

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION LETTER

ID/No: WD 31-04

Date: August 25, 2004

Key Word: Administration

To: Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors
Commission Executive Staff
Integrated Service Area Managers
Commission Local Offices

From: Luis M. Macias, Director, Workforce Development Division

Subject: Serving Foster Care Youth

PURPOSE:

- To provide Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with information on:
- using appropriate funding sources to serve youth who are in, or transitioning out of, the Texas foster care system (foster care youth); and
 - forming partnerships in the local workforce development areas (workforce areas) with the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program staff of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

REFERENCES:

United States Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 3-04, issued July 16, 2004, and entitled "The Employment and Training Administration's (ETA's) New Strategic Vision for the Delivery of Youth Services Under the Workforce Investment Act"

FLEXIBILITY RATINGS:

No Local Flexibility (NLF): This rating indicates that Boards must comply with the federal and State laws, rules, policies, and required procedures set forth in this WD Letter and have no local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to comply. Federal and State laws, rules, policies, and required procedures with a "No Local Flexibility" rating are indicated by the acronym, **NLF**, in the margin to the right of the applicable paragraph. Additionally, all information with a "No Local Flexibility" rating is indicated by "must" or "shall."

Failure to comply with the federal and State laws, rules, policies, and required procedures with a "No Local Flexibility" rating may result in corrective action, up to and including sanction and penalty.

Local Flexibility (LF): This rating indicates that Boards have local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to implement guidance or recommended practices set forth in this WD Letter. All guidance or recommended practices with a "Local Flexibility" rating are indicated by the acronym, **LF**, located in the margin to the right of the applicable paragraph. Additionally, guidance or recommended practices with a "Local Flexibility" rating are indicated by "may" or "recommend."

Boards are not subject to corrective action for failure to comply with guidance or recommended practices with a "Local Flexibility" rating.

BACKGROUND:

Many foster care youth are unprepared for living on their own. The transition from the foster care system to independent adult life can be difficult for foster care youth because of untreated health problems, homelessness, financial insecurity, and struggles with fear and loneliness.

In Fiscal Year 2003, Texas had 26,133 children in its foster care system. Each year approximately 700 to 900 foster care youth reach age 18 and are no longer eligible for Texas foster care services. (DFPS 2003 *Data Book*)

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges reports:

- Youth who exit the foster care system are statistically more likely to have lower levels of education and fewer resources.
- Three in ten of the nation's homeless adults are former foster care youth.
- One in three former foster care youth requires public assistance by age 18.

The United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's (DOL-ETA) priority for the entire workforce system is to meet the demands of business by providing adults and youth with the necessary services for educational, occupational, vocational, and other skills and training required for high-demand occupations in the 21st century.

DOL-ETA Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 3-04 sets forth a new strategic vision to serve youth under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that will prioritize investments that serve youth most in need, including foster care youth.

Additionally, DOL-ETA's comprehensive approach to serving foster care youth includes:

- basic skills remediation;
- assistance that will encourage foster care youth to remain in or return to school, in order to earn a high school diploma or work to earn a general equivalency diploma;
- employment service;
- internships;
- apprenticeships;
- vocational training; and
- enrollment in community or four-year colleges.

In Texas, foster care youth can benefit greatly by being connected to available services and resources that assist them with continuing their education and that provide assistance with employment, housing, transportation, and other needs to move toward independent living.

PROCEDURES:

To serve foster care youth in their workforce areas, Boards may provide employment and training services using a variety of funding sources, including:

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- Choices;
- Food Stamp Employment and Training;
- WIA Youth funds;
- WIA Adult funds; and
- Employment Services.

It is recommended that Boards ensure that appropriate staff establishes an ongoing partnership with PAL staff in order to:

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- identify eligible foster care youth by direct referral;
- determine the needs of foster care youth; and
- coordinate with PAL staff to provide workforce services and referral to other appropriate services and resources.

Information on the PAL program, including a list of PAL Statewide Coordinators, may be accessed at:

http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp.

ACTIONS REQUIRED:

Boards must ensure that appropriate staff is apprised of and complies with the requirements in this WD Letter.

INQUIRIES:

Direct inquiries regarding this WD Letter to the assigned contract manager for your local workforce development area.

Rescissions: None	Expiration: Continuing
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