

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office of Families and Children**

**Policy and Practice Guidance Document #005
Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021
UPDATE 3/17/2021**

On December 27th, the Consolidated Appropriations Act became law, targeting temporary support to protect vulnerable youth impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill provides emergency support and new flexibility for young people in foster care; home visiting for at-risk pregnant and parenting families; foster care prevention funds and other critical child welfare services through September 30th, 2021.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) would like to provide an initial update on practice and policy guidance as we await the release of further federal program instruction.

#	Legislation	Allocation Details	OFC Guidance
1	Increases funding and provides support for older youth who experienced foster care	<p><u>Chafee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides \$400 million for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) to support older foster youth and youth transitioning into adulthood. • Temporarily waives state match requirement for additional Chafee funding. • Raises the maximum age for Chafee-eligible former foster youth through age 26. • Provides temporary program flexibilities, including lifting the 30 percent spending cap on housing costs and accommodating pandemic-related disruptions in work and education. • Ohio’s Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood allocation is \$13,203,746. 	<p>ODJFS will be partnering with the Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services to allocate Ohio’s Chafee supplemental funding to county agencies using the current allocation methodology. There is no required match for this funding and services may be provided for Chafee eligible former foster youth through age 26.</p> <p>There are additional program flexibilities, including the removal of the 30% cap for room and board assistance.</p> <p>Uses for this funding:</p> <p>Provide unrestricted one-time or monthly direct financial assistance to youth/young adults to assist them in meeting their needs during the pandemic.</p> <p>Provide targeted payments and supports to allow youth/young adults to remain at home during the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency, when needed to ensure their health and well-being. Individuals requiring such assistance may include youth with medical conditions,</p>

pregnant or parenting youth, and youth who need to quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19.

Assist youth in meeting living expenses, including rent, groceries, grocery or meal delivery, and utilities. Such assistance may include helping youth pay back payments and fees and/or paying for expenses for youth/young adults who need to stay home for extended periods of time.

Purchase cell phones, tablets, laptops, internet service, cell phone plans or other technological tools for young people.

Provide respite care services and additional support for parenting or pregnant youth.

Help pay salaries of agency staff who administer and oversee emergency assistance for youth, including fiscal staff responsible for generating and issuing payments paid for the Chafee program.

Partner with national and state organizations to assist young adults, including for activities relating to locating youth, outreach, and marketing.

Hire youth/ young adults with lived experience in child welfare to provide navigation services to fellow youth/young adults.

Navigation services help to connect youth to services and support them as they apply for or engage in those services. Employ youth/young adults, at the agency level and/or as part of contractor staff, to provide outreach and support to fellow youth and young adults. This could include paid internships for youth/young adults to help prepare them to re-enter the job market.

Assist youth in paying medical expenses, including COVID testing and treatment, if these expenses are not already covered by other health insurance or Medicaid.

Purchase or reimburse youth for

personal protective equipment (PPE), including cloth masks. Provide services and support to combat young peoples' social isolation during the pandemic. This could include sending gift boxes, cooking kits, puzzles, art and hobby supplies, or other interactive items to connect youth/ young adults.

Provide outreach and offer any needed assistance to youth who experienced foster care after attaining age 14 and were subsequently reunified and to youth who exited foster care to adoption or guardianship after attaining age 16.

In addition to conducting required public awareness campaign about the option for youth to re-enter foster care, use social media and other strategies to perform outreach to youth, young adults, and other community providers to make them aware of expanded Chafee funding and available supports.

Expand contracts with service providers who are currently working with youth and young adults formerly in foster care to provide services through the agencies to which such youth are already connected (e.g., supportive housing providers and Runway and Homeless Youth (RHY) grantees). Establish websites, hotlines, and other mechanisms to track and provide information on assistance requests.

Agencies may also use this funding to provide up to \$4,000 per year in driving and transportation assistance for youth age 15-26 for the period 10/1/2019 - 9/30/2021. Eligible uses include vehicle insurance costs, driver's education classes and testing fees, practice lessons, practice hours, license fees, roadside assistance, deductible assistance, and assistance in purchasing an automobile.

			<p>Assistance provided under this provision shall be disregarded for the purposes of determining the recipient's eligibility for or amount of any federal or federally supported assistance. We are awaiting further guidance from our federal partners on this provision of the law and have conducted outreach to the Offices of Family Assistance and Unemployment Compensation to ensure this income disregard has been communicated and incorporated into programs administered by those offices.</p> <p>In addition, work and education requirements can be suspended if the youth is unable to meet them due to impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency. These provisions are in effect through the pandemic period.</p> <p>Funding may be used for services allowable under traditional Chafee through 9/30/2022.</p>
		<p><u>Educational & Training Voucher (ETV)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides \$50 million for ETV Program and increases maximum award amount to \$12,000 per youth. <p>The Chafee Education and Training Vouchers allocation is \$1,919,149 for Ohio.</p>	<p><u>(ETV)</u></p> <p>The voucher can be up to \$12,000, available to age 27, and can address needs beyond those associated with costs of attendance. These vouchers are for youth participating in the ETV program. The Program Instruction did not waive or modify the requirement that a participant cannot be in the program for a period of more than five years.</p> <p>ETV can be used for expenses youth incur that are not associated with the cost of attendance of the youth/young adult. While states have reported some success in working with post-secondary institutions to include additional items in the cost of attendance specific to individual needs of youth, there are other expenses related to attending post-secondary institutions that may not be covered in the cost of attendance.</p> <p>Examples of these expenses include but are not limited to laptops or other technology necessary for virtual education; earbuds/earphones; desks, chairs and other items needed to create a</p>

