

AB 12 Implementation: Youth Input

Week of April 18th

SUMMARY

ITEM 1:

Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP)

1. Should the social worker come to the apartment/home the youth has chosen as their SILP prior to approval?

MAJORITY ANSWERED YES:

The majority of the youth surveyed felt that the social worker *should* come to the apartment/home the youth has chosen as their SILP prior to approval for reasons including:

- The social worker would have to approve it OR assist a youth in identifying one in which they could approve
- The social worker needs to ensure that the youth is meeting the standards for the SILP
- The social worker should get a feel of the environment to ensure it is safe, clean, and healthy
- The social worker can scan the area for resources that will help the young adult reach their goals identified in the TILP
- Having the social worker do a walk-through with the youth and doing the check-list together will help the youth feel better and confident that their living environment up to par

However, there was significant concern about youth who choose to live in a dorm as their SILP in regards to the presence of the social worker in that environment.

ONE PERSON ANSWERED NO:

One youth surveyed felt that it was *unrealistic* for the social worker to come to the placement prior to approval. This youth thought it was appropriate in the case where the social worker is helping the youth apartment hunt/search for room and board arrangements, but that otherwise the logistics and privacy issues could prohibit the social worker from seeing the placement prior to approval (i.e. the case of the dorm).

OTHER IDEAS:

- There should be a “ladder” to supervising. The social worker should visit within the first three months of the youth moving in to the SILP, and based on the condition of the placement and the youth’s engagement in completing his/her goals, the social worker should continue visits as needed.
- If a youth moves into a dorm, the social worker should only visit prior to approval if there is an opportune time where no other students are present or where it would be non-invasive (i.e. orientation).

1a. How can the social worker do this in a manner that respects the youth's privacy?

MOST COMMON SUGGESTION:

- The social worker should set up an appointment with the youth to come visit the home; this way, both the social worker and youth are prepared ahead of time and there is no "dropping by"

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- The social worker should state his/her presence at the placement and ask permission to work closely with the young adult to reach the goals identified
- The social worker should visit the home PRIOR to placement so that the youth's personal space is respected (there is no issue of privacy if the youth is not yet moved in)

1b. What sorts of conditions should make the SILP not approvable?

MOST COMMON ANSWERS:

- The apartment does not meet the health and safety regulations and standards of the state (i.e. asbestos, mold, lead, roaches, broken appliances)
- Having drugs and alcohol in the home

OTHER ANSWERS:

- Not enough room to accommodate a twin sized bed
- Over populated home (more than 2 people per room)
- A placement situated in a heavy drug infested region
- Living with people with "questionable" items on their record
- No one should be living with the youth that is not approved on the lease
- Not being in school or work

2. What sorts of criteria should a youth have to meet before they can be approved for a SILP? Should they have to have a checking account? Other sources of income? Other criteria?

THERE WERE A RANGE OF ANSWERS REGARDING CRITERIA, MOST COMMONLY:

- The youth should be enrolled in school
- The youth should have their CA I.D. and other important documents (i.e. S.S. card, birth certificate, etc.)

OTHER ANSWERS & THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SILP:

- They should have to be enrolled in school *or* have a job
- They should have to meet one of the 5 eligibility requirements
- They should have a living arrangement contract, updated TILP and clear plan of which one of the four eligibility requirements the young person plans to pursue

- They should have some independent living skills established already
- SILPs should be reduced to housing for youth in college, or residential education and vocational programs (i.e. Job Corps, AmeriCorps) (i.e. college dorms, off-campus college apartments, and room and board settings). SILP should not be apartment living that is not confined to THP-Plus Foster Care *unless* the youth has a family, is married, or finished with school. This would prevent extended care from creating a welfare state among former foster youth. (Some youth will be ok with receiving \$627 / month for 3 years and then figuring out what they will do next at 21.
- They should have a meeting where they present their budget; acceptance letters; and plan for living while they are in school, including who they can call on for support, proof that they applied to outside scholarships (to show initiative), a financial aid packet, work study or employment that will help them maintain their housing. (*This came from an individual who thought that SILPs should be limited to students*).

MAJORITY THOUGHT THAT YOUTH SHOULD HAVE A CHECKING ACCOUNT: Comments related to checking accounts included:

- It should be up to the youth's social worker to take them to the bank and go through the steps of opening an account.
- They should be required to have a checking account *and* a monthly budget including upcoming financial goals

CONCERNS ABOUT REQUIRING A CHECKING ACCOUNT WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- Having a checking account would be a plus, but should not be required – it could be an overwhelming barrier if it is a requirement to have before getting into a housing situation. Seems a silly reason to deny someone a housing placement.

3. What kind of support or supervision should a youth receive who is living in a SILP? What should be expected of the youth while living in the SILP in terms of meeting their monthly expenses, budgeting, etc?

