

***New Jersey's 2020-2024
John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to
Adulthood***

Agency Administering Chafee

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF), Office of Adolescent Services (OAS) will administer and supervise the implementation of the Chafee program and plan. OAS works in partnership with the DCF's, Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) to implement the Chafee program in all 21 counties across the state. OAS leads training, case practice, and policy initiatives related to serving Chafee eligible youth. In addition, all National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) activities and Chafee services contracted through service providers are monitored by OAS. The OAS Team has approximately 15 staff that supports the Chafee program and plan statewide. OAS reports directly to DCF's Commissioner emphasizing the importance of supporting youth in foster care to successfully transition to adulthood.

Description of Program Design and Delivery

Program Design and Structure

New Jersey's John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee program) is driven by the Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors framework to promote healthy development and wellbeing of youth. This framework emphasizes the importance of developing and strengthening social connections, youth resilience, knowledge of adolescent development, concrete supports in times of need, and cognitive and social-emotional competence. Youth served through the Chafee program receive flexibly designed support and services through child welfare and community-based provider staff knowledgeable and trained in Youth Thrive. This shared practice lens incorporates and aligns with the tenets of positive youth development to support youth's goals related to interdependence, self-sufficiency, and healthy lifestyles as they transition to adulthood.

The Chafee program includes a range of policy, practice, and service supports delivered through child welfare casework and community-based provider staff. These supports are identified in the Transitional Plan for YOUTH Success (TPYS) that is completed every six months with youth in foster care settings starting at age 14. The TPYS seeks to develop goals and objectives that are youth-driven and also informed by the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA). The TPYS also identifies the youth's self-identified recent accomplishments, strengths, interests, and future goals. Child welfare casework staff is responsible for assisting the youth in completing the TPYS. A youth identifies individuals to participate in the development of their TPYS who can support their goals and objectives. The child welfare caseworker facilitates this teaming process to ensure the youth is linked

with and/or empowered to seek out necessary services and resources to best support the implementation of the youth's plan.

By the nature of a youth's age and experience in foster care, youth are offered Chafee funded services and supports as well as other services that are funded through a variety of other State and Federal resources (see Table 1-Chafee Services and Eligibility). This broad service and support array aims to fulfill Chafee program requirements and leverages other service systems and community-based programs to holistically and comprehensively address youth needs.

Youth Voice, Leadership, and Advocacy

Since 2001 DCF has supported youth advisory initiatives to promote youth voice and provide input to DCF, while also teaching life skills, promoting peer networking, encouraging engagement in community, and providing youth with a platform to share feedback about their experience in foster care.

Youth Advisory Network

In July of 2017, DCF awarded four regional YAN community-based providers to implement a Youth Advisory Network model statewide. The YAN is a radically different approach to promoting youth voice, leadership, and advocacy. YAN is designed to create a network of youth serving (and Chafee specific) programming and to shift the culture in New Jersey to one that values youth leadership and voice, provides opportunities to strengthen youth's advocacy and leadership skills, ensuring that youth get their concerns heard and that they continue to play a critical role in changing and improving both the DCF system and local communities in New Jersey. This redesigned model aims to engage a larger number of youth in a more consistent, comprehensive manner that will create an enduring, pervasive impact. By partnering with DCF provider agencies and their staff, YAN will ensure Chafee-eligible youth are able to provide feedback, connect with their peers and develop their leadership skills on a regular basis, as part of their everyday experiences.

As part of the effort, DCF is working to ensure that provider staff are knowledgeable and confident in their ability to provide opportunities for youth advocacy and leadership. As such, YAN regional leads provide training to DCF provider agency staff in youth leadership and advocacy development, as well as youth participation concepts and strategies.

YAN implementation to date has included:

- With the support of Casey Family Programs, DCF accessed technical assistance from Foster Youth in Action (FYA), to roll out YAN in 2018. FYA developed and led trainings for YAN staff, worked with DCF to create a Theory of Change for the new model and designed a

communication process for youth feedback. FYA provided coaching and technical assistance to all YAN providers to support implementation of the program design.

- The first two regional meetings, held in June and September of 2018, brought provider staff together to begin planning for the engagement of youth in future meetings.
- In January of 2019, 71 youth attended regional meetings and 50 youth participated in the next set of meetings in April and May of 2019.
- In addition to gathering youth feedback at regional meetings, YAN has also conducted a series of focus groups involving 59 youth across the state to discuss various DCF policies and initiatives.

