional office assigned to the case.

Applications will be reviewed as they are received on an ongoing basis. Case managers are contacted via email or telephone by the Regional Independent Living Advocates when more information is needed. Upon receipt of completed funding request with all necessary documentation, a decision regarding approval will be made and the county will be notified.

Applications can be faxed, emailed, or mailed. **All non-DSS requestors must mail or fax the request form** in order to protect youth's confidentiality; **only DSS staff may email the 30198 form**. If the application is faxed, it is not necessary to mail or email the request. Email requests to IndependentLiving@dss.sc.gov.

Checklist for submitting IL services

- Completed IL request DSS form 30198
- Updated Domain 8 of the child assessment
- Dictation for after care line youth (For youth age 18 and older)
- Updated Education Screen
- Supporting Documentation of each item requested

Please ensure COMPLETE funding requests are submitted. Incomplete requests lacking documentation will not be processed. Please provide any missing items in a timely manner before 30 days of request to avoid denial.

Available Funded Services

CHAFEE Services

Approvals are based on IL funds availability and may not cover entire expense.

Daily Living Skills

This includes programs which promote independence by teaching social skills.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Life skills classes (i.e. financial management, parenting, etc.)
- Mentoring Activity Services (Does not cover behavioral interventionists)- up to \$50 per month for a maximum of \$600 per year
- Non-school sponsored activities (such as karate classes) up to 6 months per year
- Participation in esteem-building activities such as ROTC, band, chorus, cheerleading, arts programs, or team sports or camps that are related to spiritual development up to 4 weeks for a max of \$600/yr.
- Camps that provide at least one of the NYTD categories up to 4 weeks for a max of \$600/yr. IL funds do not apply to summer programs for daycare or recreation-only purposes.
- Other community leadership/scholar programs that will provide youth with opportunities to develop academic goals, work force training and life skills, or diversity and cultural sensitivity skills.

Adult Education

This includes programs which help the youth to attain a high school degree or its equivalent. Youth may also receive funding assistance to complete supplemental coursework to achieve goals.

Examples of Adult Education items include, but are not limited to:

- GED Program- cost and materials
- Tutoring for GED- up to \$1000/year
- Study Skills training - \$200
- Alternative educational programs (i.e. Midlands Middle College)
- Non-ETV college coursework (i.e. courses that are not FAFSA eligible)
- Non-ETV vocational coursework (i.e. welding, cosmetology/barbering, CNA)

Education Support Services

Services and supplies needed to meet a youth's educational goals.

Examples Include:

- Tutoring – up to \$1000/year (progress reports required)
- Summer School for advance studies and/or academic credits
- Books and supplies for specialized classes such as lab fees, special calculators, uniforms for classes such as cosmetology, nursing, etc. and insurance for school-issued equipment
- Expenses for school sponsored educational field trips (itinerary required)
Senior trips that do not include educational components are not eligible
- Birth certificate necessary for school

- Senior Expenses:
One (1) Senior prom ticket
Senior Prom Night Package (max \$250) includes: prom attire, prom pictures, personal care services (does not include product purchase)
Senior fees, graduation invitations (max \$250), cap and gown (max \$150), year book, diploma plaque, high school senior ring or dog tag (max \$300) (college rings have a maximum of \$450 and can be paid with Chafee funds as long as the youth has not yet reached age 21). Senior pictures (max \$200)- Senior picture funds may be used for alternative pictures (Senior ROTC, Team sports, Graduation). For financial assistance, must provide copies of paid receipt.
- Personal Computer Bundle for all post-secondary students
- Personal Computer Only for 11th and 12th grade high school students are eligible for a computer if the school does not provide personal computers. Must provide documentation from the school that personal computers are not provided

IL funds are not approved to purchase iPads/tablets. All requests must provide documentation showing access to a computer will benefit youth's educational goals. Computer Request Form 30197 must be completed and attached to IL Request Form 30198.

Graduate Awards

- Recognition for high school graduates (diploma, certificate or GED) \$100
- Vocation or Technical School graduates- \$200
- College graduates -\$250

A recognition ceremony is held annually for all graduates. It is necessary to complete the graduate Invoice (DSS Form 30237) and mail or fax it to the Independent Living Advocate who serves your county or regional office.

Pre-College Expenses

- College applications (up to \$150)
- SAT/ACT preparation classes
- College Goal Sunday transportation (www.che.sc.gov)
- SAT/ACT fees (up to 3 of each test)

Note: These fees may be waived for foster youth by school counselors

Special Recognition

Funds for tuition, uniforms, or other items needed to recognize and develop special achievements or talents of youth. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Scholars Programs when selected or referred by school
- Attendance at youth conferences
- Honor/award travel expenses for youth to travel when being honored or awarded
- Assistance with Governor's School expenses up to \$500 per school year
- Conference presentation
- Academic Incentive - post-secondary students with at least a 3.0 GPA taking six or more credit hours are eligible for \$100 per semester (Max \$300/year)

Transportation

Transportation assistance is for post-secondary, vocational, or adult education and employment purposes only.

- Transportation to Adult Ed/GED
- Transportation to adult education, college or vocational school. Maximum of \$50/per week.
- Transportation to job skills training (does not include Vocational Rehabilitation). Maximum of \$50/per week.
- Transportation to work - \$10/day for a maximum of \$50/per week for 3 months (one-time assistance). Foster parents and providers may not receive transportation reimbursement due to contract specifics.
- Home Visits from college- Transportation assistance for college students to visit home two times each semester to maintain connections - \$75 per visit for a maximum of four visits per year. Distance must be more than 50 miles one way.

Transportation-related services are to assist youth in obtaining self-sufficiency. Examples include:

- Bicycles- for youth ages 13-15, up to \$150 and \$75 for a helmet and lock. For youth ages 16-21 up to \$250 and \$75 for a helmet and lock. Purchase of helmets is mandatory. Maximum of 2 bicycles per youth, mandatory 3 year wait before obtaining second bicycle. Youth must have IL goals related to transportation, employment, healthy living or social development.
- Driver's Education Course (for youth age 16 and older)
- State IDs, knowledge test, driver's manual, beginner's permit and driver's license fees

- Repairs and/or maintenance to a vehicle (MOPED does not qualify as a vehicle) which a youth owns and is needed for education and/or employment \$1,750/year (case worker must verify repairs). IL funds are only approved for repairs required for safe operation of the vehicle. Damages caused by accidents should be handled by insurance company. Title must be in youth's name. If youth is a co – signer then the title must read youth's name AND the other individual's name.
- Insurance assistance for when youth (ages 18 – 21) who own the vehicle (MOPED does not qualify as a vehicle) and need transportation to school or work - \$600/year. Renewal is based on a case by case basis. Insurance policy must have youth's name as insurer not as an additional driver. Please look for multiple quotes and make sure insurance rates are reasonable for youth to maintain.

Employment Services

This includes services needed to obtain or maintain employment.

Examples include:

- Certification courses for trades such as electronics, plumbing, first aid, life guard, etc.
- Child care for one month – Maximum of \$400, when the youth is not receiving ABC vouchers
- Job skill training classes that directly relate to the youth's goals
- Vocational equipment
- Birth certificate necessary for employment (for youth ages 15+)
- License/Certification fees
- Interview Clothing – Maximum of \$200 ages 15-17 or Maximum of \$300 ages 18 - 21
- Uniforms and footwear - \$250 (proof of employment required)

- Professional attire for work or school for youth age 18 until age 21 that do not have an open foster care line of services - \$400/year (proof of enrollment/employment required)

Housing and Transition Expenses

These expenses are related to youth establishing their own independent residence after becoming age 18 or for post-secondary students in need of assistance with interim housing. Youth who leave care to adoption, reunification, guardianship, kinship care and youth in post-legal adoption preservation placement are not eligible for housing and transition funds.

To qualify for assistance, youth must be employed and earning sufficient income to maintain the residence once Chafee housing assistance has ended.

Note: SSI recipients must be the payee of their SSI benefit in order to receive Chafee housing and transition assistance.

Note: Boarding arrangements for youth age 18 and 19 will not be approved for youth who are eligible to remain in voluntary aftercare placement or eligible to return to voluntary aftercare placement.

