

# GAL Initial IL Questions

Essential questions for GALs to consider at the onset of a transitioning dependency case:

- Will the youth have six months in foster care prior to his or her 18th birthday (the six months requirement begins to run when the youth is removed from the home, including shelter care), and time in care need not be continuous)?
- Has the youth been adjudicated dependent (to obtain most IL benefits after 18, the youth must be adjudicated dependent before the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday)?
- Are there any financial benefits to which the youth is entitled at this time (ie- social security disability, social security survivor's benefits, social security derivative benefits, child support)?
- Would the youth benefit from any other services (the youth's initial needs may be determined from the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment and through direct communication with the youth)?
- Are there any significant family or community relationships that the youth should maintain while in care?
- Does the youth have any specific educational needs, and is it feasible and beneficial to maintain the youth's pre-dependency school placement?
- Does the youth have any past or ongoing delinquency involvement (any current DJJ obligations)?
- Does the youth have all vital documents and a bank account?

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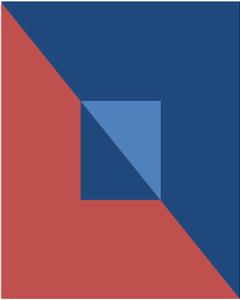
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# Normalcy Plans

Beginning at age 13, teenagers who are in the custody of the department shall, as appropriate based on age and maturity level, be allowed to engage in appropriate social and extracurricular activities. The department shall reduce these age-appropriate activities to a normalcy plan, with the collaboration of the youth and foster parents or other authorized caregivers. §409.1541(3)(a)(3) and F.A.C. 65C-30.007

## **The GAL's Role in Normalcy Planning:**

- *Note:* Though GALs are not a party that must participate in normalcy planning, GALs should assess the youth's need for normalcy, and share their opinions with the youth, case manager, and caregiver. New normalcy plans are created every 90 days.
- *Prior to the normalcy plan formation:* Visit with the youth to determine the youth's interests, maturity level, and capabilities. Many of the youth's interests should be reduced to the normalcy plan, and are dependent upon the youth's maturity level.
- Request that the case manager file the normalcy plan with the court and all parties.
- Challenge boilerplate normalcy plans; look for adjectives (should be able to identify the youth by the normalcy form without viewing the youth's name)
- Understand Caregiver Exculpation of Liability: Foster parents or other authorized caregivers who have developed a written normalcy plan shall not be held responsible under administrative rules or laws pertaining to state licensure or have their licensure status in any manner jeopardized as a result of the actions of a child engaged in the approved age-appropriate activities specified in the written plan.

## **Content of Normalcy Plans:**

- The child may attend *overnight* or planned outings if the activity is determined by the licensed out-of-home caregiver to be safe and appropriate.
- Opportunities for independence, including trips to the movies, mall, athletic events, and work.
- Dating, part-time employment, baby-sitting, arriving home after school and social outings with friends are examples of such activities.
- Support of the child's efforts to learn to drive a car and obtain a learner's permit and driver's license as appropriate for his or her age, maturity level, and availability of insurance.
- If opportunities for driver's education are not available through the school district, the licensed out-of-home caregiver and Services Worker shall assist the child in finding a driver's education program.
- Efforts shall be made to obtain automobile insurance for the child

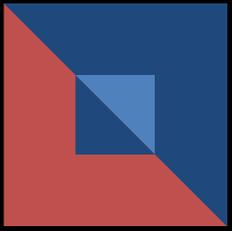
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# Pre- Independent Living (IL) Staffing

For youth ages 13 and 14, DCF conducts annual staffings for each child in licensed foster care. GALs shall be invited to each staffing. F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (4)(b)5

## **The GAL's Role at the Pre- IL Staffing:**

- *Prior to the staffing:* Visit with and remain in contact with the child. Communicate with parties suggested by youth, as well as youth's educational institution.
- *Prior to the staffing:* Speak with the child's Case Manager to receive a copy of the most recent case plan.
- *Prior to the staffing:* Be aware of timeframes; at this age, staffings are held at least annually
- Verify that the youth has vital documents
- Verify that an educational and career path is discussed in the staffing, based upon the child's interests and abilities (with time-specific action steps for ILC, CM, and youth to achieve plan...this will help with future court orders)
- Verify that post-18 IL services and post-secondary education services are discussed with the youth (with time-specific action steps for ILC, CM, and youth to achieve plan)
- Verify that the youth is receiving regular and appropriate "life skills" training
- Verify that the youth has a normalcy plan with caregiver input, and is engaging in age-appropriate activities (determine who will file with the court and when)
- Challenge boilerplate forms; look for adjectives (should be able to identify the youth by the staffing form without viewing their name)

