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Submissions on Proposed Regulatory Amendments and Policy Directive to Strengthen Supports for Youth Leaving the Care of Children’s Aid Societies

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Submitted Via Online Portal

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor in Council
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Please accept the following submissions of Justice for Children and Youth (“JFCY”) regarding the proposed regulatory amendments and Policy Directive to strengthen supports for youth leaving the care of the children’s aid societies, being proposal number 23-MCCSS003.

JFCY is a child and youth rights organization and a specialty legal clinic with core funding from Legal Aid Ontario. For 45 years, we have focused our practice exclusively on the legal issues facing children and youth. We provide wrap around legal services to the whole child information, advice, and representation - to low-income children and youth across Ontario in a variety of legal subject areas: child welfare, youth criminal justice, education, victimization, human trafficking, child support, social assistance, privacy, health, mental health, income maintenance, immigration, policing and correctional issues, and housing and homelessness.

JFCY we provide services to children and youth under 18, and to young people up to age 25 who are unstably housed, or who have grown up in Canada but have no immigration status. We start where our child and youth clients are and build supportive relationships in the solicitor-client context to find legal and other solutions to legal, personal and social challenges. In addition to our regular practice, we provide unique services specifically designed to meet the needs of young people experiencing houselessness, or who are unstably housed – Street Youth Legal Services (“SYLS”). SYLS services focus on wrap around services to help young people find the legal solutions and other supports necessary to stabilize their lives. Many of these young people are eligible for or in receipt of CCSY. Our submissions and recommendations are based on our unique perspective and extensive experience providing services, education, and advocacy for children and youth within the child welfare context.

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Outline

We commend the Minister's expansion of support for young people, recognizing that supporting the path to adulthood must begin years prior to the young person's 18th birthday. We applaud the goal of increasing transparency, accountability and consistency of services within the child welfare system.

We respectfully submit the following amendments are required to the proposed Regulation and Ready, Set, Go Program ("RSG") Policy Directive to give effect to policy's goals of youth participation in their care, ensuring meaningful transitions for youth, and improving positive outcomes for youth in care. We offer these overarching themes as the basis for our recommendations:

1. Ensuring meaningful respect for the voice, participation, and well-being of young people requires intentional focus on their human and legal rights, and systems and actions must be based on a foundation of rights-respecting practice.
2. Successful transitions from care require the proactive development of meaningful community connections expanding a durable circle of care, including but not limited to personal, social, educational, medical, financial and legal resources.
3. Addressing barriers to success for youth exiting care requires increased and robust financial literacy and access to existing benefits under the Minister's Policy Directives.
4. Income Eligibility Criteria for Financial Supports increase the likelihood of adverse outcomes for young people exiting care.

For the proposed new Regulation and RSG Policy Directive to have meaningful impact, frontline workers will require training and functional resources to implement their features and requirements. We urge the Minister to consider the development of an ***RSG Toolkit***, an accessible resource identifying, explaining, and supporting access to existing programs, services, and supports for young people on a regional, provincial, and federal basis. What workers don't know about they cannot offer to young people. In our experience workers are hungry for useful and actionable information and resources to pass on to young people.

These submissions are presented in three parts:

- A. Detailed recommendations particularizing the proposed amendments;
- B. Summary of Submissions;
- C. A verbatim reproduction of the proposed Policy Directive, including the amendments respectfully submitted by Justice for Children and Youth, and affixed as **Appendix "A"**.

Part A - Recommendations

1. Ensuring meaningful respect for the voice, participation, and well-being of young people requires intentional focus on their human and legal rights, and systems and actions must be based on a foundation of rights-respecting practice.

We commend the Minister's amendments to enhance the participation of young people in decisions involving their interests.

In accordance Canada's obligations under the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* ("UNCRC") and the right of the child to be informed, consulted, and advised with respect to decisions involving their care pursuant to s. 3 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* ("CYFSA"), we respectfully submit that:

