

HCTAYC Independent Living Skills (ILS) Recommendations

1. Improving Services Offered Through ILS

- a. Develop a menu of services for youth and caregivers that covers ILS purpose and how to access benefits. Train ILS, child welfare staff, probation staff, and tribes on the benefits and community resources ILS youth are eligible for.
- b. Create ILS services and activities that are accessible to and address the needs of youth with disabilities and pregnant and parenting youth, including inclusive outings, parenting support and providing childcare.
- c. Collaborate to develop TAY-friendly employment services that assist youth in job training and placement.
- d. Offer both classes and individual case management to ILS eligible youth on finances and credit, healthy living, employment, family relationships, education and housing.
- e. Ensure youth receive concrete one-on-one assistance with opening a bank account, applying for public benefits, and navigating the process of finding housing, including THP (+).
- f. Improve education support offered for junior high, high school and college youth by providing assistance with tutoring, planning for higher education, college and financial aid applications, and services for retention.
- g. Develop a written policy to ensure services and incentives are distributed in a fair and consistent manner – regardless of relationship between youth and staff – and distribute policy to youth.
- h. Conduct all assessments and hold discussions about youth privately to protect youth's confidential and personal information from other youth or noninvolved staff. Ensure all documents are kept confidential.

2. Improving Administration of ILS Services

- a. Add additional, dedicated staff that are able to make a long-term commitment to ILS. Create a team that delivers ILS wrap around services consisting of ILS staff, youth peer mentors, a transition age youth (TAY) wrap around social worker, mental health clinicians/staff specializing in TAY, an educational liaison, and an AOD specialist.
- b. Post daily office hours, and ensure office is open and accessible to youth. Change hours to allow youth access to ILS by opening 9am to 7pm for drop-ins, and/or adding a weekend day.
- c. During all regular office hours, ensure office is open and accessible to youth. Change hours to allow youth access to ILS by opening 11-7 for drop-ins, and/or adding a weekend day.
- d. Hire youth peer mentors to do outreach and provide services.
- e. Provide services by going to youth and caregivers, including traveling to tribal reservations on a regularly scheduled basis.
- f. Outreach to all eligible youth regularly and ensure youth's contact information is kept updated in secure files.
- g. Begin providing services to youth aged 14 and older, with a special focus on early transition planning.
- h. Develop ongoing mechanisms for youth to provide feedback on ILS and create a process for gathering suggestions and handling complaints, such as an ombudsman.

3. Adequate Transition Planning

- a. Provide all staff, caregivers and others who interact with TAY training in youth development, empowerment and transition planning.
- b. Team with youth's biological family and caregivers to prepare for transition.
- c. Ensure youth placed out of county and probation-supervised youth receive equal transition planning and fair access to ILS services and transitional housing. Increase communication regarding transition planning between Probation and Child Welfare.
- d. Develop and recruit foster homes where caregivers enjoy teens and are willing to teach and practice hands-on independent living skills in their home.

4. Ensure THP and THP+ Meet Youth's Needs

- a. Develop clear and fair policies about eligibility and selection for THP/THP+ and provide to staff and youth.
- b. Partner with youth to evaluate current program rules, guidelines and staffing to ensure they support youth through developing individual goals rather than a "one size fits all" model. Implement resident evaluations.
- c. Ensure THP+ programs follow applicable tenant laws and educate and provide advocacy to youth experiencing challenges within programs.
- d. Provide program staff training to ensure THP staff are utilizing appropriate youth development practices that prepare youth for transition to the community.
- e. Modify programs or create new flexible housing programs with reasonable expectations and intensive support to address the needs of the most vulnerable youth: parenting youth, and youth with disabilities and mental health issues. Develop a continuum of THP/THP+ options, so youth who are struggling are not evicted from program but are placed in a more structured/supervised option.
- f. Develop THP+ housing in rural outlying areas in Humboldt so youth can remain in own communities, and services are provided in communities.