



## North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • MSC 2408 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408  
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director  
(919) 733-3055

September 4, 2002

**Dear County Director of Social Services**

**Re: LINKS Plan for 2002-03  
Data Collection on Services**

Attn: County LINKS Liaisons  
Foster Care Supervisors

Attached is the outline for your LINKS agency plan for FFY 2002-03 and the agency Statement of Assurance. **In order to access your 2002-03 county allocation of LINKS funds, the signed Statement of Assurance must be returned to the State LINKS Coordinator by September 30, 2002.** If possible, your agency LINKS plan should be submitted at the same time but must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm on October 31, 2002. The outline for the plan is basically the same as for last year.

As you are aware, independent living services are required for older adolescents in foster care and for those young adults age 18-21 who aged out of care. Under the North Carolina state plan, we also encourage counties to provide LINKS services to younger teens 13-15 and to adolescents who left care as teens but who now need additional services. The John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, provides funding to help states to provide these services.

A new federal requirement will be in effect October 1, 2003 when each state must begin sending quarterly reports to the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington D.C. documenting the impact of Independent Living Services provided. In order to prepare for this Federal requirement, North Carolina counties are now required to track the following information on all youth and young adults who are receiving services through the LINKS program as well as any additional youth or young adults who are required to be offered and provided needed services but are not receiving services:

- Name, Date of Birth, SIS ID number, last completed grade in school, race/ethnicity
- Strengths and needs, as identified through the written assessment, through the youth's self assessment, through the caregiver and other adults who know the youth, and through the social worker's direct knowledge.
- Hours of services during each quarter that are directed to that youth's identified strengths and needs, whether provided by county staff or through other sources; and
- Outcomes experienced by each youth/young adult as of the end of each quarter.



**Dear County Director: LINKS Program Plans**  
**September 4, 2002**  
**Page two**

The Children's Services Section has developed and is distributing an Excel data base to capture and report required data. The database is designed to automatically transfer non-identifying information to a reporting form that can be sent electronically as a separate document to the Division. Most counties have started tracking the data and are submitting their reports to the State LINKS coordinator. If your county has not received this database, please contact Ms. McAllister immediately at (919) 733-4622 or through e-mail at [Joan.McAllister@ncmail.net](mailto:Joan.McAllister@ncmail.net). Data analysis of the relationship between Strengths and Needs, Services, and Outcomes is being developed for the state's required report to DHHS.

Case-specific information in the data base remains with the county LINKS program and is being found to help county LINKS staff to plan individual and group services, to evaluate the effectiveness of services provided, to collect specific information for case planning meetings, and to help to document the services provided through your LINKS program. In order to provide accurate data, each county will need to maintain ongoing records of hours of service provided to each participant and the progress that the participant is making toward reaching self-sufficiency.

If you have questions about the LINKS agency plan or about the data collection requirements, please contact Joan McAllister, State LINKS Coordinator.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief  
Children's Services

CCH/jm

*CS-23-2002*



**2002-03**  
**AGENCY PLAN**  
**for LINKS SERVICES**

Please describe in narrative form your agency's plan for the upcoming Federal Fiscal year (October 1, 2002-September 30, 2003) in each of the areas listed below. If you do not plan to offer services in a specific category, please indicate this on the outline of your plan. Please note that the services listed in *italics* are required services, while those in normal text are highly recommended. **A copy of your plan should be kept on file in your agency.**

**I. LINKS Services to Youth ages 13 through 15**

- Individual assessment of life skills that involves youth self assessment and caregiver assessment
- Group skill building activities
- Volunteer activities
- Development and strengthening of a personal support system
- Exposure to vocational and educational resources beyond high school.
- Activities that prepare younger teens to handle responsibility

**II. LINKS Services to Youth ages 16 to 18**

- ***Individualized Assessments, including self-assessment by the youth and assessment by the caregiver.***
- ***Individual and/or group activities*** conducted by the caregiver, social worker, other youth/young adults that offer real-life learning experiences related to needs identified by the individualized assessment.
- ***Education:*** direct services related to maximize youth educational achievement
- ***Vocational Training:*** direct services related to job readiness, job search, job shadowing or apprenticeship programs, programs that target improved job readiness and/or job performance.
- ***Self-Sufficiency Skills:*** services and/or training related to budgeting, housing, career planning, money management, procurement and/or provision of services or items that will facilitate establishing youth in achieving self-sufficiency.
- ***Counseling:*** individual or group counseling as needed to deal with losses, hopes and fears.
- ***Development of a Personal Support Network*** with biological family members, friends, and other caring adults to assure that youth will have the supports they need upon leaving foster care.
- ***Other Services and Assistance:*** Training, meetings, conferences, retreats, workshops that are related to building competencies, strengthening self-sufficiency skills.
- ***Integration/Coordination of Services:*** Collaborative efforts with other agencies, such as combined activities with other county programs.

