

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

**Policy and Practice Guidance Document #005
Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021
January 29, 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 \$350 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 estimated at just over \$10.8 million. 	<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>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> <p>Assistance provided under this provision shall be disregarded for</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. •The Chafee Education and Training Vouchers allocation estimate is \$1.6 million for Ohio. 	<p>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><u>(ETV)</u> As soon as we receive a final allocation amount and award, we will update the guidance. The voucher can be up to \$12,000, available to age 27, and can address needs beyond those associated with costs of attendance.</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>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> <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.</p>
3	Expands access to Family First Prevention Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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 \$75 million and waives state match for additional funds to support family preservation, family reunification, adoption, and other supportive services. •Ohio’s estimated allocation for Promoting Safe and Stable Families is approximately \$2.4 million. 	ODJFS is working to identify initiatives and investments to further support the state and county priorities.
5	Expands funding for the Court Improvement Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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. 	ODJFS is working collaboratively with the Ohio Supreme Court to identify preliminary plans to use this funding.
6	Expands access to kinship navigator 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. 	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).

			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.