1. "Youth voice", means meaningful informed participation and promotion of children's agency. A rights based approach is fundamental to the implementation of the RSG Program: While listening is an essential first step, simply listening is not sufficient. Creating systems and structures that support meaningful ongoing participation and Agency goes to the core of Canada's obligations under the *UNCRC*.
2. Realities disproportionately impacting young people in care, including precarious immigration status, disrupted and incomplete educational attainment, unstable housing, poverty, precarious employment, victimization, and youth criminal justice involvement, are not simply social circumstances, but legal issues for which legal considerations, entitlements and solutions exist. In our experience, barriers and issues faced by young people often have legal elements and solutions that are not identified or addressed, creating unnecessary and, on occasion, insurmountable barriers. Access to justice requires that meaningful connections for children and youth be made with appropriate legal experts. It is a reasonable expectation for any child that their caregiver would assist them in accessing fundamental social determinants of health, which includes legal services. These expectations must be supported, particularly in the context of the RSG program. This includes:
 - a. Ensuring the young person has access to legal advice and is informed of legal resources available to them, including retaining private bar counsel, Legal Aid Ontario services, the Office of the Children's Lawyer personal rights and property rights division, Justice for Children and Youth and the Ontario Ombudsman's office, where appropriate. Evaluation of the child's rights, including but not limited to legal entitlements in the context of: child's right to attend school; special education, and disciplinary proceedings; youth criminal justice; mental health; housing and unstable housing; income security, including estates, government programs, etc.; child welfare matters; family law matters; civil litigation claims, including personal injury; privacy rights; employment issues; human rights; and, victimization, including experiences of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

- b. In circumstances where a young person is experiencing precarious immigration status, considering whether a designated representative should be appointed for the young person, and whether a referral has been made to Child Welfare Immigration Centre for Excellence, and immigration counsel retained.
 - c. Recognizing access to and possession of necessary personal documentation as a corollary of the child's right to legal advice and right to privacy, including but not limited to medical records, youth criminal justice records, privileged and confidential legal information, school records, report cards, transcripts, IEPs, IPRCs, assessments, including medical and psychoeducational assessments, immigration documents, passports, drivers licence, Ontario ID card, etc.
3. The RSG Program must be situated within the mandatory language of continued care and support for youth exiting care under s. 124 of the *CYFSA* to give effect to the law and regulations regarding a young person's ongoing eligibility for services regardless of the timing of execution of the RSG Agreement, any past termination of the RSG agreement by the youth, or a youth's ongoing or past eligibility for financial supports.
 4. Respecting a child's legal rights requires recourse mechanisms to pursue those rights, including in the context of their involvement with the child welfare system. Currently, the only available recourse for the young person in the event of a dispute is the Society's internal complaints process. Young people need access to more robust third party avenues to hear and resolve these disputes, such as the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman, the Child and Family Services Review Board, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and access to independent legal advice.

2. Successful transitions from care require the proactive development of meaningful community connections and expanding a durable circle of care, including but not limited to personal, social, educational, medical, financial and legal resources.

We applaud the recognition of the importance of ongoing connections to caring adults and community in the Policy Directive.

We propose the following considerations as important mechanisms for supporting meaningful and robust community connections and long term supports. Amendments to the Policy Directive to address what a meaningful community connection and developmentally appropriate referral processes look like, recognizing that systemic barriers to accessing services are compounded for young people exiting care, namely:

1. Within the guiding principles of the RSG Program, recognize that transition planning includes proactively developing personal, community, social and professional supports in accordance with the young person's age and stage of development, and ensuring that where referrals are provided, the young person has been able to meaningfully engage with the support;
2. A rights based approach to service requires a respect for the child's privacy and agency in building the circle of care and developing community connections. The Society's

responsibility is to support access and connection with community agencies and to ensure children and young people are able to engage in those relationships and connections on their own terms. The process of making referrals and working collaboratively with supports must be informed by the young person's rights to privacy and autonomy.

We urge the development of a province-wide *RSG Toolkit* to meaningfully realize the aims of the Policy Directive to build community connection and support transition planning. As advocates for young people exiting care, we often see young people who have not been able to connect with services and who have not received support in developing these connections. Simultaneously, we frequently hear feedback from society workers that they were simply unaware and in fact are very interested in accessing this information. This lack of institutional knowledge can create insurmountable barriers for youth, despite the best intentions of child welfare workers and societies. Ameliorating these historical struggles and supporting successful transitions requires developing a resource to ensure youth and frontline workers are able to identify and access these services and programs. To ensure transparency and meaningful participation of youth, this Toolkit should be shared with the young person and made publicly available. Resources to be explained in the RSG Toolkit would include:

- Community health resources, including family medicine, necessary specialists, dentists, optometrists, registered nurses, occupational and physical therapists and others;
- Mental health supports, including social workers, psychotherapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, among others;
- Local housing workers, available housing subsidies, and the availability of rent-geared-to-income housing;
- Local YIT/YOW workers;
- Supports to foster permanency in accordance with a young person's developmental needs, including applications for DSO services where appropriate, community based trustee programs and legal advice regarding guardianship options, if applicable
- Options for educational advancement, including IB programming, gifted program options, and extra-curricular activities;
- Information and support for post-secondary applications that fulfill individual aspirations, including scholarship and bursary programs, available subsidies, RESPs, among others;
- For youth with a deceased parent or caregiver, information regarding CPP benefits and the Office of the Children's Lawyer's property rights division to ensure any estate or intestate benefits are realized;
- Supports to regularize the young person's immigration status and secure citizenship, including Legal Aid Ontario services, neighbourhood legal clinics, community and settlement organizations, the Child Welfare Immigration Centre for Excellence, and Justice for Children and Youth;

- Information regarding external financial supports for youth exiting care, including the Telus for Good program for phone and internet access and post-secondary bursary and scholarship programs.

