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**LEGAL AND  
RELATED  
REFERENCES**

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 670 et seq.; the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-66); Foster Care Independence Act, 2008 PA 215, (MCL 722.981 et seq.).

The Youth In Transition (YIT) Program was initially authorized by P.L. 99-272, through the addition of section 477 to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act). The federal designation for this program is the Independent Living program (IL). Since that time, amendments have been made to the act to increase the amount of funding, expand the population eligible for services, and to ensure that states' Independent Living Programs (ILP) are integrated into the requirements for state child welfare services programs. This has provided more funding and greater flexibility for designing programs to help youth make the transition from foster care to independence (the ability to take care of oneself physically, socially, economically and psychologically).

**GOAL OF THE  
INDEPENDENT  
LIVING PROGRAM  
(ILP)**

A priority of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is to improve the success of foster youth transitioning into adulthood from the state's foster care system. The goal is to help a youth make the transition from foster care to independence, defined as the ability to take care of oneself physically, socially, economically and psychologically.

Federal law mandates that state and local governments offer an extensive program of education, training, employment and financial support for a young person leaving foster care. Participation in such programs must begin several years before high school completion and continue, as needed, until the youth is discharged from foster care, establishes independence or reaches 21 years of age.

**Independent Living  
Preparation**

Independent Living (IL) is an ongoing process of maturation, skill development and assuming responsibility for self. IL services should provide practical experiences that are designed to assist

youth in developing the skills needed for a successful transition to adulthood.

All preparation must include the following elements; see FOM 722-03C, Older Youth: Preparation, Placement, and Discharge.

- A youth must actively participate in designing the program activities and accept responsibility for the successful completion of the plan.
- The plan must be based on the youth's age and the assessment of needs and abilities. Plans should be flexible to allow each youth to proceed toward the goals at his/her own pace.

The provision of IL services should involve an integrated team approach focusing on the youth. Semi-annual transition meetings are required to begin at age 14 and must include the youth and all persons the youth identifies as supportive. This could include parents, foster parents, relatives, foster care workers, and/or community members. This meeting must include a discussion about goals and action steps that will assist a youth in all areas of learning how to move toward adulthood. See FOM 722-06B, Family Team Meeting. Efforts to provide services should be based on this individualized plan of services that are coordinated within this group.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Federal law defines eligible children as those who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and children aging out of foster care; see definition of Foster Care, FOM 721.

### Eligibility

A YIT eligibility determination must be completed in MiSACWIS prior to any funding being approved. When a youth's eligibility changes, a new determination must be completed. (For example, a case goes from open to closed or from an ineligible placement to an eligible placement.)

### Age

A youth who has been placed in a MDHHS supervised foster care placement after his/her 14th birthday, and meets all other criteria, is eligible for YIT until his/her 21st birthday.

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## Abuse and Neglect

A youth who has been in an eligible foster care or juvenile justice placement through the MDHHS, is eligible for YIT-funded services. Eligible placements include:

- Licensed foster family homes.
- Relative provider homes.
- Group homes.
- Emergency shelters.
- Child caring institutions.
- Independent living and semi-independent living placements.

A child caring institution must be licensed or approved by the state and may **not** include:

- Any public or private secure placement facility.
- A public child caring institution for more than 25 children.
- Detention facilities, forestry camps, training schools, or other facilities operated primarily for the detention of children determined to be delinquent.
- Jail.

YIT-funded services are not available while the youth is in one of the ineligible placements. A youth placed in an ineligible facility may be eligible for YIT funding if released to a foster family home or other eligible foster care placement.

## Parental Home

A youth who has reunified with a parent is YIT eligible if he/she was in a MDHHS supervised eligible placement at some point after his/her 14th birthday and meet all other criteria for eligibility.

## Juvenile Justice

A youth who has or had an open juvenile justice case and is placed in an eligible placement under the supervision of MDHHS is eligible for YIT-funded services. This may include a youth who has never had an open abuse/neglect case, or a youth committed to MDHHS and supervised under contract by a Community Management Organization (CMO).