Housing/Transition expenses are discussed and planned at the youth's transition planning meeting. When making Housing/Transition funding requests, it is necessary to include a copy of the youth's Budget Analysis (DSS Form 30238), the youth's Transition Plan Meeting Form 30206 (formerly known as P.A.T.T.Y.), proof of employment for two (2) months, and Financial Literacy/Management course certificate (Please explore resources in your area such as banks, credit unions, college courses, SCWorks, etc.). Youth should be aware that this is a one-time award and thoughtfully consider readiness to utilize these funds. These funds are not intended for temporary residence or transitional residency.

Examples of Housing Assistance include the following:

- Phone deposit (Max \$150)
- Electric, gas, or water deposit (maximum of \$300)
- Furniture (Max \$2,500). If the youth is pregnant or has a child \$3,000 is available due to additional furniture needs. No rental/rent to own invoices.
- Rental Application fees (Max \$300)
- Rental Deposit
- Rental assistance for up to 6 months, paid as 3 months full and 3 de-escalating months. Financial Literacy Management course is required to receive rental assistance.

Interim Housing for College Students

Summer housing funds are available for youth who are no longer in foster care and in need of housing assistance for the summer. The South Carolina Chafee Independent Living program will pay \$450/month for a maximum of 3 months for summer housing for students. Housing assistance is also available based on board rate for December-January holidays if dormitories are closed. Interim housing funds could be applied to apartment style dormitory housing that remains open during holiday breaks (up to \$40/day) if the youth has no permanent connection or needs to maintain employment while in school.

Youth with Disabilities

A setup fee of \$400.00 or a household shower through the SC-FPA is available for youth transitioning from foster care to housing with the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs or Department of Mental Health.

Emergency Assistance

Time limited emergency assistance is available for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness while locating more stable housing arrangements. Must explore ALL alternative funding sources before contacting Independent Living.

Services NOT Included:

Personal hygiene products

Private mental health counseling

Baby-sitting or most child care expenses

Non-educational school-sponsored trips

Vacation travel

Clothing for use other than as described in this booklet

Medical, dental, vision and legal needs

Transportation other than described in this booklet

Purchase of a car

Food other than as described in this booklet

Entertainment expenses, appliances (i.e. TVs, microwaves, etc.)

Any services that can be funded through alternative sources
(i.e. school districts or placement agencies)

Memberships for organizations and/or clubs
(except high school academic honorary organizations)

Educational Opportunities

ETV Services

Educational and Training Vouchers are grants, funded by the federal government and administered by the states, awarded for youth with foster care experience pursuing a post-secondary education in an approved educational program.

Who is Eligible?

- Youth in the custody of the Department of Social Services with independent living as part of the case plan
- Youth who were in the custody of DSS at 18 years of age
- Youth who leave care to positive permanency (adoption/kinship/guardianship/ reunification) at or after age 16 are eligible for ALL Chafee funding EXCEPT housing funds. Youth who leave for positive permanency must have been in foster care for a minimum of 6 months.

Note:

- Youth are eligible for ETV funds as long as they are enrolled in college, making satisfactory progress, and have not reached the age of 23, even if they are not in care.
- Youth who turn age 21 without being enrolled in post-secondary education are no longer eligible for ETV after age 21.
- Youth are eligible until age 23 if they are enrolled in post-secondary education the semester prior to turning age 21.

The following (3) factors may be considered in determining eligibility:

- Acceptance to a technical school, college, university, or other program that meets the ETV criteria

- Students who demonstrate academic achievement or show a marked improvement in educational functioning
- The long term goal and plan for meeting that goal

ETV Awards

Youth may be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$5,000 per year as long as funds are available through the Education and Training Voucher Program. Youth who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, either on line or at their school, will have access to all state and federal based scholarships and grants for which they may be eligible. The awarding of ETV funds depends on the cost of the school and the amount of grants and scholarships the youth receives. The \$5,000 award is to be applied to all costs associated with the cost of attendance to a post-secondary school.

Youth should be encouraged to complete FAFSA forms as early as possible and to obtain copies of the financial aid print out and the school's billing statement and maximum financial aid award.

Youth should also be reminded to answer "yes" to the FAFSA question that at any time since age 13 they were a dependent or ward of the court. This ensures being granted an independent status for student aid.

Youth should research other scholarships and awards online, including the web site of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (www.che.sc.gov) and the scholarship funding information that is included on DSS Form 30198. If a youth does not use all of their ETV funds during the Fall/Spring semesters, the remaining amount can be used for summer school.

Approvals are based on IL funds availability and may not cover entire expense.

Services Available Through ETV funds

Approvals are based on IL funds availability and may not cover entire expense.

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- College and/or dorm deposits
- College placement tests
- Tuition and fees
- Books, supplies and uniforms
- Personal items
- Meal plans or meal cards
- Room and board on/off campus
- Parking fees
- Computer and required educational software
- Lab equipment
- School related travel (ages 21-23)
- Food allowance for commuting students
- Transportation for commuting students (ages 21-23)
- Child care for one month when youth is not receiving ABC vouchers (up to \$400 for ages 21-23)
- School medical plan for students (ages 21-23)

Note: Youth who are in foster care and eligible for Medicaid at age 18 remain eligible until age 26.

Note: Cost of attendance, including student loans for deposits, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, must be paid before any other services. Other services may be approved, but not available after cost of attendance is paid.

How to Apply for ETV Funding

Funding requests for Chafee Independent Living Funds are submitted to the Regional Independent Living Advocate on DSS Form 30198. Case managers should ensure that the youth signs the ETV funding request. Without the youth's signature, the request cannot be approved. Be sure to attach copies of the required documentation necessary to process the funding request (See Appendix A).

ETV requests for the fall semester should be submitted by June 30th of each year. Meeting this deadline will ensure that the funds will be in the county offices in time for the fall term. All college funds are approved for the entire academic year of the fall/spring semesters. If a youth plans to attend summer school, funding requests should be made at least two months before the beginning of the summer session.

It is very important that all the necessary information is submitted with the ETV funding request. The Regional Independent Living Advocate will contact the appropriate person when more information is needed; however, this delays the approval process.

Note: ETV funding requests must be submitted each academic year to ensure that the youth continues to receive educational assistance.

Partnership Resources

Listed below are a few DSS community partners and the programs available to foster youth. This is by no means a complete list. Please contact your Regional Independent Living Advocate for more information.

South Carolina Foster Parents Association

On the Road Again - provides donated cars to foster care youth who are at least 18 and not yet 21 years old, actively employed, pursuing a GED or engaged in a post-secondary educational program

Pack a SACK (Sponsor A College Kid!) - provides foster youth with needed items while they are away at college

Household and Dorm Showers - provide basic household items such as linens, dishes and kitchen items. Please complete DSS Form 30239.

Computer Bundles - provide a laptop computer bundle that includes a computer with a 1-year service agreement, software, printer, carry case, and other computer accessories. Please complete DSS Form 30197.

Urban League

Level Up offers employment and career-shadowing opportunities, youth-focused workshops, year-round mentoring and involvement in other Urban League youth initiatives.

Project Ready prepares youth for post-secondary success by integrating academic preparation for college along with life skills development, and a social, global, and cultural awareness. Students are expected to make academic progress, benefit from cultural enrichment opportunities, and be trained for school navigational and life skills development.

The Youth Leadership Development Institute offers free monthly workshops, paid summer internships, networking opportunities and positive social relationships for youth in care.

WIOA/One-Stop

WIOA can provide at no cost: financial assistance in obtaining HS diploma/GED, GED preparation, one-on-one assistance with a Youth Workforce Consultant, tutoring and study skills training, occupational skills training, resume and interview preparation, soft skills training, job referrals and placements

Vocational Rehabilitation

VR's youth services work to reduce the dropout rate of youth with disabilities and improve their participation in employment-related activities. These programs focus on building self-esteem, developing personal leadership skills, and preparing young adults with disabilities for life beyond high school. Please check <https://scvrd.net/youth-services/> for youth services.

USC/Center for Child and Family Studies

The Center's vision is to be the leading center for professional development and capacity building in collaboration with local, state, and national partners dedicated to improving the well-being of vulnerable adults, children, families, and communities.

GOALL (Go Out and Learn Life)

GOALL is an advisory group created to ensure that the voice of youths be heard when agencies are developing independent living programs. GOALL comprises up to 12 youths ages 16 and over who either are currently in foster care or have recently been left from care. GOALL meets regularly and make presentations at state-wide and national conferences.

