



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Social Services  
Children's Services Section

Mail Service Center 2408  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408  
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Director  
Carmen Hooker Buell, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal,  
(919) 733-3055

November 15, 2001

**Dear County Director of Social Services**

**Subject: LINKS Annual County Plan of Services**

**Attn: County LINKS Liaisons**

Attached please find the outline for your county's annual plan of services to youth and young adults eligible for the NC LINKS program. Your county allocation has been established and is available for provision of these services. In addition, funds are available to reimburse your county for expenditures made on behalf of youth who have been registered as eligible for LINKS Special Funds. Please see the Dear Director Letter of August 6, 2001 for further information regarding access to these funds.

The plan remains basically unchanged from last year, with the exception of expanded requirements for data collection and reporting of outcomes. This requirement is based on the Federal requirements for state reporting of services rendered and specific outcomes resulting from those services.

As the LINKS program evolves, some counties are struggling to provide sufficient staff time to serve youth and young adults who were in foster care and who are now requesting additional resources and services. Your agency is required to provide outreach services to young adults who aged out of foster care at 18 after December 14, 1999 and who are not yet 21 years of age. You are also encouraged to serve other youth and young adults under the age of 21 who had been in foster care as teens. We encourage you to evaluate your own county's staff resources to determine how best to meet this need for services. Some counties are using interns from schools of social work and private contractors to provide outreach services. We also continue to encourage DSS agencies in smaller adjoining counties to combine LINKS services and programs in order to receive an additional allocation (salary supplement associated with having 10 or more eligible children) of LINKS funds. The LINKS Special Funds are intended to help to purchase the goods and services needed, both by these youth and by youth in care, to achieve self-sufficiency.



Dear County Director  
November 15, 2001  
Page 2

Your agency plan is due by December 14, 2001 at 4:30 PM. Any questions regarding the NC LINKS program or the plan design should be directed to Joan McAllister, NC LINKS Coordinator, at (919) 733-4622.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief  
Children's Services Section

cc: Pheon Beal  
Sherry Bradsher  
Children's Services Team Leaders  
Children's Services Programs Representatives

**CS-43-2001**





North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Social Services  
Children's Services Section

Raleigh, North Carolina 27603  
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Director  
Carmen Hooker Buell, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal,  
(919) 733-3055

2001-2002

AGENCY PLAN for LINKS SERVICES

Please describe in narrative form your agency's plan for the current fiscal year in each of the areas listed below (July 1, 2001--June 30, 2002). If your plan does not include 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 and learning about life choices (e.g. drug/alcohol avoidance, pregnancy prevention, drop-out prevention activities)
- Development and strengthening of a personal support system with family, mentoring adults, friends, etc.
- Exposure to vocational and educational resources beyond high school.

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 youth achievement of high school diploma, GED, higher education.
- **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. This may include having the opportunity to re-explore relationships with estranged family members while still in agency custody to determine realistically the opportunities for involvement after discharge.
- **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. *Note: Small county programs that combine services may be eligible for supplemental salary assistance; description of planned inter-county collaborations should be discussed with the LINKS coordinator.*

### 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 have left 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*
    - **Outreach Services:** Services designed to reach other youth who have left care but are in need of further LINKS Services.

II. **Activities for staff, foster parents, mentors, and resource persons:** participation in training or other events specifically related to work with youth 16 to 21.

III. **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.

IV. **Program Operations:** FTE Staff positions/time supported with 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 agency staff or contracted staff to provide LINKS services.)*

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



**VI. *Expected Outcomes/Evaluation of Program Effectiveness***

Counties are expected to keep basic data regarding youth and young adults participating in the LINKS program and on those who have left custody, including:

- High school drop out rates
- Participation/completion of educational/vocational training programs after high school
- Employment stability
- Avoidance of dependency
- Homelessness
- Victimization
- Incarceration and other institutionalization
- Incidents of out of wedlock pregnancies
- Involvement in high risk behaviors (illegal and/or dangerous behavior with high risk of injury to self, others, or property.

The Federal government will develop outcome measures within the coming year. North Carolina will provide guidance regarding initial outcome measures so that baseline information can be collected.

LINKS funds may be used to provide financial incentives to discharged youth for periodic status reviews.

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Please submit your completed Independent Living Plan and the Statement of Assurance by  
**Friday December 14, 2001 at 4:30 p.m. to:**

Joan S. McAllister  
LINKS Coordinator  
325 North Salisbury Street, Suite 756  
MSC #2408  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-2408  
(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 2001-2002 fiscal year:

1. That the DSS will ensure that (a) an annual, written assessment and self-assessment of each youth age 16 or older in agency custody regarding their strengths and needs related to self-sufficiency; (b) 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 assessment; and (c) that the transitional independent living plan will be incorporated into the agency's service plan with that participant.
2. That 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 foster care on their eighteenth birthday and are not currently participating in a Voluntary Placement Agreement. All Transitional Housing assistance will be reimbursed by LINKS Special Funds.
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 data on current and former program participants in accordance with state and federal requirements and will submit required periodic reports to the State LINKS Coordinator.

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