REGULAR MEETINGS WERE MOSTLY AGREED UPON, BUT FREQUENCY RANGED:

- In addition to their monthly meetings with their county social worker, youth should be required to meet with a case manager *once a month* to create & go over a monthly expense report/budget
- *Quarterly meeting* where the youth and worker meet to discuss the placement - youth should submit receipts for paying rent and purchasing food in lieu of monthly meetings – the worker should be open to phone calls and social networking for emergencies and to lessen the need for frequent face-to-face meeting
- They should meet regularly for reasons of liability – supports need to be put in place
- Phone call *once a month*, in-person meeting *every 3 months*, and a *6-month review* – modeled after Casey Family Program's CJET program that includes financial accountability, checking on emotional status, and general advice

- Regular communication making sure the youth is getting enough independent living skills

OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR SILP YOUTH COULD BE:

- Hard skills classes (how to clean, how to do laundry, how to maintain an apartment, how to file papers, how to stay organization, etc.), but high quality, not a waste of time, and geared towards what the youth want to get out of the class
- Respondents were split on whether the classes should be mandatory, but leaned toward NOT mandatory

4. Who should a youth be permitted to live with in a SILP placement? Should there be any limitations on the number of roommates? Ages of roommates? Should youth be allowed to live with a significant other? Other limitations?

MIXED OPINIONS ABOUT SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:

Youth surveyed were torn on this; but more felt that youth living in a SILP *should not* be able to live with their significant other.

Reasons for:

- The rules will be broken anyway – it is unrealistic to think that young adults are not going to find a way to cohabitate with their significant others
- You would run into issues of same sex relationships taking advantage of the system and living together
- Cohabitation should be discouraged but not disallowed

Reasons against:

- This can create dependency issues with the partner
- If that youth is required to pay room and board and their significant other does not have an income, financial issues could arise between the couple
- This encourages teen pregnancy

THERE SHOULD BE STIPULATIONS ON THE AGE OF ROOMMATES:

- Roommates should be no more than 10 years older than the youth (except parental/guardian figures)
- Roommates should be 18 years or older unless they are family or fictive kin
- Roommates should be close in age
- No older than 25

THERE SHOULD BE STIPULATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF ROOMMATES:

- Youth should be permitted to live with up to two other roommates
- There should be a limitation of 2 people to a one bedroom, 3 people to a 2 bedroom, etc.
- 1-3 roommates, no more – could be overwhelming to adapt to multiple personalities during a time where you are supposed to grow as an individual

YOUTH SHOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH “FAMILY”:

- Youth should be able to live with parents, grandparents, friends, extended family, fictive kin, foster brother/sister, etc.
- Relatives (sisters/brothers) should be able to stay together

OTHER COMMENTS:

- If they are living with someone, the other person must be paying their own share of rent and be able to show that they can do this – we do not want anyone living in SILP using the foster youth services if they are not foster youth
- Youth should be permitted to live with a roommate chosen by the school or chosen by the youth
- Youth should be allowed to live with others, but they should have a safety/alternative plan in place in case this does not work out
- If living with non-foster youth, it may be nice to live with someone who has been raised with parents or family who knows how to operate in a more “normal” way



ITEM 2:

Mutual Agreement

1. **If you were opting to stay in care past 18 and were filling out this Mutual Agreement, what are the questions you would ask before signing this agreement? Areas of clarification?**

RESPONSES:

- It states: “tell my case worker within 24hrs after I complete a planned move to a new placement.” Are they referring to my county social worker? Why? If it was planned, wouldn’t they already know?
- Is there a G.P.A. requirement while completing my education in order to continue to receive the benefits from extended foster care?
- Can my monthly meeting with my social worker be over the phone? Via email? Via skype?
- Once I turn 21, how long do I have before I must leave my placement?
- Can my income affect my eligibility for this program?
- Can I back out anytime? What are my rights? What are my responsibilities?

2. **Are there any items in the Mutual Agreement that you do not feel should be included?**

RESPONSES:

- The second paragraph beginning with *I understand that I am...*” The question can be asked, whose benefits are being mentioned? Some youth will opt to stay in care for other reasons. If this will be in the agreement, it should say something that would reflect everyone in care.

3. **Are there any items you think are missing from the Mutual Agreement?**

RESPONSES:

- Under the “County Agency agrees to” section, it MUST state: “Inform me within adequate time of upcoming 6 month review hearings, TLC’s, or any other conference that I need to be present for or participate in to sustain my eligibility for extended foster care.” (*Most youth are not informed by the agency or not informed early enough to be able to attend*).
- What are the consequences if a youth falls short of meeting any of the conditions?
- The similarities of foster and extended foster care should be in the agreement so the youth can know what to expect.
- I think it should be clear to the youth how extended foster care can greatly change their life trajectories if they use this “extra time” wisely. I think it should be clear that the worker can help them maintain their medi-cal and that they will help them find the right placement, even if that means staying in their current placement at the age of 18. (*My fear is that county workers have so much work to do that they won’t have the opportunity to really sing the praises of AB 12, that they will just push the paper towards the youth*).