Over the next year, YAN will

- Continue to engage youth and gather their feedback through quarterly meetings, and new and other means of communication (e.g. YAN website to be developed, social media, and video conferencing) that will enable all youth within the Chafee specific programs to provide input.
- YAN regional leads will work directly with DCF provider agencies to develop and implement tailored technical assistance plans to ensure that youth voice, leadership and advocacy is prioritized in their programs. Areas of focus will include program policy and operation, youth skill development, community and system engagement, and staff development. The tasks and goals identified in these plans will be informed by environmental scans that were completed with each program by YAN regional leads in 2018. These scans explored each program's policies and practices related to youth voice, leadership and advocacy. Findings from these scans will allow YAN to highlight and replicate current successes while identifying opportunities for additional support, education and technical assistance.
- YAN regional leads will continue to provide statewide training and professional development opportunities for all provider agency staff on a regular basis.
- The YAN will also be refined and expanded to ensure all youth serving stakeholders (i.e. service providers, child welfare caseworkers, advocates, and caregivers) teach youth advocacy and leadership to youth in foster care as a critical life skill for adulthood and to promote their voice and feedback to DCF.

In addition, youth and OAS providers will participate in shared learning opportunities at regional quarterly meetings and at an annual YAN Statewide Day of Action scheduled for the summer of 2020. (see the attached Figure 1 Youth Advisory Network Theory of Change).

Youth Councils

In December of 2018, DCF announced the creation of the Office of Family Voice (OFV) that will include and hire young adults, parents, and caregivers that have experience with DCF's programs and services. This new Office will lead various initiatives to promote family and youth voice across DCF programming and services. OFV recently hired a Program Specialist that has lived experience and will lead additional efforts around youth voice such as a Statewide Youth Council. Additional youth voice related initiatives are currently under development will be included in the 2020 APSR update.

While the youth advisory work continues to be implemented, this plan was informed by youth through the 30-day public comment period as well as the following:

1. 2018 Commissioner Listening Sessions: three youth listening sessions including youth in and aging out of foster care (approximately 50 participants).
2. YAN facilitated focus groups with 59 youth who provided feedback on various DCF policies and initiatives (2018-2019).
3. DCF's Normalcy Workgroup Youth Ambassador (2 consistent participants) feedback and information regarding youth in foster care (2017-2019).
4. Focus groups with 24 youth in housing programs regarding ideas and feedback regarding housing program models (October-November 2017).
5. Interviews with 13 youth receiving Bridging Lasting Connections permanency program (through the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Project) to provide feedback regarding their program experience (April-May 2018).
6. Youth contacting the DCF Office of Adolescent Services with questions and concerns.

Strengthening New Jersey's Chafee Program 2020-2024

New Jersey's 2020-2024 Chafee Plan outlines several important and ambitious changes that seek to improve and strengthen policy, practice, support, and service delivery informed by and provided to Chafee eligible youth. By August 31, 2019, all strategies outlined below will have a clear workplan with timeframes for completion of key activities. Details regarding benchmarks for success and detail related to how activities will be accomplished will be finalized in the workplans by December 31, 2019.

Strategy 1: Create Statewide Chafee Advisory Group

DCF currently convenes our Chafee-specific providers quarterly for training, networking, feedback opportunities, and resources. DCF

believes a standalone advisory group is needed to inform, guide and track progress in the execution of the Chafee program. The Statewide Chafee Advisory Group will be created and will hold its first meeting by 12/31/19. Currently the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) has an existing Adolescent Workgroup that is reviewing the needs of and services available to youth in foster care. DCF will explore coordinating NJTFCAN's Adolescent Workgroup and the Statewide Chafee Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group will include youth representatives and will align efforts with other DCF youth empowerment initiatives. The purpose of the Statewide Chafee Advisory Group is to provide leadership and ongoing support and feedback for the implementation of the Chafee program. Specific roles and responsibilities will be co-created with the Advisory Group and may include, but will not be limited to the following:

- a. Provide feedback, leverage resources, and support the implementation of the Chafee program and plan.
- b. To support the development of a network of stakeholders that is committed to supporting youth in foster care to successfully transition to adulthood.

The agendas and minutes from each of the Statewide Chafee Advisory Group meetings will be publicly posted on DCF's website so the general public will also receive regular and ongoing information regarding the implementation of DCF's Chafee Plan.

Strategy 2: Continue to Elevate Youth Voice

Family and youth voice has been prioritized as a value and core approach to implement DCF's newly released strategic plan. New Jersey's Chafee Program will continue enhanced efforts to promote youth voice through the activities below:

- a. The Office of Family Voice (OFV) in partnership with OAS will develop a Statewide Youth Council that will provide feedback to the system regarding changes and enhancements needed to DCF's programs and services.
- b. Develop a training for youth and youth serving adults that will support young people in various roles (e.g. workgroups, task forces, panel presentations, councils, committees) to appropriately prepare and receive support regarding strategic sharing and using their own lived experience in a healthy way to help inform systems change and enhancement.