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A youth in a secure setting or incarcerated is not eligible while in those placements.

**AWOLP/  
Runaway**

If a youth is Absent Without Legal Permission (AWOLP)/runaway but returns to an eligible living arrangement before his/her 21st birthday, the youth is eligible to receive YIT funds, provided he/she meets all other eligibility criteria.

**Immigrant Youth  
Not Documented**

A youth who is in the custody of the State of Michigan and supervised by MDHHS is eligible, whether or not he/she is a citizen or legal resident of the United States.

**Tribal Youth**

A youth placed and supervised by a tribal child welfare court may be eligible for YIT funds provided he/she meets all other eligibility requirements.

**Married youth**

A married youth may be eligible for YIT funds provided he/she meets all other eligibility requirements.

**Incarcerated Youth**

An incarcerated youth is not eligible to receive YIT funds. When a youth is no longer incarcerated he/she may receive YIT funds if he/she meets all other eligibility criteria.

**CLOSED CASE  
ELIGIBILITY**

A youth whose case is closed, and met all the eligibility criteria for YIT during the time he/she was under MDHHS supervision, is eligible for YIT if currently between the ages of 18 and 21.

In some cases a youth whose case is closed and who fits the above criteria but is a 16- or 17-year-old may be eligible. Exceptions for 16- and 17-year-olds may be made if all of the following criteria are met:

- The youth met the eligibility criteria for YIT while his/her case was open.
- Prior to the return home, adoption or juvenile guardianship, the youth was expected to remain in a foster care placement until adulthood.
- A YIT-funded item or service was accessed prior to the case closing.
- Requested YIT services will support the youth through the stages of transition.
- Requested YIT funds will be used to gain access to goods and services designed to assist the youth to:
  - Successfully prepare for, achieve and maintain an independent living situation;
  - Prepare the youth for functional independence; or
  - Ensure the youth's physical, social, economic, and psychological needs are met; see FOM 722-03C, Older Youth: Preparation, Placement, and Discharge.
- Prior to YIT funding approval for a youth with a closed case, an assessment of need must be completed. This is documented within the DHS-5305, Request for Youth In Transition Funds Checklist. The YIT fund source cannot be used to pay for any aftercare services during the time that aftercare services are mandated by contract for youth leaving Placement Agency Foster Care (PAFC).

## Residency

**Open Case:** If a youth is placed in another state, the state of origin must fund the identified independent living services for that youth while the case is open. The originating state is also responsible for foster care maintenance payments and case planning, which includes a written description of the programs and services that will be provided to help a child age 14 or over prepare for the transition from foster care to independence.

If a youth with an open case moves to a new county from his/her county of origin, the county of origin must cover YIT expenses.

**Closed Case:** A youth 18- to 21-years-old who has a closed foster care or juvenile justice case but was eligible for YIT-funded services while the case was open is eligible for YIT funding in a new state or county to which he/she moves. The county or state in which the youth currently resides is responsible for providing closed case YIT services regardless of the county or state in which the foster care or juvenile justice case was open.

If a youth with a closed case is age 16 to 17 and found eligible for YIT funding, he/she must be served in the county or state in which he/she resides.

### **PLACEMENT AGENCY FOSTER CARE (PAFC)**

If a youth is placed through a PAFC provider, YIT funds will not be authorized until it is verified that the service is not covered by the contractual agreement. A PAFC provider is required to provide daily living/IL skills training.

A PAFC provider must provide follow-up IL services for youth after case closure.

### **APPROVED EXPENSES**

YIT funds may be used to provide services that are not available from other funding sources or agencies for an eligible youth. All expenditures must support the youth in achieving self-sufficiency. This must be documented in the youth's service plan. YIT funds may be used to provide the following goods and services after all other resources for the same goods or service have been exhausted:

- Education.
  - High school education support, services and supplies.
    - Tutoring.
    - Summer school to retake a class or to accelerate studies.
    - Books and supplies for classes such as lab fees, calculators, and uniforms.