3. Addressing barriers for youth exiting care requires increased and robust financial literacy and access to existing benefits under the Minister's Policy Directives

Financial security issues are significant barriers for children coming out of care. Endemic poverty is a persistent and significant barrier to the amelioration of young people's social and personal circumstances. While there are numbers of policies, guidelines and directives targeted at access to financial supports for youth, including the RESP and OCBE programs, in our experience these opportunities are poorly understood, or even unknown to many frontline staff, child welfare workers, and lawyers. Ensuring that front line workers know about, have access to, and facility at applying for or implementing these opportunities is crucial in our support to young people transitioning into adulthood.

A critical aspect of financial security for youth leaving care is financial literacy. While there are existing programs and resources to support forward-facing financial literacy for youth, a much more robust approach is required that includes informing children about the financial realities of their circumstances, to support their agency and ability to move forward as they transition out of care. For example, we regularly hear from young people that 'the society is using me for my money' or 'all they care about is the money they get from the government'. Approaches to financial literacy and implementing the RSG program must address and work to shift that experience to one of understanding the financial aspects of their care and the supports available for their future. Supporting youth to access these programs must recognize that RESPs and OCBE savings are not simply financial benefits, but are a sign of our collective belief in the value of the young person's present and future self.

To this end, amendments are required to the transition planning requirements of the RSG Program and the RSG Program checklist to cross-reference the CW 002-18-Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent, 004-18-Registered Education Saving Plans where it intersects with life skills for youth, and ensure that frontline service providers have information and access to the young person's entitlements under these policies, as well as the RSG Program.

4. Income Eligibility Criteria for Financial Supports Increase the Likelihood of Adverse Outcomes for Young People Exiting Care.

We applaud the expansion of financial supports for youth leaving care. As recognized in the Policy Directive, youth exiting care experience adverse outcomes disproportionate to the rest of the population. In recognition of the significant social determinants of health and serious negative outcomes risk faced by children transitioning out of care, we strongly urge the Minister to eliminate all barriers and restrictions on access to financial supports under the RSG Program.

In addition to the elimination of income testing criteria from eligibility for financial RSG Program benefits, there exist serious problems with “Appendix C – Provision of Financial Supports to Youth who are Party to a Ready, Set, Go (RSG) Agreement”, namely:

1. The regulation and directive require amendments to direct that a young person shall not be refused financial services by virtue of a failure to provide or file their income tax returns. Basing eligibility for financial supports income tax returns is problematic and unfeasible for many youth leaving care. Some young people will not have or be unable to file their income tax returns. Moreover, these tax returns do not capture particular circumstances impacting the young person’s need for support, including for youth living with disability or mental health needs.
2. Financial eligibility criteria must be indexed to allow upward flexibility and discretion to account for the escalated cost of living in high cost areas. Without indexing to recognize fluctuating costs of living across the province, young people may effectively be forced out of their communities, disrupting their support networks and connections to resources.

What follows below as Appendix A, and Appendix B verbatim reproduction of the proposed policy proposal (Appendix A), and the READY, SET, GO PROGRAM CHECKLIST (Appendix B), with JFCY’s proposed amendments integrated into the text. Proposed changes are identified in blue font, italicized, and underlined for ease of reference

We thank the Ministry for its consideration of these submissions. We welcome any opportunity to discuss these submissions and any other aspect of the Ministry’s work with children and young people receiving child welfare or child well-being services.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Appendix A: PROPOSED REVISIONS TO POLICY DIRECTIVE: CW 00X-23 Preparing Youth for Successful Transition from the Care of Children’s Aid Societies

CONSULTATION DRAFT

INTRODUCTION:

The intent of this policy directive is to provide direction to children’s aid societies (societies) with respect to new requirements for societies to prepare youth for successful transition from their care to adulthood, and to introduce the new Ready, Set, Go (RSG) Program and related requirements for societies.

Societies are required under section 124 of the CYFSA and Ontario Regulation 156/18 made under the CYFSA entitled “General Matters Under the Authority of the Minister” (the Regulation), to provide eligible youth¹ with continued care and supports based on their individual needs and aspirations to enable them to transition smoothly to adulthood. These supports, both financial and non-financial, were previously provided under the Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY) Program. The RSG Program replaces the CCSY Program.