- c. Partner with relevant stakeholders to develop strategies to ensure that youth in foster care are informed of, prepared for, and attend their family court hearings.
- d. Increase opportunities for youth with lived experience to serve as peer supports for youth currently in care.
- e. Increase opportunities for youth with lived experience to be included in training initiatives (e.g. informing curriculum, serving as trainers).

Strategy 3: Design and Implement Changes in Chafee Program Philosophy

DCF has made great strides to improve policy, practice, and programming to comprehensively serve youth in foster care. The Youth Thrive framework includes the importance of relationships, understanding of adolescent brain development, trauma-informed care, and youth voice. However, through quantitative and qualitative reviews of our data and youth we serve, there needs to be additional considerations to effectively serve youth in foster care.

Race Equity Informed Policy, Practice and Programming

DCF acknowledges and is concerned about the disproportionate number and disparate treatment of African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino youth in foster care. DCF is embarking on broader efforts to address institutional and systemic racism. The Chafee program will also and more closely examine these inequities and include a race equity informed lens to update and enhance policy, practice, and programming to youth in foster care.

Healing-Centered Engagement

Trauma-informed care has been and will continue to be important and meaningful approach to serve children, youth, and families in the child welfare system. However, there is a recognition that those we serve also need to thrive and not just survive. Trauma-informed care has important considerations regarding understanding and helping individuals cope with trauma, however DCF seeks to go beyond coping, and truly helping those we work with to heal. Often times youth in foster care are in survival mode and just getting by. Our goal is to help youth in foster care to recover and thrive through healing. Chafee program changes during 2020-2024 will move beyond asking “what’s happened to you?” to “what’s right with you?” to meet young people where they “dream” and not just where they are at.¹

¹ Ginwright, Shawn, Flourish Agenda, Healing Centered Engagement, 2019 [webinar]

Strategy 4: Promoting Kinship Care, Permanency, and Connections

DCF's 2017 CFSR results indicated a need to improve efforts regarding achieving permanency for youth in foster care. The CFSR Performance Improvement Plan includes strategies regarding strengthening concurrent planning practices and our relationship with judiciary staff and promoting kinship care. The Chafee program will be strengthened to also support these efforts by:

1. Developing a formalized process and create resources (i.e. bench cards) to train and increase knowledge of judiciary staff regarding the unique needs of adolescents and young adults in foster care. This information will include updated policy, practice, and program information impacting youth in foster care.
2. Supporting youth in kinship care through system and direct service intervention strategies that support both the youth and their kinship caregiver.
3. Updating life skills services for youth through reimagining age appropriate skill development within the context of family, peer, and community relationships. This reimagined service may help to promote emotional and legal permanency.
4. Refining efforts to ensure that youth in foster care experience age and developmentally appropriate activities that will assist in building and strengthening relationships in their home, promote stability, and support efforts towards legal permanency.

Strategy 5: Services for Young Adults 18+

Many of DCF's services for young adults' rest on program models that have not been updated in over a decade. The Chafee program will be strengthened by reviewing and updating the housing program model for youth 18+ and aftercare services for youth 18+ to more comprehensively support a youth's transition to adulthood.

Strategy 6: Marketing Chafee Services to Eligible Youth

In recognition of the evolving nature of preferred methods of communication for youth and young adults, DCF will develop a strategy to market Chafee services to newly eligible youth that achieved reunification 14+ and will refine marketing strategies of Chafee services to Chafee eligible youth whose child welfare cases are closed.

Strategy 7: Technology

In 2015, a new youth-specific website [the New Jersey Youth Resource Spot (www.njyrs.org)] was launched. DCF will be updating the content and functionality of the NJYRS website. DCF is also interested in developing a mobile application specific to youth in foster care to help them navigate the foster care system, understand their rights, and get connected to available resources and supports.

New Jersey's Process for Sharing the Results of NYTD Data Collection

Thus far, DCF has shared the results of the NYTD data collection with contracted service providers over the last several years using the data snapshots created by the Children's' Bureau. We have been able to discuss both the independent living services data using information from federal fiscal years 2013-2107 as well as the outcomes data from the surveys using information from cohorts 1 and 2. In addition, NYTD data has been shared with child welfare staff (frontline workers to leadership).

2020-2024 NYTD Data Sharing Plan

To share the NYTD data with a broader cross section of stakeholders, DCF plans to:

1. Develop a NYTD data project plan that provides ongoing information and data analysis of available NYTD data that can then be shared with the Statewide Chafee Advisory Group and other stakeholders ongoing.
2. Post NYTD data on the public DCF and New Jersey Youth Resource Spot websites. Send notifications through the DCF listserv when this data is posted.
3. Share NYTD data and information with the Youth Advisory Network and Statewide Youth Council (when developed).
4. Incorporate NYTD data into all presentations and trainings (i.e. presentations to court staff, ongoing adolescent trainings, meetings with providers).
5. Include NYTD data in any DCF Continuous Quality Improvement activities/presentations when possible (i.e. Child Stat, Qualitative Reviews).