- Expenses for school-sponsored **educational** field trips.
- Fees/expenses related to extra-curricular activities such as clubs, athletics, theater, or music.
- Senior expenses: senior pictures, class ring, senior fees, graduation invitations, cap and gown, yearbook and diploma plaque. (Some senior expenses are reimbursable by case services. YIT can pay the balance on these items, except for prom expenses.)
- Prom dress or prom tuxedo rental for **senior** prom up to \$100 for youth who are not eligible to use case services.
- Pre-college expenses.
  - College applications - up to a total of \$150.
  - SAT/ACT fees - up to three of each test.
  - SAT/ACT preparation classes.
  - Dormitory holding fees/deposit prior to being ETV eligible.
- Adult education.
  - GED program and test.
  - Tutoring for GED.
  - Study skill training.
  - Alternative education programs.
  - Non-Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funded college coursework.
  - Non-ETV funded vocational coursework.

**Note:** YIT funding is not to be used for post-secondary education expenses for students who are receiving ETV funding or attending an ETV eligible institution and are otherwise eligible for ETV funding. For example, a youth who is attending a university and loses temporary eligibility for ETV due to low grades, is not eligible

to receive YIT for tuition payment. See FOM 960, Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program, for post-secondary financial assistance.

- Computer/Tablet – a maximum lifetime limit of \$1,500 will be allowed for the purchase of a computer or tablet, and related accessories (accompanying software, printer, carrying case, etc.) **A youth receiving ETV funding, or who is otherwise eligible for ETV, is not allowed to use YIT funding for post-secondary computer needs.**
- Vocational/employment services.
  - Certification courses such as electronic, plumbing, first aid, life guard, etc.
  - Interview clothing - a maximum of \$250.
  - Uniforms and footwear.
  - Job skill training classes that relate directly to the youth's goal.
  - Vocational equipment such as tool set, or cosmetology kit.
  - License/certification fees.
- Independent Living Training - Cooking, laundry, accessing community resources, learning how to use public transportation and financial management.
- Mentoring and Family Connection.
  - Connecting a youth to a mentor and mentoring program.
  - Family connection services not covered by family reunification services funding.
- Housing.
  - Assistance in locating a suitable living arrangement; see FOM 722-03C, Independent Living Placement.
  - **Youth must have been in care at the age of 18.**
  - May only be provided to youth, **ages 18 - 21**. First month's rent, damage deposit, and utility deposit.

- **There is a lifetime limit of \$1,500 for first month's rent and security deposit.** Prior to providing assistance, the caseworker must verify the suitability of the living arrangement and the youth's ability to maintain the residence (for example, ability to make future rent payments) and document this information in the updated service plan (USP), permanent ward service plan (PWSP) or an addendum report.
- YIT funds may not be used to fund existing programs or a youth's ongoing room and board expenses.
- YIT fund may not be used to acquire real property, including houses, trailers or land.
- Start-Up Goods
  - Furniture, cleaning, hygiene, and household goods.
  - There is a lifetime limit of \$1,000 for start-up goods.
  - If a youth is a parent or expecting a baby, there is an additional \$500 allowed for start-up goods, to be used specifically for items needed for the baby. Examples include car seats, cribs, strollers, etc.
  - When a father requests funds for start-up goods for his child, verification of legal parentage must be provided. Acceptable forms of documentation include affidavit of parentage, child support order, birth certificate with the father's name identified, or a court order naming the youth as the legal father.

**Note:** No more than 30 percent of the state's YIT allocation may be spent on housing, including first month's rent/deposits and start-up goods.

- Medical and Health Needs.
  - Prenatal appointments and tests not covered by Medicaid or other health insurance.
  - Preventive health care (pregnancy, smoking avoidance, substance abuse, hygiene, and nutrition).