Furthermore, new regulatory amendments will come into effect on March 31, 2023, that require societies to provide care to youth in extended society care with a focus on better preparing them for transitions out of care. This directive supports the regulation and promotes early assessment and planning, promotes youth voices and youth engagement in decision-making about their long-term goals and identified barriers, during the provision of care prior to the child’s 18th birthday, with a view to preparing youth for successful transition to adulthood.

Outcomes for youth in, leaving and from the child welfare system are typically poor compared to the general Canadian youth population. Without a stable home environment and strong relationships with peers, mentors, or adults, youth in and from care are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes, such as homelessness, mental health concerns, unemployment, lack of educational engagement and achievement, and involvement in the justice system.

Youth leaving the care of a society or customary care are more likely to achieve improved outcomes when they are provided with supports and guidance and have a voice in planning and decisions that concern them. This policy sets out a youth-centred, strengths-based program that outlines the parameters within which societies are expected to work with eligible children and youth both before and beyond their 18th birthday *[in accordance with the rights of children and youth enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of children under s. 3 of the CYFSA](#)*. Societies will provide supports and guidance that will assist youth to achieve physical and emotional well-being, acquire basic life management skills and develop social networks that include connections to caring adults and the community while respecting a child’s identity characteristics and cultural connections.

¹ For the purposes of this directive, a person who is 18 or older and under the age of 23 is defined as a “youth”.

Societies are required to offer the RSG program to all eligible youth.

The legislative requirements with respect to the RSG program are set out in s. 124 of the CYFSA and the Regulation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Transition supports and services to children and youth in and leaving the care of children's aid societies will be guided by the following principles.

Transitions Planning is Care: Integral to the legislated function of children's aid societies to "provide care for children assigned or committed to its care" is the responsibility to prepare youth for successful transition from their care.

Individualized Assessment and Planning: Evidence demonstrates that best outcomes for young people transitioning from care to adulthood are more likely to be achieved when the process is gradual, well supported, based on strong preparation and planning, with access to tailored supports to increase life skills, promote independence and foster stability.

Education and Employment Pathways: Evidence demonstrates that education is one of the most important factors for future employment and other long-term positive outcomes and that workforce participation decreases the risk of poor outcomes. The goal of transition planning is to better ensure youth are prepared for and working toward the lives they want to lead when they exit care. Transition planning should give youth improved access to services that support them in building connections to their communities, accessing education, and finding training and employment opportunities. These additional supports will help empower youth leaving care to navigate the path to successful adulthood and financial independence.

Youth Voice: Transition planning is driven by the child or youth and societies will actively engage children and youth and support them to drive their own plan for transitions. *Fostering youth participation requires a rights-based approach to services, including the rights of youth to be informed of their rights, to express their views freely, to be consulted on the nature of services provided to them and advised on decisions with respect to those services. Adult supporters as duty bearers are required not only to inform young people are informed, but are also to ensure young people are meaningfully supported to implement and actualize their legal rights. This may well require connecting young people with relevant legal services.* Children in care have experienced traumatic events and circumstances, and separation from their families and communities. Societies will take a trauma-informed approach and make every effort to engage the child or youth in decision-making, assisting the child or youth to build on their strengths and implement meaningful plans that are responsive to their circumstances while promoting educational and employment pathways that will contribute to successful transition. Societies will be responsible for ensuring that all children and youth have access to the full RSG program and are accountable for documenting that engagement.

Concurrent Planning: Recognizing that societies have an obligation under the CYFSA to pursue a permanency option for every child in their care, successful transition planning should be

undertaken concurrently to ensure children in care are appropriately prepared should they remain in care until the time of their 18th birthday. *Transition planning includes proactively developing connections with the youth and their circle of care, including community and professional supports, to increase substantive equality for children leaving care.*

Connections to Culture, Identity and Community: Well-being is increased when children and youth feel connected to their cultures and communities and have relationships and services that support their identities. Transition planning will prioritize these connections. Each youth is unique, and service should be responsive to the diversity and unique identity characteristics of children, youth and families served and be provided from an anti-oppression and anti-racism perspective *through a rights-based, youth centred approach recognizing the lived reality of youth in care, including the impact of legal status on emotional well-being, the youth's sense of identity, and connection to community.*

Culturally Appropriate Services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children and Youth: Service to First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) children and youth should be provided in a manner that recognizes their cultures, heritages, traditions, connection to their communities and the concept of the extended family.

REQUIREMENTS:

Transitions Planning for Children in Care

The following requirements apply to children in extended society care. However, these requirements for transition should also be considered for application by societies where the child is:

- In interim society care for a period of 12 consecutive months and the society anticipates that the society may bring an application for extended society care;
- In a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA) and the youth who is 16 or 17 wishes to participate in transitions planning; ~~or~~
- In a customary care agreement supervised by a society, and in consultation with the band or community and child there is agreement that planning for transitions, as outlined in this directive, is appropriate in the circumstances; *or*
- *Was formerly in the extended care of the Society and has experienced or is at risk of an adoption breakdown.*

Where the society decides not to offer these supports to children in interim society care, in a VYSA, or in customary care, the society will document the reasons for this decision *and provide notice of the society's decision to the young person, in accordance with their age and stage of development.*

1. Upon the child's 13th birthday, the society is required to initiate every action and assessment record (AAR), and the plan of care process, with a transition lens applied. Each of the life dimensions will be considered from the child's perspective and to support building on the

child's eventual readiness to successfully transition from care. These dimensions include, at a minimum:

- *Health:* Considering whether there are physical, mental, emotional or developmental health issues, that require assessment and/or treatment in order for the child to be ready for successful transition, [possible barriers to accessing healthcare services, and available community resources, recognizing the importance of providing consistency of care where possible.](#)
- *Education:* Considering the child's identified goals or views about education and/or employment pathways. Considering whether there are educational assessments, supports or interventions (e.g., tutoring, careers courses, supplemental work to obtain credits) that would contribute to the child being successfully prepared for post-secondary education and/or employment pathways. [Considering whether the child needs accommodation and whether any existing educational supports and resources should be updated, in accordance with the child's identified views. Exploring any current accommodations for the child, including any IPRC, IEP, or psycho-educational assessment.](#)
- *Identity:* Considering transition supports and connections from the perspective of each unique child and their unique identity characteristics. Considering whether there are connections and supports that would contribute to a healthy formation of the child's identity and readiness for transition. Assisting in securing appropriate identification documents (e.g., birth certificate, social insurance number, health card, photo ID, citizenship or permanent residency card, and, in addition for FNIM children, any membership or Secure Certificate of Indian Status that the child may be eligible for.) [and identifying necessary steps to regularize the child's status, recognizing the impact of precarious status on the young person's sense of self and equality of opportunities, including as relates to that support the youth in pursuing post-secondary education and/or workforce participation.](#)
- *Family and social relationships:* Considering whether the child has reliable and enduring personal relationships and how to support the child in building relationships and maintaining relationships that are important to the child. [Exploring the child's existing circle of care and trusted adults. Considering the possibility of family finding for the child, in accordance with their views. Building trust with the child in supporting the child's personal relationships, including through ongoing and transparent communications regarding privacy.](#)
- *Emotional and behavioural development:* Considering whether the necessary assessments, connections, supports and services that will prepare the child for successful transition have been initiated, and the child's perspective on their relationships and behavioural expression. [Considering the need for meaningful](#)

accommodation for the child in the context of their education, activities, and day to day care, in accordance with the child's views.

- *Self-care skills:* Considering whether the youth's self-care skills (e.g., personal care, financial literacy, meal preparation) are appropriate to their age and developmental stage and whether there are additional supports that would contribute to the youth being successfully prepared to care for themselves independently. *Considering self-care skills in the context of the youth's individual circumstances and lived reality, including but not limited to the availability of supports for FNIM youth specifically, youth with special needs, youth who have lived through the death of a parent, and youth navigating unstable housing. Considering available community resources and connections for the youth, including possible referrals to YIT and YOW workers for youth aged 16 and over.*
2. Plans of care will integrate the findings of the AAR process and incorporate the youth's views, goals and tasks that build toward successful transitions, including but not limited to any necessary assessments, participation in programming, and educational supports.
 3. At a point following the child's 15th birthday, and no later than three months before the child's 16th birthday, the society will offer the child an opportunity to participate in a conference or other forum to support formal transition planning, based on the following considerations:
 - A formal alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process through a provincial ADR service may be utilized. In these situations, ADR regulatory and policy requirements apply.
 - If the child is FNIM, the society must consult with a representative chosen by each of the child's bands and FNIM communities to determine whether an alternative dispute resolution process established by the bands and communities, or another prescribed form of ADR process could assist.
 - A culturally appropriate resource may be utilized (e.g., Indigenous approach, African Caribbean Black model).
 - The conference will be planned in advance and the society will seek input from the child about the conference. The conference will bring together service providers and individuals who are important to the child, with the child at the centre of the planning process.
 - Where the child is over 15 at the time that they are placed in extended society care, the conference will be offered as soon as possible, and no later than nine months after the Order. Youth who are not in extended care and are participating in transition