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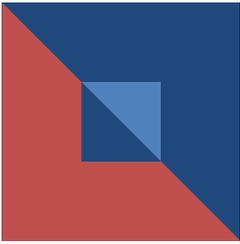
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# Independent Living (IL) Staffing

For youth ages 15, 16, and 17, DCF conducts staffings at least every 6 months for each child in licensed foster care. GALs shall be invited to each staffing. F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (4)(b)(5).

## **The GAL's Role at the IL Staffing:**

- *Prior to the staffing:* Visit with and remain in contact with the youth. Communicate with parties suggested by youth, as well as youth's educational institution. Invite valuable community members to the staffing.
- *Prior to the staffing:* Speak with the child's Case Manager to receive a copy of the most recent case plan
- *Prior to the staffing:* Be aware of timeframes; at this age, staffings are held at least every 6 months
- Verify that an educational and career path is discussed in the staffing, based upon the child's interests and abilities (time-specific action steps for ILC, CM, and youth to achieve plan...this will help with future court orders)
- Verify that post-18 IL services and post-secondary education services are discussed with the youth (with time-specific action steps for ILC, CM, and youth to achieve plan)
- Verify that the youth is receiving regular and appropriate "life skills" training, including public benefits
- Verify that the youth has a normalcy plan with caregiver input, and is engaging in age-appropriate activities (determine who will file with the court and when)
- Challenge boilerplate forms; look for adjectives (should be able to identify the youth by the staffing form without viewing their name)
- Ensure that the youth has meaningful adult connections (inquire from youth and follow-up)
- Verify that the youth received a new independent living assessment at age 15 (NOT a pre-independent living assessment). If an assessment was performed at age 15, a new one is not required at age 16
- Verify that the youth received a NEW independent living assessment by the calendar month following the 17th birthday
- Verify that Case Manager will ensure that the youth's IL assessment and staffing forms are filed with the court (may request filed prior to JR)
- Ensure that the youth is informed of the availability of public assistance and social security beyond age 18
- Verify that the youth has all vital documents and bank account

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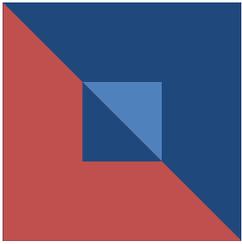
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# Independent Living (IL) Status Hearing

The court holds special hearings designed to address the needs of teens in the dependency system. IL hearings generally begin for each dependent youth at age 13.

### The GAL's Role at the IL Hearings:

- *Prior to the hearing:* Visit and remain in contact with the child prior to the IL hearings
- *Prior to the hearing:* Speak with the child's Independent Living Coordinator to ensure that an up-to-date transitional plan was developed for the child
- Ensure youth's meaningful participation in IL hearings (in person and after school, when possible; via phone; letters to the court)
- Verify that the youth has all vital documents, including drivers license/state ID, birth certificate, Medicaid care, and Social Security Card (if not obtained, request these items from *specific parties* with *dates certain*, including who will cover financial expenses associated with each)
- Ensure that the youth has a normalcy plan and is engaging in age-appropriate activities
- Ensure that the youth has an educational and career path
- Ensure that the youth has meaningful adult connections
- Ensure that the youth has a plan and a clear understanding of housing options beyond age 18
- Ensure that the youth is informed of the availability of public assistance and social security beyond age 18
- Ensure that the youth has a bank account (and monthly allowance)

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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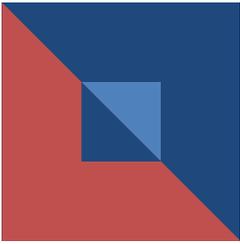
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# Subsidized Independent Living (IL) Staffing

The subsidized independent living program allows youth of sufficient maturity to live independently (without the daily care or supervision of an adult) while still under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families.