Strengthening NYTD Data Collection 2020-2024

DCF recently created a CWIS/NJS interface for community-based providers to enter NYTD Independent Living Services that are provided to youth/young adults. This will assist in improving the quality of the data that is collected. This will roll out fully by the summer of 2019 and will be refined as needed.

Other strategies to strengthen NYTD data collection include:

1. DCF will work to create a system to capture NYTD Independent Living Services being provided by resource parents as well as child welfare staff.
2. Incorporate reviewing NYTD data during case record reviews during contract monitoring site visits with service providers to ensure that services are being provided as well as verify documentation for those services is in the youth's record.
3. Develop online access for youth to complete the NYTD Follow Up survey to improve access to and number of youth who complete the survey.
4. Develop a quality assurance process to ensure timeliness of data collection and submission, update NYTD policies as needed, and make any necessary improvements or changes.

Using Data to Measure Success and Improve Service Delivery to Chafee Eligible Youth

DCF is currently analyzing the NYTD data along with risk and protective factors to determine 1) the factors associated with incarceration, homelessness and adolescent parenthood among youth transitioning out of foster care, 2) the factors that may associate with the completion of high school and obtaining full or part time employment among youth transitioning out of foster care and 3) to what extent participation in Chafee services influences incarceration, homelessness, adolescent parenthood, completion of high school and employment among youth transitioning out of foster care. This data is being analyzed by looking at youth who completed the NYTD survey and received at least one NYTD service.

Outside of ongoing NYTD data collection and analysis, DCF will develop a plan to include additional youth specific data to help inform the Chafee program. This will include data from record reviews, qualitative reviews, New Jersey's Child Welfare Data Hub, education related data through NJ's Department of Education, and other available data. By September 30, 2020 DCF will refine outcomes that will be tracked and identify measurement tools. This work will be led by DCF and reviewed and informed by the Chafee Advisory Group.

Serving Youth Across the State

Ensuring that the Chafee Program will Serve Youth Statewide

New Jersey has a state administered child welfare system through 9 Area Offices and 46 Local Offices within CP&P. All governing policies and practices are administered through a centralized statewide authority. All youth that experience out-of-home care are recipients of services to both secure permanency and establish strong pathways to healthy interdependence. CP&P operates rigorous continuous quality improvement systems that ensure staff receive quality pertinent training; that resources for youth and families are robust and available

and that all efforts for an adolescent to achieve permanency are exhausted prior to case closure.

Chafee services are offered statewide; however, they are primarily located in areas of the state or county where there are higher concentrations of youth. There are some services such as housing that are not located in every county, however, youth from across the state can access the service. NJ has urban, suburban and rural areas and as such, services may vary due to differences in transportation infrastructure, population density, and/or cost of renting or owning a property to offer services.

Through the Youth Advisory Network and meetings with child welfare staff and contracted providers, we receive feedback on barriers youth experience regarding accessing services as well as how the youth's experience in receiving services may differ by county or region.

Data Informing Service Variation by Region or County

For the 2020-2024 Chafee program plan, DCF plans to analyze NYTD data by county to see if there are any differences in services that are provided. In addition, and as referenced in the section *"Using Data to Measure Success and Improve Service Delivery to Chafee Eligible Youth"*, a plan has been proposed to use multiple data sources to review and analyze youth specific data to inform the Chafee program and services. As DCF reassesses current supports and programming to update and enhance service models (see *"Strengthening New Jersey's Chafee Program" 2020-2024*), data will be reviewed from a variety of sources. This analysis will help determine how services may look different or are designed differently across the state.

Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence

As noted in the *Services: Child and Family Services Continuum* section², DCF plans to implement strategies to achieve service excellence, to include services for youth of various ages and stages of achieving independence, to address concerns related to availability (targeted for special populations, etc.), accessibility (service gaps, waitlists, access for neighboring counties, more language availability, etc.), acceptability (individualized services, etc.), and quality. The strategies outlined in that section will also target Chafee program services and supports.

Targeting Chafee Program Services and Supports

New Jersey extended foster care to age 21 in 2004. During 2015-2019 there were training enhancements (e.g. Youth Thrive and LGBTQI) and updates to

² See section beginning on page 75

planning resources (e.g. Transitional Plan for YOUth Success) for child welfare casework staff and community-based providers. Through new training and updated planning resources, staff and providers are better able to engage, assess, and plan with youth in a developmentally appropriate and informed way.

