

VDSS – Youth Services (Independent Living) Highlights - January 2025

Drive To Thrive is Here!

**** BL 877 is accessible in LASER. ****

**** Guidebook posted on FUSION [DTT Guidebook 12-11-24-Print.pdf](#)****

**** Submit Drive To Thrive Referral Form to va.ilp@virginia.gov ****

****Transition Plans and Life Skill Assessments must be current prior to submitting D2T requests. Requests will be delayed without a current up to date plans and assessments!****

If you have any questions regarding the Drive To Thrive program, contact Transportation Specialist – Avis Thomas – avis.thomas9@dss.virginia.gov

NYTD 19-Year-Olds Cohort 5A

19-Year-Old NYTD survey list is available in [SafeMeasures](#). ALL NYTD surveys in **OPEN** cases MUST be entered in OASIS by **January 15, 2024**. ALL **CLOSED** cases MUST be entered in Oasis by **March 14, 2025**.

NYTD Forms can be located in English and Spanish on FUSION - [Services for Older Youth SURVEYS CAN \(AND SHOULD\) BE ENTERED PRIOR TO THE YOUTHS 19th BIRTHDAY.](#)



Education Stability

New FEDERAL joint non-regulatory guidance: [Ensuring Educational Stability and Success for Students in Foster Care](#).

[Joint Federal Guidance Highlights](#) - 2-page summary of the updated guidance highlighting what's new since 2016.

Ongoing Youth Services Projects

FYI Guidehouse Assessment – conducting current State assessment and recommendations to assist Virginia in improving the delivery of the FYI Housing Vouchers to eligible Youth statewide.

- Stakeholder survey completed
- Assessment report completed by mid-February

FYI Sub-workgroups - resume this month. If you are interested in participating in a sub-workgroup, contact

Gwen.Castillo@dss.virginia.gov

[SPEAKOUT - The Power of Permanent Connections for Youth in Foster Care - Video](#)

Virginia's Youth Advisory Board, SPEAKOUT hosted an enlightening and impactful virtual event focused on the critical importance of permanent connections for youth in foster care.

Permanent connections provide a sense of belonging and security, helping youth to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. Youth who have strong, stable connections are better equipped to handle life's challenges and build self-confidence. Professionals, foster parents and community partners all play a pivotal role in fostering these life-changing relationships.

YouTube Link - <https://youtu.be/D9B30nL4Zns>

[SPEAKOUT is growing!](#)

VDSS - Youth Advisory Board has only few spots left. Looking for additional representation in the **Eastern** Region. Send an interest email to:

SPEAKOUT@dss.virginia.gov for more information/application or visit [Foster My Future - SPEAKOUT](#)

[Project LIFE](#)

View and SHARE the Project LIFE Newsletter [PLIFE latest Newsletter](#) for Youth Activities in your Region!

See PLIFE newsletter for IL workshop registration information in all 5 Regions!

[Project LIFE FALL 25 Youth Conference](#)

Another awesome, powerful, impactful, Youth Conference

Special Thanks to Project LIFE Staff for a well-planned thought-out event.

Extra Thanks to all the LDSS staff that sacrificed an entire weekend to support youth in FC. (**Albemarle, Alexandria, Henrico, Petersburg, Richmond City, Roanoke**)

It means more than you will ever know to the youth to have the support of caseworkers.



[IL Coordinator's Meetings](#)

[Central Region-ILCC](#)

[Jan 14th LDSS Staff/ILC's ONLY!](#)

In-person UMFS Campus Bldg. 10

Contact tmurphy@umfs.org for virtual link.

[Northern Region-ILCC](#)

[Jan 28th](#) 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Contact gmack@umfs.org for meeting link...

[Eastern Region-ILCC](#)

[Jan 15th](#) 11:30am - 1:00pm

Contact mlee@umfs.org for more info.



TRAININGS

Virginia DMAS

Insights on Implementing a Language and Disability Access Plan.

<https://youtu.be/3R8o3XnmzLI>

Additional information - [Forum on Language and Disability Access](#)



GREAT EXPECTATIONS INFO SESSION

If your agency works with IL youth, plan to attend (and let your colleagues know) and learn about Great Expectations (located at every Virginia community college), Project LIFE, and the Educational and Training Vouchers/ETV program.

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Contact Brooke.Newman@dss.virginia.gov - with additional questions.

Meeting link:

<https://v.ringcentral.com/join/692110352>

Youth Opportunity

JOIN PROJECT LIFE & ROANOKE DSS FOR RESPONSIBLE PARENTING SESSIONS

Address: 1510 Williamson Rd. NE, Roanoke, VA 24012

This will be a 3 month long program to complete 9 modules

First session: January 8th, 2025 @ 6pm
Second session: February 12th, 2025 @ 6pm
Third Session: March 12th, 2025 @ 6pm

Any youth that complete all 3 months with all 9 sessions will be awarded \$75!

Eligibility:

- Youth must be between the ages of 14 - 23
 - Youth under 18 need consent from their custodial agency
- Youth must be in foster care, fostering futures, or previously in fostering futures
- Youth do NOT have to be a parent to participate in these sessions



[Registration Link](#)



[Responsible Parents Registration Form](#)

RESOURCES

Opportunities Booklet!

Choosing a College Starts with Knowing Your Options

The *Opportunities* guide helps high school students choose the right college, understand admission requirements, identify types of financial aid and more.

[Opportunities Guide and Workbook | ECMC](#)

Job Corps

For Youth Exiting Foster Care: If your student has been in the foster care system in the last six months, they are automatically eligible for the program. [Enrollment Flyer](#)



Human Trafficking Prevention Month Toolkit

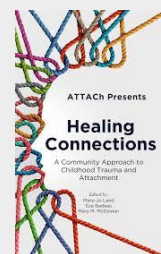
[2025 Human Trafficking Prevention Month Toolkit](#)



READS!

Our very own Chauncey Strong was featured in the ATTACH Newsletter [ATTACH E-News December 2024](#).

The newsletter features an excerpt from Chapter 10 of the book [Healing Connections: A Community Approach to Childhood Trauma and Attachment—ATTACH](#).



The book is a great resource on healing trauma through connections. In addition to my chapter, there are great chapters on Cultural Connections, Father Engagement, and Sibling Connections, all of which are some of Chauncey's favorite topics. 😊

Youth Voices

My Future Talks - Podcast

Listen here: <https://lnkd.in/erYWkRwu>

Whether you've experienced foster care or are simply looking for inspiration, this conversation is one you won't want to miss.

