



DCF COVID-19 Daily Update Supporting Children, Families and Staff

April 22, 2020

STAYING CONNECTED WITH OLDER YOUTH IN CARE

Youth in care over the age of 18 face special challenges at this time. Yesterday, the Department issued a memorandum advising that services to all youth in care will continue, including youth who would normally be aging out of the Services Post Majority programs, until at least 9/1/2020.

This is one step in many our staff put forth daily to support older youth in care. What are the others?

The Department's Division of Transitional Supports and Success is taking action to ensure we stay in touch and stay helpful to this particular population of youth.

More than 600 of these young men and women are attending a post secondary program — including two and four year colleges — but like other college students had their academic year halted due to the pandemic.

Linda Dixon, the division administrator, said this population needs special attention — especially at this time.

"Youth in care between ages of 18-23 are prone to increased stress and isolation due to a multitude of reasons," she said. "Many, for example, have been sent home from college, lost childcare options, and/or have been furloughed from work."

Dr. Dixon has partnered with others to organize a response to stay connected with these young people, see how they are doing, and let them know they are not alone despite these most difficult circumstances.

In an effort to support our youth, the Department has enacted a protocol for twice-a-week phone calls from our social workers with adolescents on their caseload. The checks ins will focus on three areas:

1. maintaining connectedness to others
2. access to basic needs (food, housing, medication)
3. financial stability
4. mental health status and emotional wellbeing
5. assessment of physical health
6. if enrolled in post-secondary education, that they have connected virtually to maintain casework

When the social workers find that a young person is in need of support, staff from Dr. Dixon's division will collaborate with the regions in identifying assistance and creating a plan to deliver it.

"This is a way for us to tell these young people we are there for them," Dr. Dixon said. "They need to know they are not alone and that we can help."