- planning, will be offered a conference or other forum to discuss transition planning as soon as possible after becoming eligible for transition planning under this Directive.
- Where the youth has been offered and refused a conference, the society will make subsequent offers at the point of developing each Plan of Care or Youth Plan.
 - Follow up conferences at various junctures leading up to the child's transition from care may be appropriate, and the frequency should be a subject of the conference. It may also be appropriate to schedule conferences for youth who are receiving transition supports through the RSG Program to continue to assist youth in transition planning.
4. The society will document the following with respect to the conference or other forum:
 - The occasions on which the opportunity to participate in a conference or other forum was offered to the child, and the relevant details (i.e., type(s) of conference or forum offered).
 - If the child does not wish to participate in a conference or other forum, the reasons for the child's decision, to the extent that they can be ascertained.
 5. Prior to the child's 16th birthday, the society is required to work with the youth to complete a review of the youth's readiness to transition, using the Ontario Youth Transitions Guide (Transitions Guide) provided by the ministry. The goal of the review is to:
 - Assess the child's readiness to transition from care across nine indicators;
 - Prioritize areas of focus for the child's plan of care; and
 - Identify the appropriate services and individuals that the child would like to participate in the child's plan of care process. In the case of a First Nations, Inuit or Métis child, the Band or Community should be notified and invited to participate, and any culturally specific planning processes will be utilized.
 6. Once every six months, as part of the preparation for the plan of care, the society is required to review the individualized assessment of the child, using the Transitions Guide, to measure the child's progress in preparing for transition, and to identify new priorities, and the necessary services and supports for the child. This review should be completed with the child and should include the child or youth's perspectives on their progress, their goals, barriers and their views on what services and supports would assist. This review process should continue after the child turns 18 if they are eligible for the RSG program until the youth exits transition supports or the youth's 23rd birthday, and the process should inform the Youth Plan.
 7. If at any time during the process of assessment and transition planning it becomes apparent that the child may become eligible for adult developmental services at the time of the youth's

18th birthday, the society will address, as part of transition planning, eligibility requirements for the child to receive services from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO).

8. Prior to the child's 18th birthday, the society will ensure the completion of the following (see checklist at Appendix A):
- The child has been provided with identification and membership documents that have been obtained by the society.
 - *The child has been provided with a copy of third party records, including health and educational assessments and reports.*
 - The child has been prepared for transition where financial matters are concerned *and has been provided with information regarding the financial supports available from the Society, including RESP and OCBE fund information, and the existence of any funds held in trust for the youth by the society.*
 - The child has been given the opportunity to participate in real world life experiences that inform a life skill.
 - The child has been connected with professional supports. *The child has been supported regarding any necessary changes to existing professional supports whose scope of practice is limited to youth under 18.*
 - *The Society has met with the child to review current supports and services available to them when they leave care, including continued care and support for youth under the RSG Program.* The child has been provided with an information package on current supports and services available to them when they leave care.

The Ready, Set, Go (RSG) Program for Youth 18-23rd birthday

9. A society is required to *provide continued care for youth pursuant to s. 124 of the CYFSA. In accordance with this section, the society will* enter into an agreement with each eligible youth, to whom they will provide continued care and supports for youth through the RSG program. The society must use the standard agreement template (see Appendix B).
10. A society is required to engage with children on an agreement prior to the expiry of their court order, customary care agreement, or Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA) (e.g., 3-6 months prior to the youth's 18th birthday). *The society will provide written and oral notice to the young person as to the availability of the RSG Program.* The option to enter this agreement should be the subject of transition discussions. *A failure to engage with the youth or sign the agreement prior to the youth's 18th birthday will not disqualify the youth from RSG Program supports.*

11. The agreement must be signed by the youth, the society worker and approved by the local director (or designate). The society worker will provide a copy of the signed agreement to the youth, and document in the youth's file that the youth received a copy of the signed agreement.
12. The continuation of an agreement is not contingent on whether the youth meets their goals as stated in the Youth Plan.