Commission on Higher Education

College Goal Sunday is a volunteer program that provides free information and assistance to students and families who are applying for financial aid for postsecondary education. College Goal South Carolina is an opportunity for ALL students and parents/guardians to receive free financial aid assistance while completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You will also get advice from financial aid experts, receive scholarship information and learn about the college application process and your next steps.

The SC Need Based Grant for Foster Care Youth was created to provide additional financial aid to South Carolina's neediest students. Student are required to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Form and provide official verification to the institution that he/she is in current custody of DSS (either in DSS custody or Independent Living Program through DSS).

Clemson/Youth Learning Institute

The Sibling Connection camp is designed to allow siblings ages 10-17 who are not placed together to attend a fun and educational adventure. At least one sibling must be in foster care for the sibling group to attend. Youth engage in a variety of experiential, hands-on learning activities that relate to leadership, communication, job skills, advocacy, relationship building/trust, and planning. There are also activities like go-carts, climbing walls, teams course, canoeing, and archery.

The Leadership Retreat camp is exclusively for Chafee-eligible youth, ages 15-20. Youth engage in a variety of experiential, hands-on learning activities that relate to leadership, communication, job skills, advocacy, relationship building/trust, and planning. There are also activities like go-carts, climbing walls, teams course, canoeing, and archery.

Independent Living Youth Groups

The Independent Living County Youth Groups have five purposes: (1) Prepare youth in foster care to transition out of care successfully, (2) Provide basic personal and social skills, (3) Develop and promote positive youth development, (4) Provide workshops related to the 14 National Youth in Transition (NYTD) categories, and (5) Provide the opportunity for the youth's voice to be heard by DSS. Please contact IndependentLiving@DSS.SC.gov for a list of youth groups throughout the state.

APPENDIX A

Additional Paperwork Needed to Apply

NOTE: These are requirements for funding requests to the state office. Counties may require receipts for items even though state office may not require receipts.

CHAFEE IL FUNDING

Daily Living Skills requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Mentoring – Provide Mentor Form DSS 30235 and a copy of the SLED background check summary, sex offender registry check and the abuse and neglect central registry check for the mentor. Mentors are paid on a monthly basis by invoice.

Adult Education requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line). This section includes vocational schools and career certificate programs at school without a federal school code (see fafsa.ed.gov).

Education Support Services and Supplies requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Tutoring - Tutoring Request and Progress Report (DSS Form 30236), copy of the SLED background check summary, sex offender registry and the abuse and neglect central registry check. Tutors are paid on a monthly basis by invoice after progress reports are submitted to case manager.
2. Educational field trips - provide itinerary.
3. Personal Computer - 11th and 12th grade high school students will need to provide an attendance record for the current semester. Documentation from the school stating personal computers are not provided. Post-secondary students will need to provide an acceptance letter and proof of enrollment (i.e. schedule, financial aid award). Completed computer bundle request form DSS 30197 will need to accompany IL request.

Senior Items requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Graduation packages - announcements/invitations must be included in the package and itemized pricelist
2. Prom Package- attire, personal care, senior prom pictures – receipt/invoices.
3. Prom Ticket - copy of ticket or flyer with cost stated.

Pre-College Expenses requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels, documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line) and a printout showing cost and vendor used or receipt.

1. Transportation to College Goal Sunday - starting point, college name and round trip mileage.

Graduate Award requests

1. Caseworker needs to verify graduation status before requesting and submit the Graduate Invoice (DSS Form 30237).
2. CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

Special Recognition requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Itinerary and out-of-state travel form (DSS Form 1103) if travelling out of SC.
2. Awards/Honors - recommendation letter from agency honoring/sponsoring youth.
3. Academic Incentive Award - need unofficial transcript for the semester requested. Limit of 3 semesters per year.