Youth in foster care often have needs related to mental health, substance use, and domestic and/or interpersonal violence. DCF will continue refining these efforts through leveraging and improving existing resources offered by DCF's Office of Clinical Services (specifically the child health nurse program), Children's System of Care (mental health and substance use supports and services) and the Division on Women (domestic violence supports and services). These efforts will be coordinated with DCF's 2020-2024 Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan.³ By March 31, 2020 DCF will develop a stakeholder informed plan to review supports and services currently available and used, while also identifying areas that need to be strengthened and tailored to meet the needs of youth in foster care. Please refer to Table 1 regarding eligibility for benefits and services that outlines Chafee specific services and additional services offered through DCF that can support Chafee eligible youth.

DCF also recognizes that expectant and parenting youth (including young fathers) need unique services and supports to support their role as a parent while also developing as a young adult. Through 2020-2024, DCF will update and improve policy, practice, and programming to best meet the needs of these youth to promote successful parenting and prevent maltreatment with their own children. By December 31, 2019 DCF will develop a stakeholder informed plan to improve these systemic efforts.

As stated earlier (see "*Strengthening New Jersey's Chafee Program 2020-2024*") the Chafee program will be strengthened by using a race equity informed lens to update and enhance policy, practice, and programming for youth in foster care. These efforts will explore strategies to tailor practice and Chafee services to ensure all youth receive fair and equitable treatment and receive support and services that are culturally informed and appropriate.

Also stated earlier, under "*Using Data to Measure Success and Improve Service Delivery to Chafee Eligible Youth*", there will be improved efforts in 2020-2024 to use data to inform continuous quality improvements in the delivery of Chafee services. Please see Tables 2 and 3, which provides data on the number of youth in foster care by county from 2015-2017 ages 14-17 and 18-21.

Assessments and Tools to Determine Individualized Needs

DCF currently uses the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA) with youth 14+ in foster care. The CLSA is completed annually by the youth with assistance from

³ See Attachment B: Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan

either the child welfare caseworker or a contracted service provider. The CLSA is used in conjunction with the Transitional Plan for YOUth Success (TPYS) to help inform goals that have been identified by youth. There are six domains of the TPYS that include:

- Supportive Relationships and Community Connections,
- Education,
- Employment,
- Living Arrangement,
- Health, and
- Transitional Services

At this time DCF has identified that the CLSA self-assessment is not the best indicator of a youth's knowledge or skill across domains. Some preliminary research on assessments was conducted through DCF's Youth At-Risk of Homelessness federal project, however this research did not yield an assessment that was appropriate to replace or supplement the CLSA.

More recently, DCF has reviewed the newly released Youth Thrive Youth Survey. This survey is a self-assessment that DCF plans to incorporate utilizing with youth in care to help round out the Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors framework that is being used by child welfare staff and contracted service providers.

The findings from the 2017 CFSR indicated a need to improve practice regarding assessing needs and connecting with services. Moving forward, DCF will conduct a deeper level review and inventory of existing assessments to identify if there is anything else that exists that might be useful to gain a better understanding of the needs of youth in order to connect them to the appropriate service(s)/support(s). If we are unable to find an assessment(s) that meets our needs, we will look to develop one. The "Embracing a Youth Welfare System: A Guide to Capacity Building" guide has helpful information regarding what needs to be included in a useful assessment which will be taken into consideration when trying to identify or develop assessments we may want to use in the future. DCF will also include a more intentional link between the assessment results and connecting youth to appropriate service(s).

DCF is also exploring the use of behavior-based case planning for child welfare practice. The Office of Adolescent Services will partner with the child welfare leadership regarding this potential change in planning to determine how it can enhance the Chafee program, services, and practice.

DCF also plans to look at possibly providing services for adolescents who are not in placement but involved with child welfare to prevent placement. There is an existing child's strength and needs assessment that is used that may be an indicator of additional support or services a family might need to build protective

and promotive factors to prevent placement. The assessment looks at family relationships, coping skills (in home, school and community), substance use, physical health, social/community relationships, development, education and response to case plan/treatment services.

Collaboration with Other Private and Public Agencies

DCF is committed to ongoing and meaningful collaboration with a variety of stakeholders as a central element of its work and the implementation of the Chafee program and services. Multiple approaches and activities are utilized to continue collaboration and consultation with stakeholders, these include but are not limited to:

1. Collaborative Mechanisms with Contract and Non-contracted Providers

DCF regularly creates and convenes opportunities for synergy with community-based service providers. Many of these efforts are open to non-contracted agencies. Through the Office of Adolescent Services, there are layered discussions, forums and focus groups to ensure that services are accessible and represent cutting-edge practices.

