

CIRCULAR

Date: March 23, 2021

CIRCULAR NUMBER: 2020-47r – COVID-19 (**revisions in bold font**)

To: CFS Authorities, CYS staff

Subject: **Supports for Youth Exiting Care during COVID-19 - UPDATE**

Program(s): **Agreements with Young Adults, Age of Majority**

Type: Policy For Internal Reference Only
 Procedure Information Only

Effective Date Immediately

On Tuesday, March 23rd the province announced it will renew the order providing support to youth exiting care during the COVID-19 response, recognizing the pandemic continues to create significant uncertainty that is likely to affect the plans of those young adults scheduled to leave care. The announcement can be read in full at: <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=51028>.

This change will be formalized by a new amendment that overrides section 50(2) of the Child and Family Services Act section for the pandemic period to temporarily enable continued support for 18 year olds of any legal status and the ability to extend benefits for young adults when they turn 21. **This temporary measure is in effect up to September 23, 2021 and includes continuation of supports for those young adults supported under the original order, retroactive to March 20, 2020.**

This circular can be considered to be a directive to ensure continued care and maintenance are offered to all young adults set to exit care at this time.

As a reminder of previous direction from the original Circular 2020-47:

Effective immediately, and until further direction is received:

an offer to hold and extend existing benefits or an Agreement with Young Adult (AYA) is to be given to:

- all youth in the care of child and family services agencies reaching the age of majority, 18, during the COVID-19 response regardless of legal status; and
- all young adults on an expiring AYA, including when a young adult turns 21.

Young adults currently on an AYA who remain eligible under regular policy and legislation are to be offered a renewal upon the expiry of their existing agreement.

These new requirements should not interfere with plans to reunify the youth with their family where this plan is safe and appropriate, and where public health directives have been considered.

Process for Extending Benefits

- Youth must be offered a continuation of supports, either based on their support level as a child in care at age 17 for those reaching age of majority, or based on their current agreement for the duration of the COVID-19 response. Agencies will determine if adjustments to the level of support are needed.
- The offer should be provided from the agency to the young adult one month prior to the expiry of an AYA or the young adult reaching the age of majority, whichever is linked to the conclusion of support. In situations that are currently less than a month away from the end of supports, the offer should be immediate.
- Approval processes may be developed at the authority and agency level but should ensure a seamless continuation of support. Authorities can determine whether to go through the formal AYA process for youth who would already be transitioning to an extension of care or to simply extend current supports, while working towards establishing AYAs for those eligible under current CFS standards.
- Documentation provided to the youth must indicate supports will remain in place throughout the COVID-19 response and that notice will be provided to discontinue these emergency benefits.

Continued use of AYAs

- For youth reaching the age of majority who were eligible under previous policy and legislation for an AYA, the agency should work with the youth to transition them to a formal AYA. In the interim, documentation of extended benefits is sufficient if there is no authority directive requiring the use of AYAs.
- Agencies retain the ability to determine the supports required under an AYA within existing policy.
- Authorities retain the ability to approve funding for AYAs to be in place after the COVID-19 benefits end.
- The continuation of benefits and AYAs are voluntary. A young adult may decline supports.

Tracking

- Continuation of support/benefits should be documented in CFSIS, including actively offering all youth turning 18, all young adults on an expiring AYA, and all AYAs turning 21, an extension of support or AYA renewal. This offer, and the response, should be noted in CFSIS case notes.
- Use the existing AYA process to formalize AYAs per authority direction.
- Track all cases where benefits have been held and extended and all AYAs entered into or extended during this period.

Financial Arrangements

Ensure the existing level of support is available for each young adult. This is intended to provide stability and maintain existing services, such as placements, where available and appropriate. In situations where supports/benefits need to be altered due to a change in placement or availability of service, agencies will seek authority approval on any changes in the level of financial support.

The division has previously provided a tracker to document costs related to this measure, recognizing that a large number of youth typically access AYAs at age of

majority, which is already included within single envelope funding. Authorities are required to submit the tracker on a quarterly basis for review by Finance. Trackers can be submitted to cfsauthorityreporting@gov.mb.ca.

The department will continue to work with you to stay informed and supported at this challenging time. Thank you for your flexibility and responsiveness in supporting young adults.

For the latest provincial public health information on COVID-19, including helpful information for citizens, service providers and employers, please regularly visit the Manitoba government's website at: www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Christy Holnbeck | Assistant Deputy Minister
Child and Youth Services