**III. LINKS Services to young adults 18-21**

- **Voluntary Placement Agreements** for maturing young adults age 18-21 who are participating in or enrolled for the next term in a full time educational or vocational program, who are willing to accept their responsibilities for maintaining the placement, and who request to remain in agency placement responsibility.
- *Making available services to young adults who aged out of foster care at age 18, including*



1. Diligent efforts to locate and contact youth who aged out of foster care to assess their current status and need for further services;
  2. Meaningful involvement of the young adult in the development and implementation of services;
  3. Scholarship assistance for vocational and educational training;
  4. Transitional housing assistance for youth who were in foster care on their eighteenth birthday, in conjunction with other provision of other LINKS services;
  5. Strengthening of a personal support network through family, friends, mentors, volunteers and other caring adults that will sustain them into adulthood. This may include agency assistance and support to re-explore relationships with biological family members.
  6. Access to any other appropriate/relevant LINKS program offered by the agency to other youth
- Aftercare Services: Services designed to reach other young adults 18-21 who did not age out but were discharged from foster care as teens and are requesting further LINKS Services.

**IV. Training for LINKS liaisons, staff, foster parents, mentors, and resource persons:** participation in training specifically related to work with youth 13 to 21.

**V. Resource Development:** Purchase of materials, supplies, and equipment for the establishment, continuation, revision, or evaluation of the program. Development of volunteer mentor program; involvement of youth's community as resources; etc.

**VI. Program Operations:** FTE Staff positions or worker time is charged to LINKS funds. *(Note: Staff positions funded with ILP funds must be designated for provision of direct services to ILP youth. Counties receiving a staff supplement must spend those designated funds for staff time for agency or for staff contracted to provide LINKS services.)*

**VII. Other Activities and Projects,** such as volunteer or community service projects involving youth as volunteers.

**VIII. Data Reporting**

**Counties are required to keep accurate longitudinal data regarding service needs, services to youth and young adults participating in the LINKS program and on those who aged out of custody, and outcomes experienced by those youth and young adults.**

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 Please submit your signed Statement of Assurance by **Monday September 30, 2002** and your Agency Plan for LINKS Services by **Thursday October 31, 2002** to

Joan S. McAllister  
 LINKS Coordinator  
 325 North Salisbury Street, Suite 756  
 MSC #2408  
 Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408

(919) 733-4622

FAX (919) 715-6714



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

The \_\_\_\_\_ County Department of Social Services hereby submits the attached plan for LINKS services and assures that the following Federal and State requirements will be met during the 2000-2001 fiscal year:

1. The DSS will (a) assure that an annual, written assessment and self-assessment of each youth age 16 or older in agency custody is completed which clarifies their strengths and needs related to self-sufficiency; (b) assure that each LINKS participant will develop, with minimum necessary staff assistance, a written transitional living plan reflective of their goals and the results of the strengths/needs assessment; and (c) that the transitional independent living plan will be incorporated into the agency's service plan with that participant.
2. Agency staff members will strive to establish and encourage relationships with teens in foster care that will encourage them to develop into self-sufficient young adults.
3. That Federal funding received under this Act will supplement and not replace Title IV-E foster care funds available for maintenance, administrative, and training costs; that funds will only be used for the specific purposes allowed under the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act;
4. That the DSS will advocate for continuation of county funds to support the LINKS program in an amount at least equal to the amount of county funds used to support the Independent Living Program in SFY 1999-2000;
5. LINKS funds will not be used for the provision of room or board for any child under the age of 18 nor for young adults 18-21 unless they were in agency custody on their eighteenth birthday and are not currently participating in a CARS Voluntary Placement Agreement.
6. The agency will designate one or more staff members to coordinate county LINKS services, to facilitate youth participation in statewide events, to attend required training, to meet periodically with the State Coordinator, and to coordinate periodic service monitoring site visits with the State Coordinator.
7. Any funds received specifically for staff positions will be used to help pay the cost of agency or contract staff who are directly providing services to youth in the LINKS program.
8. The agency will collect and record data on current and former program participants in accordance with state and federal requirements and will submit required quarterly reports to the State LINKS Coordinator.

| Name                            | Signature | Date  |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| _____                           | _____     | _____ |
| Agency Director                 |           |       |
| _____                           | _____     | _____ |
| Foster Care Supervisor          |           |       |
| _____                           | _____     | _____ |
| Designated County LINKS Liaison |           |       |



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