

# The Young Adult Bridge to Independence Act

## Key Provisions You Should Know



### BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

#### Eligibility Requirements

- Adjudicated under § 43-247(3)(a) and in an out-of-home placement at 19 or discharged to independent living
- Meeting at least one of the following requirements:
  - Completing secondary education
  - Enrolled in post-secondary education
  - Employed at least 80 hours per month
  - Participating in a program or activity to remove barriers to employment
  - Unable to do any of those because of a medical condition

#### Services for Young Adults

- Medicaid coverage\*
- Continued foster care maintenance payments to provide ongoing housing support for the following housing options:
  - Foster family home
  - Supervised independent living setting (e.g. single/shared apartments, houses, host homes, college dorms, etc.)
  - An institution or foster care facility, if necessary due to developmental level or medical condition \*\*
- Age-appropriate, young adult-driven case management services:
  - Assistance in meeting the young person's individual goals
  - A case plan, which incorporates the independent living transition proposal (developed jointly by the department and the young adult)
  - Continued efforts at achieving permanency and creating permanent connections

- Young people who were adopted (and whose adoptive parents were receiving adoption assistance) or entered into a guardianship with a licensed relative (and had a guardianship agreement) at age 16+ will receive:
  - Medicaid coverage
  - Extended guardianship/adoption subsidies

#### Obtaining Services

- Eligible young adults who wish to receive services sign a voluntary services and support agreement with the department
- Eligible young adults can opt in and/or opt out of the program any time after turning 19 and before turning 21
- Information about the program will be provided to potentially eligible youth at age 16 and every year thereafter, including 90 days prior to the youth's final court review

#### Oversight Mechanisms

- The Court's Role:
  - Review the voluntary services and support agreement, open a Bridge to Independence program file, and make a best interests determination
  - Conduct annual age-appropriate permanency reviews
  - Can appoint an attorney or CASA volunteer, if desired by the young adult
- Case Reviews
  - Held every 180 days to evaluate progress made toward meeting goals in the case plan
  - Conducted using a team approach by the Foster Care Review Office and the department in collaboration with the young adult and others identified by the young adult
- The Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee
  - Created by the Nebraska Children's Commission
  - Make initial recommendations for a statewide implementation plan
  - Meet biannually to share recommendations and annual reports with the Nebraska Children's Commission, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, the department, and the Governor

\* Starting in 2014, the majority of this population will be covered under the Affordable Care Act.

\*\* For those residing in a foster care facility upon leaving care, the young adult may choose to remain at the facility until able to transition to a more age-appropriate setting.

# STATE EXTENDED GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## Eligibility

- Currently 19 to 21 years old
- Entered into a guardianship agreement at age 16+ that was NOT with a licensed relative
- Meeting at least one of the following requirements:
  - Completing secondary education
  - Enrolled in post-secondary education
  - Employed at least 80 hours per month
  - Participating in a program or activity to remove barriers to employment
  - Unable to do any of those because of a medical condition

## Services

- Extended guardianship subsidies, to the extent possible with existing funds

## Implementation

- A total of \$400,000 for 2014-2015 is appropriated by the Legislature
- The Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee will develop recommendations for maximizing and making efficient use of this funding

