



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

325 North Salisbury Street • MSC 2409 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2409
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director
(919) 733-3055

April 7, 2005

Dear County Director of Social Services

**Attention LINKS county liaisons
RE: Annual LINKS county plan**

Attached you will find the outline for your 2005-06 LINKS county plan. Plans are to be prepared in narrative form and should reflect your county's design for mandated and optional services to this population in order for you to continue receiving a program allocation. Please submit the completed plan and the signed copy of the Statement of Assurance by Friday, June 17, 2005 at 5:00 pm. The fax number is (919) 715-0766. Please remind the staff that they do *not* need to return the outline with the plan.

Each county agency is required to provide LINKS services and resources to eligible youth and young adults ages 16-21 who are still in custody or on CARS agreements, as well as to young adults who aged out of your county's custody. We hope that you will also be able to serve other eligible teens and young adults. While you are no longer required to send quarterly reports of services to the Division, you will need to maintain information on outcomes of your services, particularly on young adults who aged out of care.

The state survey of county program services and outcomes for the Federal Fiscal Year 2003-2004 was analyzed and has been distributed electronically to the LINKS liaisons. The design of the plan this year has changed very little since last year, but does now include a section for counties to analyze their own data and to describe plans to improve outcomes.

Thank you for your timely response to this letter and for the services you are providing to this group of young people. We are encouraged by the outcomes resulting from your hard work, and anticipate continued improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm".

Jo Ann Lamm, Section Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

cc: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Children's Programs Representatives
Family Support/Child Welfare Team Leaders

FSCWS-12-05



2005-06

AGENCY PLAN for LINKS SERVICES

Note: Since the LINKS allocation funding year is now in line with the State Fiscal Year, it is time to submit your agency LINKS plan that describes your intended LINKS program. Your plan should reflect the unique characteristics of your agency and the youth and young adults that you serve. Please do not return this outline with your plan.

Please describe *in narrative form* your agency's plan for the upcoming State Fiscal year (July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006) 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 Federal John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, which governs the use of these funds. 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 include, but are not limited to the following:

- 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 include, but are not limited to the following:

- 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 and to promote healthful life choices;
- 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.



- **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, including referral and application assistance for the Education Training Voucher program;
 - 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 strongly recommended) Examples include, but are not limited to the following:
- Aftercare Services: helping young adults to make decisions about the direction their lives are taking, providing agency services such as LINKS services, food stamps, housing assistance, etc. as appropriate;
 - Referral Services: Making young adults aware of other community services, providing contact information and assisting them, if needed, to follow through;
 - Emergency assistance using LINKS Special Funds for needs other than rent or rent deposits.
- III. 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.
- IV. 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). Program operations costs include food for meetings, activity fees, contracted speakers or facilitators for special events, etc.
- V. The 2004 Survey Data was recently sent to your county. How did your county performance compare to state results? Which areas need additional focus to meet or exceed state standards? Discuss in narrative format what specific plans will be initiated for the 2005-06 year.



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

5:00 pm Friday, June 17, 2005:

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 2005-06 state 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 agreement 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. LINKS 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. The LINKS program allocation will not be used for the provision of rent, rent deposits or room and board arrangements for any child or young adults. LINKS Special Funds for transitional housing shall be accessed on behalf of young adults 18-21 who were in agency custody on their eighteenth birthday.
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 salary supplements received specifically for staff positions will be used to help pay the cost of agency or contract staff who are providing direct 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		