Youth Plan:

13. The society worker and youth will work together to develop a Youth Plan that is based on the youth's individual strengths, needs and goals and considers, at minimum, the nine indicators from the Transitions Guide. *The society worker will advise the youth of the option to include personal and professional supports in the meeting.*
14. The Youth Plan must include the financial and/or other supports that will be provided to the youth. The parameters for financial assistance are set out in Appendix C.
15. The initial Youth Plan will be finalized within thirty days of the agreement being signed.
16. The society worker and youth will meet to review progress on a quarterly basis, at minimum, and the Youth plan will be reviewed and updated, utilizing the Transitions Guide, at least once every 6 months. *The youth may request verbally or in writing that their Youth plan be reviewed and updated at any time.*
17. Each Youth Plan (initial and updated) shall be signed by the youth, society worker, and local director (or designate). The society shall provide a copy of the signed plan to the youth, and upon consent of the youth, to other participants involved in the development or implementation of the plan. *The society shall include written information regarding the Society's complaints process and information for the Ombudsman's office in the event that the youth does not agree with the contents of the Youth plan or the services provided under the RSG agreement, and is unable to resolve the dispute with the worker directly.* For each Youth Plan, the society worker shall document in the youth's file that the youth received a copy of the plan.
18. The society shall prepare a closing summary for each youth at the end of his or her participation in the RSG program, which is to be included in the final Youth Plan. The closing summary shall be informed by the youth and include the youth's status with respect to each of the nine indicators in the Transitions Guide, *and will include an updated copy of the Ready, Set, Go Checklist as at the last date of the youth's participation in the RSG Program. The youth shall be provided with a copy of the closing summary in addition to an information package, the Ready, Set, Go Checklist and an information package on current supports and services available to them.*

Provision of Supports to Youth

19. Provisions of supports to youth are outlined in the Regulation. For greater certainty, where an eligible youth is residing outside of Ontario and wishes to remain in an agreement, the youth will continue to receive supports, including financial supports.

Termination of Agreements

20. Where an agreement is being terminated by the youth, notice must be given to the society. The agreement then remains in effect for a notice period of three months from the date notice was received.
21. The society shall continue to provide the supports set out in the agreement and youth plan to the youth during the notice period. Societies shall document in the youth's file the youth's reason for terminating the agreement and the efforts made to locate or engage the youth prior to the termination of the agreement. *The youth will be advised of their ongoing eligibility for the RSG Program until their 23rd birthday.*
22. Where a society ceases to provide financial supports *as a result of being unable to contact the youth despite reasonable efforts for a period of at least three months* in accordance with the Regulation, the society shall resume payment of financial support to an eligible youth when the youth resumes contact with the society. *Where a society ceases to provide financial support as a result of income ineligibility, the youth receiving financial assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997, or the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, the society worker will advise the youth of their ongoing eligibility for other supports. The Society worker will notify the youth verbally and in writing of their ongoing eligibility for financial supports under the RSG program in the event their employment situation changes or they cease receiving support under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 or the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997.*
23. Where a youth's caregiver is no longer receiving a targeted subsidy or financial assistance through the Stay Home for School Policy, and the youth is still eligible for continued care and supports through the RSG program, a new agreement *including updated financial supports to be provided to the youth in accordance with Appendix C* should be developed to reflect this change.
24. Where a youth is no longer receiving support under the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997* or the *Ontario Works Act, 1997*, a new agreement *including updated financial supports to be provided to the youth in accordance with Appendix C* should be developed to reflect this change.
25. Where a youth has experienced a change in income and they are now be eligible for financial supports, a new agreement *including updated financial supports to be provided to the youth in accordance with Appendix C* should be developed to reflect this change.

Dispute Resolution

26. Each society shall ensure that its dispute resolution process addresses complaints brought forward by youth, including situations where the society is ceasing financial supports, or changing the level of financial and non-financial supports provided to a youth. Each society shall provide written information on its dispute resolution process to youth upon signing the agreement and in circumstances where the society intends to terminate the agreement with the youth, where the youth can be located.
27. The society shall give the youth information on its complaints process [and information regarding the Ombudsman's office](#) when the youth signs the agreement, upon renewal of the agreement, or at any time when the youth expresses dissatisfaction with service.

Documents and Information:

28. The society shall ensure that upon signing an Agreement a youth is provided with:
- A copy of the signed agreement;
 - A copy of the signed Stay Home for School Agreement (the agreement template is appended to the 2023 Ontario Permanency Funding Policy Guidelines), where applicable;
 - A copy of the youth's initial and updated Youth Plans; and
 - Written information about the RSG Program, [the society's complaints policy, and the Ombudsman's Office.](#)

Reporting:

29. The society will collect data concerning each child receiving transition supports and report aggregate data to the ministry on an annual basis as required.

Provisions to Support the Transition from the Moratorium on Youth Leaving Care

Effective April 1, 2023, this directive comes into effect and the moratorium on youth leaving care will have been lifted. The following provisions are in place to support transition.

30. For youth who have already reached their 23rd birthday, societies will enter agreements and continue to provide transition supports for a period of six months. Supports for these youth will be consistent with those provided immediately prior to April 1, 2023.
31. Societies will continue to provide transition supports for youth who were in interim society immediately prior to the moratorium and became eligible for financial supports until their 23rd birthday.

