



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
MSC 2409

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Director
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal,
(919) 733-3055

2003-2004 AGENCY PLAN for LINKS SERVICES

Please describe in narrative form your agency's plan for the upcoming Federal Fiscal year (October 1, 2003-September 30, 2004) in each of the areas listed below. If you do not plan to offer one or more of the optional services, please indicate this on the outline of your plan. Please note that the services listed in **bold** are services required by the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act. A copy of your plan should be kept on file in your agency.

I. LINKS Services to Youth ages 13 through 15 (Optional but recommended)

Examples:

- Individual assessment of life skills that involves youth self assessment and caregiver assessment
- Group skill building activities
- Volunteer activities
- Development and strengthening of a personal support system
- Exposure to vocational and educational resources beyond high school.
- Activities that prepare younger teens to handle responsibility

II. LINKS Services to Youth ages 16 to 18 (Required)

Examples:

- Individualized Assessments, including self-assessment by the youth and assessment by the caregiver.
- Individual and/or group activities conducted by the caregiver, social worker, other youth/young adults that offer real-life learning experiences related to strengths and needs identified by the individualized assessment.
- Education: direct services related to maximize youth educational achievement
- Vocational Training: direct services related to job readiness, job search, job shadowing or apprenticeship programs, programs that target improved job readiness and/or job performance.
- Self-Sufficiency Skills: services and/or training related to budgeting, housing, career planning, money management, procurement and/or provision of services or items that will facilitate establishing youth in achieving self-sufficiency.
- Counseling: individual or group counseling as needed to deal with losses, hopes and fears.
- Development of a Personal Support Network with biological family members, friends, and other caring adults to assure that youth will have the supports they need upon leaving foster care.



- Other Services and Assistance: Facilitating youth participation in training, meetings, conferences, retreats, workshops that are related to building competencies and strengthening self-sufficiency skills.
- Integration/Coordination of Services: Collaborative efforts with other agencies, such as combined activities with other county programs.

III. LINKS Services to young adults 18-21 who aged out of foster care (Required)

- Diligent efforts to locate and contact youth who aged out of foster care to assess their current status and need for further services;
 - Meaningful involvement of the young adult in the development and implementation of services;
 - Scholarship assistance for vocational and educational training;
 - Transitional housing assistance for youth who were in foster care on their eighteenth birthday, in conjunction with other provision of other LINKS services;
 - Strengthening of a personal support network through family, friends, mentors, volunteers and other caring adults that will sustain them into adulthood. This may include agency assistance and support to re-explore relationships with biological family members.
 - Access to any other appropriate/relevant LINKS program offered by the agency to other youth.
- IV. Services to LINKS-eligible young adults aged 18-21 who did not age out of foster care (Optional but recommended)
- Aftercare Services
 - Referral Services
 - Emergency assistance using Special Funds
- IV. Resource Development: Purchase of materials, supplies, and equipment for the establishment, continuation, revision, or evaluation of the program; use of allocation resources to support program activities such as skill training, outreach, educational trips or events, etc.
- V. Program Operations: State whether or not any of the program allocation will be used to help pay for worker time for providing LINKS services, and if so what portion of the allocation will be used for that purpose. A portion of the program allocation should be protected for program expenses other than salary. (Note: Staff positions funded with ILP funds **must** be designated for provision of direct services to ILP youth. Counties receiving one or more staffing supplements **must** spend those designated funds for staff time for agency or for staff contracted to provide LINKS services).
- VI. Other Activities and Projects, such as volunteer or community service projects involving youth as volunteers.

Please submit your completed LINKS Plan and the Statement of Assurance by

Tuesday September 30, 2003 at 4:30 p.m. to:

Joan S. McAllister
 LINKS Coordinator
 325 North Salisbury Street, Suite 715
 MSC #2409
 Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-2408
 (919) 733-2580 FAX (919) 715-0766



STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

The _____ County Department of Social Services hereby submits the attached plan for LINKS services and assures that the following Federal and State requirements will be met during the 2003-04 fiscal year:

1. The DSS will (a) assure that an annual, written assessment and self-assessment of each youth age 16 or older in agency custody is completed which clarifies their strengths and needs related to self-sufficiency; (b) assure that each LINKS participant will develop, with minimum necessary staff assistance, a written transitional living plan reflective of their goals and the results of the strengths/needs assessment; and (c) that the transitional independent living plan will be incorporated into the agency's service plan with that participant.
2. Agency staff members will strive to establish and encourage positive relationships with teens in foster care that will encourage them to develop into self-sufficient young adults.
3. The Federal funding received under this Act will supplement and not replace Title IV-E foster care funds available for foster care maintenance, administrative, and training costs; that funds will only be used for the specific purposes allowed under the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act;
4. That the DSS will advocate for continuation of county funds to support the LINKS program in an amount at least equal to the amount of county funds used to support the Independent Living Program in SFY 1999-2000;
5. LINKS funds will not be used for the provision of room or board for any child under the age of 18 nor for young adults 18-21 unless they were in agency custody on their eighteenth birthday and are not currently participating in a CARS Voluntary Placement Agreement.
6. The agency will designate one or more staff members to coordinate county LINKS services, to facilitate youth participation in statewide events, to attend required training, to meet and/or confer with the State LINKS Coordinator, and to coordinate periodic service monitoring site visits with the State LINKS Coordinator.
7. Any funds received specifically for staff positions will be used to help pay the cost of agency or contract staff who are directly providing independent living services to youth in the LINKS program.
8. The agency will track data on current and former program participants in accordance with state and federal requirements and will submit reports to the State LINKS Coordinator as requested.

Name	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Agency Director		
_____	_____	_____
Foster Care Supervisor		
_____	_____	_____
Designated County LINKS Liaison		

