

The Bridge to Independence Program

Key Provisions You Should Know



Eligibility

- Adjudicated under § 43-247(3)(a) or its equivalent in tribal court **and**
 - were in an out-of-home placement at age 19
 - were discharged to independent living **or**
 - exited foster care to a guardianship at age 16 or older*
- 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 adults who entered a guardianship agreement at age 16+ and choose NOT to join the B2I program may be eligible for the extended guardianship program (details on reverse).

** 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.

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 at age 16 and every year thereafter, including 90 days prior to the youth's final court review

Oversight Mechanisms

- The Court's Role
 - Required to inform young adults of the programs and their rights at the Independence Hearing, which is the already-existing last court hearing before a youth ages out
 - 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 and hold other court hearings as requested
 - Can appoint an attorney or CASA, 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
 - Meet biannually to advise the Department and the Nebraska Children's Commission regarding ongoing implementation and provide a report to the Nebraska Children's Commission, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, the Department, and the Governor.

The Extended Adoption and Guardianship Programs

Key Provisions You Should Know



EXTENDED GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Eligibility

- Currently 19 to 21 years old
- Entered into a guardianship agreement at age 16+
- 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

- Medicaid coverage
- Continued guardianship payments

EXTENDED ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Eligibility

- Currently 19 to 21 years old
- Entered into an adoption agreement at age 16+
- 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

- Medicaid coverage
- Continued adoption payments