

Legislative Program Review and Investigation Committee

Connecticut General Assembly

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SCOPE OF STUDY

Department of Children and Families Services to Prepare Youth Aging Out of State Care

Focus

Using the principles of results-based accountability (RBA), the study will assess the Department of Children and Families (DCF) services to prepare youth aging out of state care by answering the questions: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?*

The study will focus on evaluating DCF services for the transition and discharge of youth aging out of state care. The study will also discuss the coordination efforts between DCF and other state systems and services including but not limited to education, mental health and addiction services, and/or correctional/judicial services involved in transitioning the DCF population aged 18 and over.

Background

DCF provides adolescent and transitional services to assist youth under the care of DCF to make the transition from out-of-home care to a self-sufficient, productive life as an adult in the community. DCF adolescent specialists provide case management services, monitoring, and support services through a variety of programs. Under certain circumstances (e.g., continued education), a youth may remain under DCF care until age 23. As of May 15, 2013, there were 602 youth aged 18 to 23 being served by DCF.

Since 2011, the legislature's Committee on Children has prepared a RBA report card on the state of Connecticut's youth known as the "CT Kids Report Card." The report card uses the following results statement to assess and address the state's progress in achieving the desired quality of life result: *"All Connecticut children grow up in stable environments, safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives."* The report card will eventually provide useful data to inform decisions about budgets, policies, and programs that promote effectiveness; and help ensure efficient and effective investment of public resources.

Areas of Analysis

- 1) Develop an RBA framework for DCF youth aging out of state care using the CT Kids Report Card result statement and identify:

- Main partners, public and private, that make significant contributions toward achieving the desired results and system accountability
 - Major state strategies and programs undertaken to achieve the results statement
 - Core measures of program performance in terms of outcomes for those served
- 2) Describe current state system and programs designed to help transition youth from out-of-home care to a self-sufficient, productive life as an adult in the community:
- Define youth aging out of state care
 - Compile an inventory of state-funded programs
 - Determine the roles of relevant state agencies
- 3) Collect and analyze data to answer the three core RBA program performance questions:
- *How much did we do?* – program outputs, such as:
 - Scope and size of programs (e.g., range of services, clients served)
 - Resources used (e.g., staff and funding)
 - *How well did we do it?* – program efficiency and quality outcomes, such as:
 - Meeting relevant standards and legal requirements
 - Following best practices (where established)
 - Clients satisfied (if measured)
 - Adequate coordination and communication
 - *Is anyone better off?* – client outcomes, such as
 - Youth completing or continuing education
 - Independent living
 - Employment
- 4) Identify data weaknesses (e.g., unavailable, incomplete, poor quality) and establish a data development and research agenda for addressing them
- 5) Develop recommendations for improving state agency performance and achieving better progress toward desired results giving particular attention to no- and low-cost changes that could have a positive impact on outcomes.

Areas Not Under Review

Although coordination efforts will be reviewed, this study will not evaluate the other state systems and services available to the target population.

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