Chafee-specific contracted service providers convene quarterly for updates, trainings, and resources on a variety of youth related topics. During the last three quarterly meetings these providers have received information regarding NYTD services, the Child and Family Service Plan, and have provided feedback regarding the Chafee program purposes. This feedback has been incorporated into the planning activities outlined in this 2020-2024 Chafee plan.

DCF also works closely with One Simple Wish (OSW), an online platform that brings national awareness to the foster care system and increases the wellbeing of children experiencing out-of-home care by granting their unique wishes. This support increases a youth's access to items including but not limited to musical instruments, sports equipment and other needs. OSW will support youth currently in foster care and youth with experience in foster care ages 21+.

Although DCF contracts with several housing programs, DCF also partners with Roots and Wings which is a privately funded program that provides safe housing, case management, education, counseling, and life skills to youth aging out foster care 18+. This is an important program and partnership since this program is able to serve youth up to age 24.

2. Initiatives with Key Stakeholders

Youth

Youth are key stakeholders and partners to inform the Chafee program and service area. See the earlier section titled “*Youth Voice, Leadership, and Advocacy*” for more information.

Public Agencies in New Jersey

The Children in Court Improvement Committee and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC): DCF’s Office of Adolescent Services provides standard and ad-hoc training for the Children in Court Improvement Committee (CICIC) and the AOC to improve communication and collaboration in service of improving timely permanency, particularly for adolescents. More broadly, DCF will partner with the CICIC on a statewide permanency improvement effort. The CICIC will manage this effort through use of a standing agenda item related to permanency.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA): DCF will continue its strategic partnership with DCA in the form of varied subsidized and supportive housing models for youth across the state. This includes, but is not limited to, Section 8 vouchers for child welfare-involved young adults (including parenting youth) and other supports.

The Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (HMFA): HMFA is dedicated to increasing the availability of and accessibility to safe, decent and affordable housing to families in New Jersey. HMFA and DCF collaborate with contracted supportive housing providers to track housing and services for adolescents and young adults, identify gaps in the local service continuum and develop appropriate outcome measurements. Also, HMFA’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) staff provide periodic trainings and technical assistance to DCF-funded housing service providers.

The Department of Education (DOE): In accordance with the 2015 The Every Student Succeeds Act, DCF and DOE have a data sharing agreement in place to provide education/school data regarding youth in foster care. DCF and the Statewide Chafee Advisory Group will review and analyze trends in student’s educational attainment.

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC): To improve outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system or dually-involved with both child welfare and juvenile justice, DCF participates in several collaborations with the JJC. This includes Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative statewide and local activities and efforts through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Technical Assistance Providers

Through federal projects and other initiatives DCF partners with and has contracts for various technical assistance (TA) providers regarding initiatives to improve and enhance Chafee services and programming. Some of these technical assistance providers include:

1. The Center for the Study of Social Policy, providing TA regarding the Youth Thrive initiative.
2. The Juvenile Law Center, providing TA regarding implementing the normalcy and reasonable prudent parent mandate.
3. The Corporation for Supportive Housing, providing TA regarding New Jersey's Connect to Home youth supportive housing programs specific to the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Project.
4. Child Trends, providing evaluation TA regarding the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal project.
5. Payperks (through Conduent), providing TA regarding the NJ Money Skills online financial literacy program.

Collaboration with Other Private and Public Agencies 2020-2024

Enhancing Career Planning and Supports

In September 2017, DCF launched a new Pathways to Academic and Career Success (PACES) coaching program statewide. The PACES program serves 500 youth across 6 programs within 4 community-based service providers. PACES programs provide yearlong academic and career coaching to youth in foster care, ages 16-21, from 10th grade thru their 2nd year of college or completion of a career technical certificate. In addition to academic support and post-secondary exploration, this program includes assisting the youth in developing soft skills necessary to succeed in a work environment. DCF has provided technical assistance and trained PACES coaches and recognizes that additional support is needed to bolster their knowledge and resources regarding career coaching.

To ascertain whether the PACES program has a positive effect on students' academic performance, development of soft skills and college and career technical school enrollment and persistence, DCF will be measuring outcomes such as increases in high school GPAs by the end of the school year, students planning to attend NJ colleges or universities that apply and receive the New Jersey Tuition Aid Grant, students persisting to the second year of college, and students in career technical education students completing their certification. These outcomes will be measured through data received through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Education, NJ Foster Care Scholars data maintained by Embrella, a community-based agency who oversees the NJFC Program. DCF is continuing to explore outcomes measures for soft skills/ non-technical employability skills that lead to employment success.

There will be efforts to develop a partnership between Rutgers' Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, PACES coaches, and potentially other youth serving staff. More specifically there is interest in developing a partnership with the New

Jersey Career Network Coaching Community of Practice to support service providers and staff to provide effective career coaching and soft skills to youth in foster care.