- No. 6 in the Youth Agreement section – instead of listing “County Agency”, list the actual human beings to contact (i.e. name and phone number)
- Some of the youth surveyed really wanted some mention of the placement options in here, although they did understand this document is between county and youth



ITEM 3:

Definitions of Eligibility

1. Upon reading the Definitions of Eligibility document, do you feel you thoroughly understand each requirement? What areas would you ask questions about?

ALL YOUTH SURVEYED UNDERSTOOD EACH REQUIREMENT IN THE DOCUMENT:

However, they would ask the following questions for further clarification:

- Is there a provision for a 3-month summer break for those youth who want to opt into extended foster care but they won't meet one of the 5 participation requirements until they start their school or vocational program in the fall? Will they be able to stay in their current placement (or get a new placement) before they meet a participation criteria? Will an acceptance letter be sufficient?
- Does a youth have the option to stay in a foster home after age 18 where there are other foster children who are under 18? Will they have to go through finger printing and background checks? If so, will it cause a gap in their foster care benefits?
- Is part of eligibility for extended foster care "being in foster care a day after you're 18th birthday?" In other words, can a person be 20 years old and become a dependent of the court for the first time?
- What is the 6 months Transitional Independent Living Case Plan that the non-minor must be participating in? Is it continuous? What happens after 6 months?
- Does the Secondary Education section include continuation schools? If yes, it should name them because most youth know these schools by this name.
- Is SILP only for those 1-4? (i.e. point 5 is redundant)

SEVERAL YOUTH SURVEYED HAD INPUT ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS:

- Major concern about taking only 1 class as a participation requirement will not allow them to receive financial aid. You need 6 units to qualify for financial aid.
- Concern that taking only 1 class is too low of an expectation
- No. 2 "Continuing under the juvenile court system" could be scary for a youth if they had a traumatizing time in care.
- Something needs to be mentioned about how many physical education classes can be taken. Upon reading the document, I found a loop hold, where as students can take all remedial and P.E courses to satisfy the post-secondary education requirement.
- The title of the document should clearly state "Definitions of Eligibility Requirements".
- The first requirement "Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential" needs to be reframed so that it is more comprehensive to youth. Many people who hear Secondary education do not think (as most youth) of high school or a GED, so I feel that it should be worded in a way in which youth can clearly understand.
- If you live in a SILP you should have to be eligible for financial aid.
- Some youth surveyed really liked the idea of "removing barriers to employment" because it helps you get your foot back in the door. However, the fear is that this turns into extended

long-term homelessness – if you set the bar too low, youth and their social workers will not rise to the occasion.

- The section “unable to participate because of a medical condition” seems to be a lot of repetition

2. Do you think it is realistic for a youth between the ages of 18-21 to fulfill one of these requirements? Please explain.

COMMON THEME WAS THAT THE REQUIREMENTS COULD BE EASILY FULFILLED, PERHAPS TOO EASILY. THERE WAS CONCERN ABOUT CREATING AN “EMANCIPATION 2.0” (SAME SCENARIO AS WHAT HAPPENS AT 18 NOW, ONLY IT WILL NOW HAPPEN AT 20)



ITEM 4:

Shared Living Agreement

1. **Are there any major categories (other than those already listed) that you believe should be included in the Shared Living Agreement? Please specify.**

RESPONSES:

- For foster home placements the SLA should be as family oriented as possible; for roommate scenarios the SLA should reflect the real world; and SLAs should exist for THP-Plus Foster Care as well.
- Music or religious practices should be on the list.
- The youth should have the right to a key to the house.
- There should be an inner-home agreement about rules between roommates
- It would be helpful to clarify that this form is a guideline to give structure to the conversation between “caregiver” and “nonminor”
- There needs to be protection for the youth in this document in the case of an overbearing caregiver; and conversely when a caregiver is not strict enough, there should be required certification or continuing education in place
- This document needs to be revisited any time there is a major change (i.e. class schedule, work schedule, new job, etc.)

2. **Are there any categories listed that you think do not belong in the Shared Living Agreement?**

RESPONSES:

- It should be made clear that each SLA will be individualized and that each party’s wishes should be heard.
- This document should serve as an outline for a written shared living document, if needed, yet, it SHOULD be required for the caregiver & NMD to discuss amongst themselves the conditions around each category.
- Regarding drugs & alcohol, we need to remember these are NON-Minor dependents & there should be little to no consequences for behaviors that are not within the home or not brought into the home, unless it has required law involvement.

NOTE: a typo in this document: under Financial, is should be “NMD” not “NDM”