**When a Social Worker Wants to Terminate a Non-Minor Dependent**

**For CASAs**

**What is a Non-Minor Dependent?**

A Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) is a current dependent child or ward of the juvenile court, who has opted to remain in care beyond their 18th birthday. They are able to remain in extended foster care as an NMD status until their 21st birthday. These extra years of support can better prepare a youth for a successful transition into adulthood. To be eligible for extended foster care, a NMD must meet **ALL** of the following**:**

* + Is at least 18 years old, but under age 21
  + Are eligible for either federal or state Aid to Families with Dependent Children- Foster Care (AFDC-FC)
  + Was under an order of foster care on his or her 18th birthday
  + Meets one of the participation criteria

**Requirements to be a Non-Minor Dependent**

For a youth to transition to a Non-Minor Dependent status and remain in Extended Foster Care (EFC), they must meet **ONE** of the following participation criteria:

* + Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential
  + Enrolled in an institution which provides postsecondary or vocational education
  + Employed for at least 80 hours per month
  + Participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment, or education
  + Is incapable of participating in any activity as described in 1- 4 due to a documented medical condition.

**You may have a case child who no longer qualifies, what are your next steps?**

If you have a case child who is not meeting the minimum requirements to stay in Non-Minor Dependency, you can still help them. Hearings are still held six months apart for these cases, so there is time to get your case child back on track before the next hearing so that they may remain eligible.

* Speak to the DPSS social worker and find out if your case child has tracked any progress as an NMD, and find out what he/she needs to complete before the next hearing to qualify.
* Provide resources to your case child to help them get back on track.
* Advocate for the best possible options available to your case child. This could include:
  + Tutoring to help them stay motivated to finish high school
  + Counseling to help them understand why they are not working to complete the requirements of Non-Minor Dependency
  + Facilitating transportation to job interviews
  + Rehearsing interview questions and appropriate answers
  + Resume building
  + Introducing them to THRIVE courses

It is possible, though rare, for a social worker to request a sooner hearing to consider termination of jurisdiction. We are still able to prepare a report for this hearing.

**Exiting and re-entering Extended Foster Care**

When a child in foster care turns 18 years of age, they are given the option to remain in Extended Foster Care, but it is not required. You may have a case child who opts out of EFC for a number of reasons. The good news is that they are able to re-enter EFC at a later time if they discover that they need assistance before they are 21 years of age. If your case child decides they do not want to participate in EFC:

* You will no longer legally be appointed as their CASA
* They do not have to meet any state requirements and their case will be considered closed.

If they choose to re-enter EFC, there are a few steps they will have to take. You can help your case child by informing them of these steps before they leave the program, so that they are prepared if they ever choose to come back.

* They will need to contact their previous DPSS social worker and inform them that they would like to reopen their NMD status.
* They should also call Michelle Wohl, the ILP Program Administrator for DPSS. She is listed as the EFC re-entry contact for the county. She can be reached at (951) 358-7915.
* They must be able to prove that they are meeting at least one of the eligibility requirements listed above.
* The DPSS social worker will have to file an ex-parte request for the NMD to re-enter EFC.
* The request will have to be approved by a Juvenile Court Judge
* Note that this means if the youth calls the Child Abuse hotline and expects to have a staff member immediately sent out to assist them with housing, this likely won’t happen. They may be referred to shelters until other housing can be assessed. It’s not considered an emergent response.
* They may request to have you as their CASA again, and at that time Voices for Children would be contacted to let you know.