In addition, although there have been some partnerships over the years, DCF is interested in strengthening our partnership with Labor and Workforce Development and the Statewide Employment and Training Commission regarding initiatives to support career readiness for youth in foster care. For example, there are initiatives related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and apprenticeships that could be highly beneficial for youth in foster care.

Initiatives Related to Adolescent Health

In review of Chafee program purposes DCF acknowledges there is a need to strengthen practice and education to youth regarding preventative health activities (smoking avoidance, nutrition education, and pregnancy prevention). DCF plans to partner internally through the Child Health Nurse Program for youth in foster care and with the Department of Health regarding these prevention activities. The goal is to ensure that this information is provided to youth in foster care through a variety of practice and programming activities.

Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Housing Stability for Youth in Foster Care

DCF has numerous contracts for youth supportive housing and several key partnerships with housing stakeholders statewide. Over the last few years DCF has become more familiar and started working more closely with the Continuums of Care (CoCs) statewide. DCF seeks to expand and improve CoC partnerships to better coordinate youth housing resources and ensure that youth experiencing housing instability are appropriately assessed to best understand their housing needs.

Promoting Developmentally Appropriate Activities and Experiential Learning

Since the implementation of the normalcy and reasonable prudent parent mandate, DCF has convened a large stakeholder group to provide feedback and drive related practice guidance resources, training, and policy. There are outstanding issues related to driving instruction, cell phones/cell phone plans, transportation, and savings accounts for youth in foster care that need to be addressed. DCF will seek out partnerships with other State departments and private agencies to identify potential resources to leverage or purchase to ensure youth in foster care more consistently and easily have access to activities and learning that are necessary and developmentally appropriate for transitioning to adulthood.

Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services

Child welfare caseworkers are responsible for linking youth with needed Chafee services through a youth driven assessment and planning process. The Youth Bill of Rights and the Voluntary Services Agreement (for youth 18+) outlines these services and needs that the caseworker is responsible for in partnership with the youth and their supports. For Chafee eligible youth that are closed with the child welfare system, they can access Chafee services through various service providers available statewide. In addition, youth may re-enter the child welfare system after 18 and before the age of 21 if they were receiving child welfare services at age 16+. Eligibility for Chafee services will be expanded to serve youth that were in foster care at age 14+ and were reunified with the families. DCF is currently reviewing youth data and funding availability to determine whether Chafee services can be extended to 23 and ETVs can be extended to 26.

Chafee funds for independent living services and room and board are implemented through programming with various service providers and leveraged with other funding sources to create a continuum of Chafee services statewide. Please refer to Table 1 regarding eligibility for benefits and services.

DCF will not deny eligibility for independent living services to a youth who otherwise meets the eligibility criteria but who is temporarily residing out of state. DCF will not terminate ongoing independent living assistance solely due to the fact that a youth is temporarily residing out of state.

Cooperation in National Evaluations

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families will cooperate in any national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of Chafee.

Chafee Training

DCF has a vast training menu supporting various areas of child welfare practice. Within this training menu there are several Chafee specific training opportunities available to child welfare staff, service providers, and other stakeholders to effectively implement policy, practice, and programming to ensure high quality and comprehensive services to Chafee eligible youth. These trainings are highlighted below:

Youth Thrive: The Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors framework training was co-designed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), OAS, and DCF's Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD) to help NJ's young people reach their full potential. This training is co-led by a seasoned trainer and a trainer with lived experience. Youth Thrive is based on

emerging research in neuroscience and brain development as well as established research on the promotion of positive youth development. This training emphasizes the importance of supporting healthy development and wellbeing of youth to help promote their positive outcomes. This three-day training is offered to child welfare staff and service provider staff. In addition, a Youth Thrive home correspondence course has been developed and is offered to resource and adoptive parents.

Got Adolescents?: Got Adolescents? is a one-day training for child welfare staff primarily serving adolescents and young adults. The training provides the “101” regarding youth specific policy, practice, and programming to best prepare child welfare staff to best engage and team with youth.

Transitional Plan for Youth Success (TPYS)/Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA): TPYS/CLSA is a one-day training that is designed to provide child welfare staff and service providers an opportunity to develop a basic competency and understanding of assessment and planning practices with youth in foster care. The content includes the identification and exploration of assets and opportunities, long and short-term goal setting and application of the CLSA in the development of a TPYS. The training focuses on the importance of comprehensive assessment, effective planning and youth-involvement in assisting youth with their transition into adulthood.

