

Department of Planning and Budget

2008 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: HB 149

House of Origin ☐ Introduced ☐ Substitute ☐ Engrossed
Second House ☐ In Committee ☐ Substitute ☒ Enrolled

2. Patron: Fralin

3. Committee: Passed Both Houses

4. Title: Independent living services and arrangements

5. Summary: The proposed legislation:

- Defines the terms “independent living arrangement” and “independent living services,” and replaces the term “independent living placement” with the term “independent living arrangement.”
- Mandates children 14 years and older have a foster care plan that describes in writing their needs and goals in the areas of counseling, education, housing, employment and money management skills development, and that independent living services that will be provided to meet these goals.
- Allows local departments and licensed child placing agencies to provide independent living services to persons between 18 and 21 years of age who are in the process of transitioning from foster care to self-sufficiency.
- Requires, for children ages 16 and over, documentation of the services to be provided to assist the child in transitioning to an independent living arrangement.

6. Minimal Fiscal Impact

7. Budget Amendment Necessary: No

8. Fiscal Implications: The independent living program provides services and activities for current and former foster children to promote self-sufficiency. While the program covers a wide array of services, not all services require financial assistance from the state or localities. In addition, many of these services are covered by the federal funds Virginia receives to support independent living services statewide.

The eligible population currently includes young people ages 16-18 who are likely to remain in foster care and those 18-21 who have aged out of foster care, but continue to need independent living services. The independent living program provides those services that are based on an assessment of life skills, such as personal development skills (self-esteem, communication skills, decision-making, and conflict resolution and anger management), as well as career exploration, job skills, money management, housing, transportation and legal

issues. Also, for those children aging out of foster care and those adopted after 16, vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year are available for post-secondary education and training. The purpose is to assist foster care youth in making the transition to self-sufficiency by helping them receive the education, training and services necessary for them to obtain employment.

Foster Care Plan for Youth 14 and Up

The proposed legislation lowers the age of children (from 16 to 14 years and older) who are required to have a foster care plan that describes in writing their needs and goals in specific areas as well as an outline of necessary services. The Department of Social Services does not believe this change will have any fiscal or staffing implications. Since the impacted youth, in the 14 – 18 age group are already in foster care and receiving services, additional resources should not be needed to develop the required plan.

Expansion of Independent Living Services

This bill would allow for the continuation of independent living services to youth between the ages of 18 to 21 who have aged out of foster care and are transitioning to self-sufficiency. Currently, the provision of independent living services to youth between the ages of 18 to 21 is discretionary; therefore this bill will simply codify current practices and not require any additional resources for local departments and child placing agencies.

Documentation of Services Provided

This bill requires documentation of the services to be provided to assist youth ages 16 and up in transitioning to independent living. This requirement is already included in the initial service plan that is completed for every child in foster care. Per federal and state law, for all foster care teens age 16 or over, the foster care plan must include specific independent living services to meet the needs of the youth to assist the youth, family and foster family or care provider in the youth's transition to independence. Section 16.1-281 (B) of the Code of Virginia specifically requires the plan to address the services that will be provided to youth age 16 and over that will help the youth transition from foster care to independent living. For youth with a goal of independent living, the plan is reviewed in court annually.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected:

Department of Social Services
Local departments of social services
Office of Comprehensive Services

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: Yes. The definition added by this bill stipulates that independent living services are services provided to children ages 16 or older. However, this delineation seems to be inconsistent with the rest of the bill which allows for these services to be provided to any child ages 14 or older.

11. Other Comments: None

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cc: Secretary of Health and Human Services