- Mental Health.
  - Individual and/or group counseling **for youth with a closed case only**. Health insurance must be accessed prior to utilizing YIT.
  - Interpersonal/communication or relationship-building classes.
- Parenting.
  - Classes, trainings, etc.
  - Childcare, if not covered by MDHHS Child Daycare assistance.
- Money Management - Trainings for budgeting, banking, credit cards, etc.
- Fees for memberships such as sports, community organizations, associations.
- Transportation.
  - Transportation for educational or employment purposes.
  - Bus card.
  - Medical, including counseling transportation (closed case services only).
  - Driver's training courses and testing. Vehicle purchase if county allocation allows it and it does not prevent other youth from being served.
    - There is a \$5,000 authorization limit to purchase, not lease, a vehicle. A DHS-720, YIT Exception, must be completed and signed by the county director or designee when the purchase is over the general \$600 limit.
    - The vehicle must be used as a primary means of transportation to support the youth's employment, education, or independent living goals.

- The youth must have a valid driver's license and valid automobile insurance or an estimate for automobile insurance.
- The youth must demonstrate the ability to maintain any payments, insurance or other expenses associated with owning a vehicle.
- A vehicle inspection by a licensed mechanic is required that supports the purchase price.
- Prior approval is required by the caseworker supervisor.
- Vehicle Insurance.
  - There is a lifetime limit of a 6-month payment for vehicle insurance.
  - The youth must provide three estimates for comparison.
  - Payment for vehicle insurance is only available for a vehicle with a title in the youth's name.
- Vehicle repair.
  - Prior approval of the cost of repairs as estimated by a certified mechanic is required unless an emergency occurs outside regular MDHHS work hours.
  - The vehicle must be registered in the youth's name, or there must be sufficient documentation that the vehicle is the primary transportation used by the youth for work, school, or independent living activities.
  - The cost of repairs may not exceed \$900, and if over \$600 a DHS-720, YIT Exception, must be completed and signed by the county director or designee.
  - There is a lifetime limit of \$900 for vehicle repairs.

- Gas cards or reimbursement for gas when used for a documented transportation need to employment, education or other activity related to self-sufficiency.
- Aftercare.
  - Follow-up services after the case is closed and after mandated aftercare services for a youth in PAFC care are completed. Services may include regular contact by phone or face-to-face with the youth to ensure progress toward living independently.
  - Includes peer support groups and participation in various other organizations for support.

**Note:** Peer support groups must not have fewer than four youth per group.

- Coalition Building.
  - Funds to plan for local programming of transitional/independent living services to youth.
  - Funds to coordinate an existing program.
  - Funding is limited to payments for coffee and meals at state rates within the current guidelines.
  - Expenses for youth groups or peer support groups related to independent living.
  - Reimbursable for a youth in non-PAFC placement only.
  - Workbooks are the only allowable expense for a youth in a contracted placement. Examples include: supplies, workbooks, refreshments and guest speakers.

**Note:** Peer support groups must not have fewer than four youth per group.

- Development and piloting of new initiatives with prior written approval of the central office IL service YIT Analyst.

**Items not covered by YIT funds:**

- Entertainment appliances or expenses; televisions, video games, stereos, concert tickets.

- School trips that are not associated with education (for example, spring break trip).
- Special recognition gifts unless the gift is an allowable expenditure that helps the youth meet his or her goals.
- Vacation travel.
- Pageants and fashion shows.
- Graduation parties or gifts.
- Birthday party, wedding expenses, or baby shower expenses.
- Court costs, probation fines and costs, parking/traffic tickets.
- Matching funds for AmeriCorps members.
- Services that can be funded through alternative sources such as school districts or PAFC's.

### **Sales Tax**

Sales tax is not to be paid on purchases made by MDHHS on behalf of a youth. However, youth who have paid sales tax for YIT eligible purchases can be reimbursed for sales tax included in the total.

### **Bulk Purchases**

Local offices may purchase items in bulk such as bus passes/tokens, and gas cards. All expenditures of YIT must be tied to an individual youth. If a local office chooses to buy items in bulk, the following rules apply:

- The item must be able to assist the youth in meeting the goal of self-sufficiency.
- The purchase should be made based upon the prior year's expenditures on similar items.
- Documentation must exist that comparative research on similar products was completed supporting the particular bulk purchase.
- The county must follow ACM 423, Bulk Purchases.