APPENDIX B

READY, SET, GO PROGRAM CHECKLIST

Ready: Youth Life Skills

Examples of life skills for youth aged 13 to 18

The Transition Guide will set out several possible skills that a child can develop during their time in care. The identified skills are connected to general life skills, financial literacy, skills to assist a child in moving towards their identified goals and life skills that are important to a child's identity, culture, and heritage.

- Meeting with a banker to discuss credit scores, credit cards, debt, open a bank account
- Practicing budget in the grocery store by grocery shopping for the family
- Practical meal preparation
- Completed income tax return *and opened "My Account" on the Canada Revenue Agency's website*
- Meeting with a financial planner regarding the Registered Education Savings Program (RESP) and the Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent (OCBE) Savings Program
- Participating in advocacy
- Volunteering
- Opportunities to practically explore music/art/hobbies/organized sport
- A session with a career coach who takes the youth shopping for an interview outfit, co-creates/edits resume and cover letter, helps fill out online job applications
- College/university/trades campus or workplace tour days
- Going to a community lecture at a local postsecondary institution
- Attending a session on nutrition and grocery shopping
- Navigating public transit (in communities where this is feasible)
- Support to obtain a driving licence
- Doing another self-development course
- Participating in a competition
- *Explored housing, including connecting with a housing worker, and completing a subsidized housing application*

Set: Child Protection Worker Accountability Checklist

The child protection worker's responsibilities to be completed by youth's 18th birthday

1. Documentation and ID

Does the youth have all of the corresponding documents?

- Birth Certificate
 - Social Insurance Number
 - Health Card
 - Driver's Licence (if applicable)
 - Government Issued Photo ID Card
 - Secure Certificate of Indian Status (formally known as a Certificate of Indian Status) and or any membership documents from a band or First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) community
 - Passport or Permanent Resident Card – have you guided the youth to obtain citizenship and explained the consequences of not doing so
 - Where the youth does not have citizenship, is the youth connected with legal resources to enable the youth to regularize their immigration status, including a designated representative, where applicable*
 - A work or study permit for temporary residents
 - A copy of any medical assessments or third-party medical records related to the youth, including mental health assessments for the youth;*
 - A copy of any IPRC, IEP, psychoeducational assessment or other third-party educational records for the youth*
 - A copy of any court orders or agreements to which the youth is subject.*
2. Has the society supported the youth to participate in **life skills and development between age 13-18 as set out in the Transitions Guide?**
3. Does the youth have financial affairs in order?
- Opened a bank account and has contact information for their financial institution
 - Has a credit card and understands credit scores
 - Has a provider selected for income tax returns
 - Has set up Registered Education Savings Program (RESP) and the Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent (OCBE) Savings program (if applicable), *including a copy of existing account statements, the availability of disbursements, and programs for the transfer, redemption, or collapse of the accounts*
 - Has the youth been supported in submitting an RGI housing application, where applicable*

- If the child has a deceased caregiver, has any estate or beneficiary information been obtained and/or referral to the Office of the Children's Lawyer Property Rights Division been provided, and an application made for CPP survivor benefits for the youth, as applicable*
 - Where applicable, has the youth been advised of the availability of DSO services, RDSP programs, and other developmentally appropriate support services*
 - Where applicable, has the youth been advised regarding the availability of community based trustee programs for financial assistance*
4. Has the youth been connected to **professional supports**?
- Has a family doctor or registered nurse
 - Has a dentist
 - Has an optometrist
 - Has a therapist/psychologist/psychiatrist (if applicable)
 - Has an Elder (if applicable)
 - Is connected with their spiritual or religious community, in accordance with their self-identification*
 - Has a legal representation (if applicable)*
 - Has all referrals needed
5. Was the youth provided with an **information package** on current supports and services available to them when they leave care such as:
- The contact information of a Youth in Transition Worker/Housing Support Worker
 - Information on the Aftercare Benefits Initiative (ABI)
 - Information on how to apply for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)
 - Information on the Living and Learning Grant (LLG)
 - Information on the Stay Home for School Program
 - Information on the Postsecondary Application Fee Reimbursement Program
 - Contact information of their Band representative, Elder or a representative of their FNIM community

- Information on how to protect their online privacy and security of their financial and personal records
 - Information on emergency service phone numbers and crisis lines
 - Information on mental health supports within the community, [and information about 211 and 311 services](#)
6. Does the youth have their medication and understands how to manage it?
7. Does the youth have a cell phone and computer?

Go: Pathways to School and Work

Opportunities for youth between ages 18-23

A society shall be responsible for having ongoing discussions with youth about their pathways to school and work and discussions about the youth's identified goals as set out in the Transition Guide.