			<p>learning space; supplies such as printer paper and ink; and tools for internet access (such as broadband internet access, cell phone data cards, routers and WIFI extenders).</p> <p>Federal law allows ETV funding to be used for advanced degrees, as well as qualifying vocational education, and Associate's and Bachelor's degree programs. Therefore, funding may be used to assist young people in attending law school, a Master's Degree, Ph.D., or other doctoral programs.</p>
2	Prevents children from aging out of foster care and being at risk of homelessness during the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prohibits states from requiring a child to leave foster care solely due to their age during the pandemic. •For youth who have “aged out” of foster care during the pandemic, requires states to permit youth to voluntarily re-enter care. •Allows states to use additional Chafee funds to offset costs caused by these requirements for youth not eligible for federal matching funds. 	<p>There are three options for youth and young adults:</p> <p>(1) If a youth is in the custody of an agency and will reach the age of majority during the public health emergency, the youth, may wish to maintain in the custody of the Public Child Welfare Agency OR (2) the child may choose to enter the Bridges program. (3) If a young adult under the age of 22 left foster care due to age during the COVID-19 public health emergency, they may voluntarily re-enter foster care by entering the Bridges program.</p> <p>ODJFS will work collaboratively with the Ohio Supreme Court and Prosecutor's Association to communicate these options.</p> <p>The reentry requirement expires September 30, 2021.</p> <p>Although the work and education requirements are waived through September 30, 2021, the judicial requirements are still in effect to draw down title IV-E.</p> <p>Chafee funds may be used toward additional costs incurred for non-IV-E eligible youth who would emancipate from foster care, but not for the pandemic. <i>Note: Between March 2020- January 28, 2021 there have been 848 kids who emancipated from care.</i></p>

			Youth who re-enter care must not be determined ineligible for IV-E foster care maintenance payments solely due to age or the education/employment conditions before 10/1/21.
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3	Expands access to Family First Prevention Services	During the public health emergency, waives state match for evidence-based mental health, substance abuse, and parenting skill services, to allow states to invest in prevention services that keep children safely at home.	Family First Prevention Services will be initially funded with Family First Transition Act funding. There is no state or local required match at this time and Ohio will not be eligible to draw these funds until October 1, 2021.
4	Provides emergency funding for the Title IV-B MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides \$85 million and waives state match for additional funds to support family preservation, family reunification, adoption, and other supportive services. • Ohio's allocation for Promoting Safe and Stable Families is \$2,442,286 	ODJFS is working to identify initiatives and investments to further support the state and county priorities.
5	Expands funding for the Court Improvement Program	Provides an additional \$10 million for courts handling child welfare cases and temporary flexibilities to conduct virtual hearings and waives the state match for the new funds. \$260,139.	<p>ODJFS is working collaboratively with the Ohio Supreme Court to identify preliminary plans to use this funding.</p> <p>Must be used to address needs stemming from the COVID-19 public health emergency to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of children are met in a timely and complete manner. Courts must collaborate with child welfare agencies on the local and state levels and jointly plan for the collection and sharing of all relevant data and information to ensure those outcomes</p> <p>Use of funds may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology investments to facilitate the transition to remote hearings for dependency courts when necessary as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health

			<p>emergency;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for judges, attorneys, and caseworkers on facilitating and participating in remote hearings that comply with due process and all applicable laws, ensure child safety and well-being, and help inform judicial decision-making; • Programs to help families address aspects of the case plan to avoid delays in legal proceedings that would occur as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; and • Other purposes to assist courts, court personnel, or related staff related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
6	Expands access to kinshipnavigator programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •During the public health emergency, waives the state match and allows states to use models not yet in the Evidence Clearinghouse for kinship navigator programs, to provide greater access to federal funding to support grandparents and kin caregivers. •Services to kinship families, including kinship families raising children outside of the foster care system; and assistance to allow children to continue safely living with kin. •Awaiting approval from Children’s Bureau on our OHKAN program. If approved, we can claim all state funds. 	<p>From April 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021, allows title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program funding to be used for specified activities, including evaluations and independent systematic reviews, short term support for kinship families for direct services or assistance, and technology for remote learning or other virtual activities. Funds may also be used to ensure that kinship caregivers have access to information and resources for testing and treatment for COVID-19, health care, legal assistance, and assistance with making alternative care plans for the children in their care (sec. 8(c) of Division X). Eligibility is not dependent on the title IV-E candidacy requirements.</p>

			ODJFS will be working with Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator vendor, Kinnect, to explore all opportunities to maximize funding.
7	Makes technical corrections needed in response to FMAP increase:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Makes a technical correction to Title IV-E treatment of the 6.2% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase for Family First Transition Act funding. 	The funding certainty grant baseline for former waiver counties (participating in the waiver as of 9/30/2019) has been recalculated to remove the 6.2% increase in the FMAP rate during the pandemic period so as to not adversely impact the calculated grant amount.
8	Adult Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$100 million for Aging and Disability Services Programs including “not less than \$50 million” for states’ APS programs. •Ohio will receive over \$3 million in funding. 	The federal register notice will officially be published on February 1, 2021. Letters of Assurance and an Initial Spending Plan are due in 30 days from the time the notice is published.

Contacts and Resources

- **Transition Planning and Assisting Youth Emancipating from Care**
 - Ohio’s Independent Living Toolkit: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/ILSkillsToolkit32019.stm>.
 - Additional questions contact, Laurie Valentine, Laurie.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov.
- **Bridges**
 - Contact Jana Pearce, Jana.Pearce@jfs.ohio.gov
- **Adult Protective Services**
 - Contact Heidi Turner-Stone, Heidi.turner@jfs.ohio.gov
- **Fiscal**
 - Contact Charlotte Gerhardstein, Charlotte.gerhardstein@jfs.ohio.gov
- **Other Questions**
 - Contact the Office of Families and Children’s Help Desk via email at HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov.