DATE: November 3, 2008

TO: Regional Directors

THROUGH: John Cooper, Acting Assistant Secretary for Operations
         David Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs

FROM: Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Independent Living in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN)
         Policy Update for Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care

PURPOSE: This memorandum updates policy for the management of cases of young adults formerly in foster care in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). This supplements information from the FSFN FAQs and information that was distributed to the field.

BACKGROUND:

Current Policy

Current FSFN policy for documenting and tracking youth aging out of care, who will no longer receive services, is as follows:

- Deactivate the youth as a case participant upon the youth turning 18;
- End date the current placement; and
- Discharge the removal episode.

If the young adult, age 18 or over, continues to receive services, he or she remains active as a case participant in their original case. This policy was developed in part around a desire to retain the youth's history under the same case and to support continuity.

New Policy:

Policy involving youth who age out of care and will no longer receive services shall remain the same.

The new policy for documenting services to young adults, who were formerly youth in care, in FSFN will be to:

- Deactivate the young adult as a case participant in his or her original case at age 18;
End the placement; and

Discharge the removal episode with a reason of "Reached the Age of Majority".

Then, re-open the case as a Services Referral with the type "Case of One". The youth shall serve as his or her own Provider for payments. For all practical purposes, the youth is now in his or her own Living Arrangement.

Adding a hyperlink between the new and original cases has been discussed; however, it is felt that staff will be able to readily search and locate the original case if historical, background, and other information is needed.

Considerations Taken Into Account for the New Policy

When a youth becomes an adult at age 18 and is continuing to receive services, allowing them to remain active as a case participant raises legal questions regarding confidentiality and reasonable expectations for privacy for the now adult youth. Taking the new approach will ensure the privacy of case participants.

Current practice in the field appears to be inconsistent despite established policy. Some areas keep the youth active in the original case. Others deactivate the youth based upon reaching age 18, and then re-open the youth in a Services Referral case for continued services.

ACTION REQUIRED: Effective immediately, any youth who ages out of care and will continue to receive services shall be ended in their original FSFN case, and created as a "Case of One" Service Referral. Additionally, young adults, currently age 18 – 22 who are receiving services, must be ended in their original case (if this has not already occurred), and created as a "Case of One" no later than January 1, 2009.

Please share this information with Circuit Administrators, community based care lead agencies, and staff responsible for providing services to young adults formerly in foster care.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If additional information is needed, please contact Catherine Heath at (850) 922-2425 or via email at Catherine_Heath@dcf.state.fl.us.

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