- In addition to following ACM 423, a YIT request must be completed for each item distributed from a bulk supply.

### Gifts and Gift Cards

While it is important to recognize a youth's birthday or special achievement, YIT funds cannot be used to purchase a gift, unless the gift is a YIT-approved item that can be linked to a specific goal for the youth.

YIT may be used to purchase gift cards when found appropriate (for example, a gas card to assist a youth with attending a meeting.) When an individual gift card is redeemed for a particular youth, the receipt itemizing the purchase made with the gift card must be uploaded into MiSACWIS and YIT request must be completed. Gift cards should be purchased in denominations of \$25 or less. All gift cards must be redeemed within the fiscal year purchased. Local county offices must monitor how many gift cards are purchased and how many have been utilized.

### ACCESSING YIT FUNDS

Local offices may access YIT funds only for reimbursable goods and services listed above. YIT funds must **not** be used for goods and services normally covered under the foster care rate or reimbursed by foster care. Reimbursable goods and services are those goods and services **not** covered under the age-appropriate rate for foster care (scheduled uniform rate), determination of care supplements for foster care, or special needs items covered by non-scheduled payments.

- Open Case: A youth will access YIT funds through the assigned foster care worker or juvenile justice specialist.
- Closed Case: A youth will access YIT funds through the last assigned foster care worker or juvenile justice specialist or local MDHHS office in the county where the youth currently resides.

All YIT funding requests must include documentation that other funding sources were researched and were not available.

YIT requests are done in MiSACWIS for open cases. For a youth with a closed case, a paper form of the DHS-4713 must be completed and uploaded into MiSACWIS.

The DHS-5305, Request for Youth In Transition Funds Checklist, is required to be completed for every YIT request processed at the county level. Once approval for the expenditure is obtained at the local level, the DHS-5305 must be placed in the financial section of the case file and uploaded to the Service Authorization section of MiSACWIS.

### **Reimbursement without prior approval**

All YIT expenditures require prior MDHHS supervisory (or higher) approval. However, in the event a youth submits a reimbursement request for a YIT eligible expense without documentation of prior approval, a DHS-720, Youth in Transition Exception Request Form, can be completed and sent to the YIT Analyst in the Education and Youth Services Unit. Exception requests must be sent within 12 months of the purchase, must include all supporting documentation, and are subject to availability of funds.

### **Reasonable Availability**

Local offices must not expend YIT funds on goods and services that are available from other (state/federal) sources. However, these goods and services must be reasonably available. Contact the YIT Analyst for assistance whenever a question regarding reasonableness arises (a youth being placed on a six-month waiting list, depending on the service and the youth's needs, may not be reasonable).

### **Lifetime Limit**

There is no set lifetime limit for each youth, except in the case of start-up goods, first month's rent/security deposit, vehicle purchase/insurance/repair, and computer. However, discretion should be used in disbursing funds to ensure that every eligible youth is provided appropriate services.

### **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)**

Monitoring of services and funding, required as part of the application for and use of YIT, occurs through MiSACWIS. The

NYTD/YIT Eligibility tab within a youth's case captures the following:

- The number and characteristics of young people receiving services.
- The type and quantity of services being provided.

Outcomes are measured by cohorts of youth who take the National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD) survey bi-annually through age 21. The survey shows outcomes of educational attainment, employment, avoidance of dependency, homelessness, non-marital childbirth, incarceration and high-risk behaviors.

YIT request are done within MiSACWIS for open cases. For closed cased foster youth, a paper form of the DHS-4713 must be completed and uploaded into MiSACWIS.

## YOUTH SERVICE PLANS

For an eligible youth who is currently in care, the case service plan must identify goals and methods for achieving them in the following life skills areas:

- Education, including obtaining a high school diploma or GED, and post-secondary and vocational education.
- Employment, including job placement and retention training.
- Interactions with dedicated adults in approved mentoring relationships.
- Relationship skills.
- Life skills, including preventive health care, substance abuse prevention, sexual responsibility, sexual assault, dating violence, and responsible parenting.
- Housing.