Transportation requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Car Repairs - preprinted invoice/estimate or receipt in youth's name AND one of the following in the youth's name: car title in youth's name OR vehicle registration and insurance card together. Repairs must be completed by or under the supervision of an ASE certified mechanic.
2. Bicycle - documentation showing youth is working or in school and receipt/invoice. Youth 13-15 must have IL goals related to healthy living and/or social development.
3. Transportation to adult education/post-secondary school - documentation showing youth is in school.
 - a. Per Audit Division...Please note 4 weeks may be paid in advance as long as the youth is attending class. The number of weeks for reimbursements is limited only by the approved amount and the student's attendance. Provide MapQuest/Google Maps for mileage reimbursement.
 - b. Foster Parents (includes Regular and Therapeutic) and Group Home Providers will not receive transportation reimbursement due to contract specifics.
4. Transportation to work - documentation showing youth is working.
 - a. Per Audit Division...Please note 4 weeks may be paid in advance as long as the youth is employed. The number of weeks for reimbursements is limited only by the approved amount and the student's paystub or employment work schedule. Provide MapQuest/Google Maps for mileage reimbursement.
 - b. Foster Parents (includes Regular and Therapeutic) and Group Home Providers will not receive transportation reimbursement due to contract specifics.
5. Car Insurance - vehicle title OR Vehicle registration AND one of the following in the youth's name: bill /estimate for car insurance OR receipt from insurance company.
6. Driver's manual/license/permit fees - fee schedule printout from DMV or receipt.

Employment Services requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Interview clothing - youth must be actively seeking employment and this must be annotated on IL funding request (DSS Form 30198), receipt for reimbursement OR estimate/invoice from store.
2. Work Clothing - indicate employer and type of work (i.e. Shift Manager for McDonald's) on IL funding request (DSS Form 30198), receipt for reimbursement OR estimate/invoice from store.
3. Professional Attire - provide proof of full time school enrollment or indicate employer and type of work (i.e. Shift Manager for McDonald's) on IL funding request (DSS Form 30198), receipt for reimbursement OR estimate/invoice from store.
4. Child care - case worker must verify that youth is not receiving ABC vouchers and this must be annotated on the IL funding request (DSS Form 30198) AND indicate employer and type of work.

Housing and Transition Expenses requests

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested (i.e. lease agreement, apartment flyer or information from online website, utility deposits, quote, invoice, wish list printout), CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line). An aftercare service line must be opened before requested services will be reviewed by state office IL Program staff.

1. Caseworker must arrange a TRANSITIONAL PLANNING MEETING to include all significant supports for the youth (i.e. supportive family, etc.). Complete and sign the Transition Plan Meeting (DSS Form 30206) at this planning meeting. This form must accompany ALL housing and transition requests.
2. IL Budget Analysis (DSS Form 30238) - meet with youth to discuss the planned monthly budget and how rental costs/living costs will be covered once IL funds are depleted. Budget Analysis form must accompany ALL housing and transition requests. Must provide proof of employment for at least 2 months.
3. Must provide certificate for the completion of certified financial management course.
4. Requests for boarding type arrangements:
 - A. Boarding arrangement requests must be staffed between requesting office and state office IL Program staff. Boarding will not be considered for youth who are eligible to remain or return to voluntary aftercare placement
 - B. Caseworker must conduct a face to face meeting at the boarding facility to assess the safety and appropriateness of the facility and a note verifying the meeting took place must be added to the funding request
 - C. Monthly visits are required for boarding youth until the end of the rental period for which housing and transition funds were used
 - D. The operator of an unlicensed boarding facility must pay for and provide an FBI background check to accompany the funding request
5. Furniture - invoice, receipt, or printout from vendor
6. If youth is entering an apartment with a roommate(s), youth will only receive a portion of the rental expenses. Youth will only receive full utility reimbursement if receipt shows service is only in the youth's name.
7. No pricing documentation is required for Supervised Independent Living setup fees or for youth with DDSN/DMH set up fees

ETV FUNDING

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) FUNDING- \$5,000 maximum per year for post-secondary schooling only, NOT for high school or vocational schools without a federal school code (see www.fafsa.ed.gov)

For all requests - documentation showing the itemized pricing of items requested, CAPSS education screen showing current educational levels and documentation of IL goals (domain 8 of the child assessment or dictation for youth with an open aftercare line).

1. Acceptance letter - for all freshmen students or first time ETV requests
2. Financial Aid Award letter (or documentation from the school showing the amounts of financial aid awarded per year)
3. Documentation from the school (or its website) showing the total annual cost of attendance
4. Lease agreement if the student is out of care, living off campus and would like for rent to be considered for room & board payments out of ETV funding

Appendix B

GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING COUNTY CHECKS

Write check vouchers out to the vendor for direct payments (those that are not reimbursements or items below). The following are the only payments that should be issued directly to a youth.

1. Reimbursement to youth- Case managers should submit the following:
 - A. Check Voucher written to the youth
 - B. Approval letter
 - C. Original, pre-printed receipt (no hand-written or book receipts that can be purchased from an office supply store)
2. Transportation to college or work- Case managers should submit the following:
 - A. Check vouchers written to the youth with **specific weeks identified** and for **no more than 1 month** at once- **NOT** as a lump sum unless it is for a time period before the check voucher is issued.
 - B. Approval letter
 - C. Work/school schedule on company letterhead or other official documentation such as student academic schedule/enrollment printout to show the class schedule or work schedule/pay stub
 - D. Email or written note from case manager stating that the youth is attending work/school
 - E. MapQuest from home to work/school to justify that walking is not safe or it's not reasonable)
3. Commuter Meals- Case managers should submit the following:
 - A. Check vouchers written to the youth with **specific weeks identified** and for **no more than 1 month** at once- **NOT** as a lump sum unless it is for a time period before the check voucher is issued.
 - B. Approval letter
 - C. School schedule on school letterhead or other official documentation such as student academic schedule/enrollment printout to show the class schedule
 - D. Email or written note from case manager stating that the youth is attending school and that cost of college attendance (including deposits, tuition, fees, books, room & board) are paid before request for commuter meal funds is made
4. Personal Items- Case managers should submit the following:
 - A. Check vouchers written to the youth with **specific semester identified- NOT** as a lump sum unless it is for a time period before the check voucher is issued.
 - B. Approval letter
 - C. School schedule on school letterhead or other official documentation such as student academic schedule/enrollment printout to show the class schedule or work schedule/pay stub
 - D. Email or written note from case manager stating that the youth is attending school and that cost of college attendance (including deposits, tuition, fees, books, room & board) are paid before request for personal item funds is made
5. Academic Incentives- Case managers should submit the following:
 - A. Check vouchers written to the youth with **specific semester identified**
 - B. Approval letter
 - C. School semester grades printout that includes the student's GPA on school letterhead or other official documentation such as student academic account printout

6. Graduate Awards are typically mailed directly to the youth, but sometimes the case manager will ask that it be mailed to the county. This money is not to be deposited into the county account, but held in the Business Office safe and given or mailed directly to the youth.

If Graduate Award funds must be deposited into the county account for some reason and reissued to the youth, the case manager should submit the following:

- A. Check vouchers written to the youth with **specific achievement identified** (i.e. high school diploma, GED, certificate of completion, Bachelors, etc.)
- B. Approval letter

Documentation to assist County Business Offices in issuing checks to REIMBURSE someone with Independent Living Funds:

Issuing checks requires **clear supporting documentation**. Please help ease the process by providing three important pieces along with any other requirements by the county Business Office.

1. Check Voucher Request
2. Approval letter corresponding to the service provided to the youth
3. Receipts, letter or account printout from vendor showing proof of payment received. *On the receipt, letter or printout, **highlight important information** such as the youth's name, amount to be paid, and who paid for the service so it is clear to the county Business Office.*

*Sometimes the person who prepaid for a service is not clearly annotated on the receipt or documentation and there is a question as to who should be reimbursed (i.e. an 18+ youth or a third party). If this is the case, since funds are actually approved for services to the youth, it is not required, but strongly suggested that a letter signed by 18+ youth be on file when there is a discrepancy. This letter is not for youth under age 18.

This dated letter should include a statement with critical information for recordkeeping such as "I, YOUTH FULL NAME, acknowledge that THIRD PARTY FULL NAME provided my transportation to work from November 28, 2015 through October 2, 2015. I also give DSS permission to reimbursement him/her with Independent Living funds approved for this purpose" Or "I, YOUTH FULL NAME, acknowledge that THIRD PARTY FULL NAME purchased my graduation invitations for \$212.43 from Balfour on 12/07/15. Although the receipt from the school shows my name as the payer, I give DSS permission to reimbursement Mr./Ms. _____ with Independent Living funds approved for this purpose".

To assist the county Business Office in expediting payments, please ensure that all supporting documents (listed in #3 above) match the check voucher request so there are no discrepancies about who should be reimbursed.

I Have an Approval Letter- Now What?



Schedule an MS Outlook calendar reminder two weeks from approval email date to “submit a Check Voucher Request to Business Office”

Day of the MS Outlook Calendar REMINDER, submit a **Check Voucher Request** to the county Business Office. To expedite payment for services, please ensure that the **Approval Letter, Time Frame, Proof of Enrollment/Employment, Justification** and **Clear Supporting Documents** match so there are no discrepancies or delays in payment.

- A. Approval Letter and clear supporting documentation listed in the Appendix of this booklet.
- B. **DIRECT payments to vendor-** Provide invoices, estimates with taxes included, rental agreement, etc.
- C. **REIMBURSEMENT payments to youth or third parties-** Provide proof of payment. Receipts, letter or account printout from vendor showing proof of payment received from individual requesting reimbursement. Documentation must show the full cost of items as well as proof that the youth received services (i.e. driver’s license as proof the license fee was paid, GED certificate as proof of attendance and payment of testing fees, etc.). Highlight important information such as the youth’s name, amount paid, and who paid for the service so it is clear to the county Business Office.

Note: IL funds are approved for services to the youth. It is not required, but strongly suggested, that a letter signed by 18+ young adults be on file when a third party is reimbursed for payment for services delivered to young adults.

- D. **DIRECT payments to youth-** (Must show dates)
 - a. Transportation to college or work
 - b. Commuter Meals (post-secondary only)
 - c. Personal Items
 - d. Graduate Awards are typically mailed directly to the youth. If the case manager has the check delivered to a county office, the check should be held in the Business Office safe and hand-delivered to or mailed directly to the youth.
 - e. Academic Incentives- School semester grades printout that includes the student’s GPA on school letterhead or other official documentation such as student academic account printout.

Time frame- Include **specific dates** on the Check Voucher Request for **no more than 4 weeks** transportation/meals at once- **NOT** as a lump sum unless it is for a time period before the check voucher is issued.

Proof of enrollment/employment- Work/school schedule on company letterhead or other official documentation (student academic schedule/enrollment printout to show the class schedule or work schedule/pay stub). Email or written note from case manager stating that the youth is attending work/school and for meals, that cost of college attendance (including deposits, tuition, fees, books, room & board) are paid before request for commuter meal funds is made

Justification for transportation (distance/safety)- MapQuest from home to work/school to justify that walking is not safe or it’s not reasonable to walk)

Appendix C

Federal Guidelines: Residency Status and State Responsibility to Pay Chafee and ETV

Foster Care Status	Residency	Chafee	ETV
In Foster Care Licensed Placement in SC	SC (even if attending college in any state while maintaining SC residency)	SC pays Chafee	SC pays ETV
(ICPC) In Foster Care Licensed Placement in Another State	SC (even if attending college in any state while maintain SC residency)	SC pays Chafee	SC pays ETV
(ICPC) In Foster Care Licensed Placement in SC	Other (even if attending college in SC while maintaining residency in another state)	State of custody pays Chafee	State of custody pays ETV
Aged Out in SC (includes Aftercare Placement)	SC (even if attending college in any state while maintaining SC residency)	SC pays Chafee	SC pays ETV
Aged Out in Another State	SC (even if attending college in any state while maintaining SC residency)	SC pays Chafee	SC pays ETV
Aged Out in SC	Other (even if attending college in SC while maintaining residency in another state)	State of residency pays Chafee	State of residency pays ETV
Left Foster Care to Positive Permanency in SC at or after age 16	SC (even if attending college in any state while maintaining SC residency)	SC pays Chafee	SC pays ETV
Left Foster Care to Positive Permanency in Another State at or after age 16	SC	No federal guideline. State IL Programs will coordinate (case by case basis)	No federal guideline. State IL Programs will coordinate (case by case basis)
Positive Permanency in SC at or after age 16	Other	No federal guideline. State IL Programs will coordinate (case by case basis)	No federal guideline. State IL Programs will coordinate (case by case basis)

Note: Each state offers Chafee and ETV services; however services offered are different in each state