- *Prior to staffing:* Meet with the child to gauge the youth’s level of maturity. What behaviors of the youth indicate ability to succeed in SIL placement? Does the GAL support SIL placement?
- Is the IL assessment tool that the youth will take “established” by the department? How long has the system been employed?
- Ask for bridge-the-gap services in the staffing: are there any services that the ILC or CM can provide which would make the otherwise ineligible youth eligible for SIL (ex– paying DJJ restitution, taking a financial literacy trainings, obtaining new mental health examinations)? Who will secure these services and when?
- If the department determines that the youth is currently ineligible for SIL services and the GAL supports SIL for the youth, determine if the youth should be accepted to the program through special consideration, or determine when the youth will be re-assessed for SIL.
- Verify that the youth is receiving regular and appropriate “life skills” training, as required. Schedule future IL trainings for the youth (with the youth’s input), and determine who will transport youth
- Ensure that the youth’s transition plan is updated to reflect the youth’s desire to obtain SIL placement, and what steps are needed to obtain the placement.

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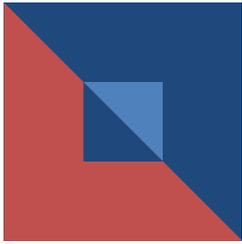
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# 17-Year-Old Judicial Review Staffing

Staffing at seventeen years old. Within thirty days prior to the Special Judicial Review (which is held within 90 days after the youth's 17th birthday), a staffing shall be conducted to notify the youth of the options available upon reaching his or her eighteenth birthday and to discuss the youth's plans.

## **The GAL's Role at the 17-year-old Special IL Staffing:**

- *Prior to the staffing:* Visit with and remain in contact with the child. Communicate with parties suggested by youth, as well as youth's educational institution. Invite valuable community members to the staffing.
- *Prior to the staffing:* Speak with the child's Case Manager to receive a copy of the most recent case plan and transitional plan.
- Verify that the following information is conveyed to the youth (§ 409.1451(4)(a)4 and F.A.C. 65C-28.009(4)(a) :
  1. Road to Independence Program, grants, scholarships, waivers, Bright Futures Scholarship and requirements for eligibility
  2. Review of public benefits and master trust account
  3. Subsidized Independent Living (SIL) options.
  4. The opportunity for a mentor
  5. Normalcy plan/ plan of age-appropriate activities
  6. Allowance
  7. Life skills activities (based on IL assessment and interests
  8. Extended jurisdiction
  9. Review of case plan
  10. Plan to obtain vital documents and bank account, if not already secured
  11. Educational and career path options.
- Challenge boilerplate forms; look for adjectives (should be able to identify the youth by the staffing form without viewing their name)
- Verify that Case Manager will ensure that the youth's pre-IL assessment and staffing form are filed with the court (may request filed prior to JR)
- Request that the CM help the youth schedule follow-up appointments with medical/ mental health providers
- Leave staffing with a specific life plan for the immediate future, which includes residence, health, education, social supports, and finances

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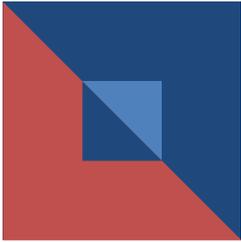
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# Child to Adult Transition Team Staffings

## (Pre-CATT and CATT Staffings)

CATT staffings are held to help transitioning youth develop a life plan with the help of the youth's trusted adult support system. Optimally, CATT staffings will yield a stable support system of individuals outside of the child welfare system willing to assist the youth through out life. CATT staffings begin just prior to the youth's 17th birthday and are held every three months. Pre-CATT staffings are held prior to age 17 1/2. At age 17 1/2, CATT staffings are held every month until the youth reaches age 18.

### The GAL's Role at (Pre) CATT Staffings

- Prior to the Staffing: remain in contact with the youth. Determine individuals that the youth considers positive, accessible role models. Assess the youth's personal strengths and weaknesses
- At the Pre-CATT staffing: Share names of individuals that the youth considers role models (school, athletic, extra-curricular, religious, extended family)
- Pre-CATT staffing attendees: GAL, Independent Living Coordinator, Case Manager
- Following the Pre-CATT staffing: speak with the youth regarding possible CATT staffing participants. The youth must approve participant attendance. If the youth does not approve of certain adults' attendance at the meeting, those adults may not attend
- CATT staffing attendees: Youth, GAL, Independent Living Coordinator, Case Manager, other individuals approved by the youth
- CATT staffing content: review of post-18 financial services, youth vital documentation, life goals, education and employment goals, housing goals
- At staffing: verify that the youth has contact information for all adults; determine the level of future interaction attending adults are able to have with the youth; verify that the youth understands that initiating regular communication with supportive adults in attendance is encouraged

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