Young people must be active participants in designing their own program activities and accepting responsibility for the successful completion of the plan; see FOM 722-08C, Parent-Agency Treatment Plan and Service Agreement.

Anytime a youth uses YIT funding, the need for that specific item or service must be documented on the DHS-5305 form. Additionally, when completing the service plan, all independent living services and supports that were provided during that period must be documented in the Child Assessment of Needs and Strengths (CANS) for that report period. This includes all services or goods provided with YIT funds, the outcome of those services and any barriers to achieving the identified goals. Assessment of a youth's benefit from services provided with YIT funds is an ongoing process and should be documented in future reports. For a youth receiving independent living services from a YIT-contracted agency, a youth service plan must be completed to address the goals and services in the same manner as identified for the case service plan.

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING CONTRACTOR PAYMENTS**

The DHS-3469, Statement of Expenditures, must be used by contracted agencies/persons who are providing services for eligible youths. For each youth who received a YIT service/payment, a completed YIT request, including type of service received, must be attached to the DHS-3469.

### **FUNDING AND PAYMENT**

#### **Local Office Allocation**

YIT funds are allocated to each of the MDHHS county offices for distribution. These funds are available for the provision of IL-related goods and services to eligible youth. County offices may use a portion of these funds to contract services. However, plans must be developed to ensure that eligible youth who are not using contractual services continue to have access to goods and services.

#### **Payments to Contractors**

Non-standard contract language must be reviewed and approved by the YIT Analyst and submitted to the Office of Contracts and Purchasing (OCP).

Payments for goods and services will not be made to a contractor until the contract is signed by both MDHHS and the contractor. Goods and/or services conveyed to a youth by a contractor are ineligible for payment if those goods and/or services were rendered on a date prior to both parties signing the contract.

### **Fiscal Monitoring**

Each county is responsible for managing and tracking the YIT allocation.

### **Payments**

For non-contractual expenditures of YIT funds, refer to Youth In Transition Payments, Accounting Manual (ACM) item 426.

MDHHS workers are required to use the DHS-1291, Local Payment Authorization to authorize payments for each eligible youth. Supervisory signature, indicating approval of the purchase, is required. The original invoice and/or receipts must be obtained and uploaded into MiSACWIS, then sent with the YIT request to the Accounting Services Center. Copies of invoice/receipts should be uploaded into MiSACWIS, to the person's active case.

Residential foster care providers must enter the YIT request into MiSACWIS and then forward it to the MDHHS monitor when YIT-funded services are provided. Allocation of funds is made at the beginning of the fiscal year to each county through the MDHHS Child Welfare Field Operations Administration.

### **EXCEPTION REQUESTS**

All payments up to \$600 per request may be authorized for eligible youth, provided they are approved expenditures as defined in FOM 950.

Services exceeding \$600 require prior written approval from the county director or designee. A DHS-720, Youth in Transition Exception Request Form, must be completed and signed by the county director or designee. First month's rent and security deposit have a lifetime limit of \$1,500 and does not require an exception approval. In addition, start-up goods has a lifetime limit of \$1,000 (\$1,500 for a parenting youth) and does not require an exception approval.

If the request for a resource, service, or reimbursement is not specifically stated as an approved expenditure in the YIT policy, the

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DHS-720, and the supporting documentation regarding the expenses, must first be sent to the YIT program office. Mail or fax to the YIT Program Office at:

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services  
Education and Youth Services Program  
235 S. Grand Ave. Suite 514  
P.O. Box 30037  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517-335-7789  
Ph: 517-373-9219

Once the DHS-720 is signed by the YIT program office, it is sent to the county director or designee for signature.

All exception requests must be uploaded into MiSACWIS along with all supporting documentation.

Contractual expenditures of YIT funds must comply with contract requirements as established by the Office of Contracts and Purchasing and the Reconciliation and Recoupment Section of the MDHHS. Documentation and reporting requirements are established by the YIT program office. Other requirements may be established by individual (MDHHS) initiated contracts.