Post-BA Certificate in Adolescent Advocacy (ADAD): OAS and Montclair State University created this 15-credit certificate program primarily geared to child welfare staff and expanded to other DCF staff over the years. The ADAD certificate focuses on adolescent advocacy, case practice, and provides students with a multidisciplinary understanding of the role of the adolescent advocate as seen through the disciplines of law, sociology, and psychology. The certificate incorporates youth perspectives, concepts from the Youth Thrive framework, adolescent development, trauma informed care, and engagement into its coursework. DCF will be updating the coursework to include more transfer of learning activities and the Attachment, Regulation, and Competency (ARC) framework. The ADAD certificate is a one-year program that includes five courses; two in the fall, two in the spring and one in the summer. In an effort to ensure that all staff have access to the program, both an in-class option at Montclair and an online option are offered for 40 staff each year.

Adolescent Practice Forums: OAS recognizes that inter-departmental practice conversations are an important tool to provide quality and consistent services to adolescents. OAS began the Adolescent Practice Forums (APFs) to establish a forum where professionals across DCF can discuss common practice concerns and receive updates on adolescent-related policy, practice and workgroup/task force activities. These forums are offered several times in regional offices across the state. They are designed to facilitate dialogue between adolescent-serving staff within CP&P, the Office of Education (DCF-OOE) and the Case

Management Organizations (CMO) serving Children's System of Care (CSOC) youth. Forums include an overview of adolescent-specific resource materials, trainings on requested topics, and services offered by OAS.

Safe Space Program and Training: The Safe Space Program encourages and promotes DCF to create welcoming and inclusive environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) youth, families, and staff. This strategy provides an atmosphere whereby the LGBTQI population can feel safe, supported, and access resources specific to their needs. Sexual and gender minority youth are an at-risk population that is faced with many challenges regarding accessing services, placement and interactions with other professionals. DCF continues to educate its workforce on providing proficient and comprehensive services to LGBTQI individuals. In order to ensure that DCF remain responsive to this population, Safe Space Liaisons participate in Safe Space in-service trainings held throughout the State. Each in-service training features a guest speaker, cutting-edge resources and specific LGBTQI education. In addition, a statewide Safe Space Networking conference is held annually.

Cultural Competency LGBTQI Training: This recently launched two-day training for child welfare staff develops a basic understanding of the needs, challenges, issues, and resources pertinent to LGBTQI youth, adults, and families served by the child welfare system as well as the skills to recognize and meet these needs. Through discussions and activities around terminology, values and attitudes, the coming out process, safety, and legal issues, participants will learn how to best provide services that promote the psychological, social, emotional, and physical health and welfare for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Youth Leadership and Advocacy Training: This one-day training is currently offered to Chafee specific service providers to provide an overview of the theories and concepts related to youth engagement and leadership development. The training emphasizes how youth engagement contributes to healthy development, healing from trauma, and fostering youth resilience. Knowledge is increased regarding strategies for developing effective youth-adult partnerships and effective strategies to promote leadership and advocacy. This training will be expanded to child welfare staff, resource parents, and other youth advocates over the next three years.

Adolescent Networking Conference: OAS partners with Rutgers University to hold a one-day biennial conference for youth, staff, service providers, and other interested stakeholders. The conference topic seeks to identify areas of youth work that may not have training available or may be relevant to improving services and supports provided to youth. In 2019 the conference topic was Adolescent Sexual Health; the next conference will be planned for 2021.

Chafee Training Plan 2020-2024

Along with the training opportunities above, DCF will continue implementing or pursue the following trainings below:

1. Normalcy Training: Training has been in development regarding the normalcy and reasonable prudent parent mandates. A video webinar will launch in September 2019 for child welfare staff and will be available on DCF's website. A subsequent in person training will be available for child welfare staff by early 2020. A similar training will be developed for resource and adoptive caregivers and for non-family based out of home providers.
2. Expectant and Parenting Youth Training: DCF seeks to develop training for child welfare staff and providers regarding the unique needs of expectant and parenting youth (including young fathers).
3. Chafee-related training for resource and adoptive parents: DCF has several trainings for child welfare staff and service providers, however needs to focus on strategies to ensure that similar Chafee related training is available to resource and adoptive parents through in-person and/or online based modalities.
4. Develop a training for youth and youth serving adults that will support young people in various roles (e.g. workgroups, task forces, panel presentations, councils, committees) to appropriately prepare and receive support regarding strategic sharing and using their own lived experience in a healthy way to help inform systems change and enhancement.

Consultation with Tribes

New Jersey does not have any federally recognized tribes; however, three tribal nations have very recently received state recognition. DCF will plan to engage these tribes through the Commission on Indian Affairs regarding Chafee and ETV program services for Indian youth. As outlined in the *Serving Youth Across the State* and *Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services* sections, these services are available statewide to all eligible youth to include those identified as Indian children.

There have not been any tribes requesting to develop an agreement to administer, supervise, or oversee the Chafee or an ETV program with respect to eligible Indian children and to receive an appropriate portion of the state's allotment for such administration or supervision.