



TITLE	POLICY NUMBER	
Community Program Screening	DCS 12-03	
RESPONSIBLE AREA	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION
Office of Quality Improvement	December 11, 2019	1

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Child Safety's (DCS) mission is enhanced by the participation of community programs that provide services such as life skill development, tutoring, and mentoring to children in DCS care and custody, and/or young adults in extended foster care. DCS is responsible for ensuring that all such community programs meet standards that maintain child safety and well-being. Accordingly, the Department establishes this policy regarding community program selection, responsibilities, and expectations.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies solely to non-contracted community programs that approach DCS with a proposal to provide services to youth in DCS care and custody, and/or young adults in extended foster care. Participation in community programs is entirely voluntary and shall not be mandated. Community programs that are presently under contract with DCS are expected to be in full compliance with the terms and conditions of their contracts.

III. AUTHORITY

[A.R.S. 8-453](#)

Powers and duties

IV. DEFINITIONS

Community program: A youth-serving program that provides services such as career

planning, mentoring, coaching, and/or any other life skills designed specifically to assist youth in foster care to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

DCS Information: All information, whether stored in an electronic or a hard copy file, the Department gathers during the course of an investigation from the time a case is opened and until it is closed. DCS information does not include information that is contained in child welfare agency licensing records.

Department or DCS: The Arizona Department of Child Safety.

V. POLICY

A. Screening of Community Programs

1. Any non-contracted community program that approaches DCS with a proposal to offer services to youth in DCS care, and/or young adults in extended foster care, shall submit to the Permanency and Youth Services Unit a *Community Program Screening Employee/Volunteer Document Checklist* form listing each employee or volunteer of the community program who is proposed to provide direct services. If accepted as a service provider, the community program shall update this form whenever new employees or volunteers join or exit the program.
2. Any community program that approaches DCS to offer (or is currently offering) services shall complete a screening process to assess their qualifications, compatibility with DCS practice standards, and ability to provide services. The academic credentials, work history, and relevant life experiences of individual service providers shall be considered. Community programs must complete the screening process and be accepted by the DCS Permanency and Youth Services Unit before services may be offered or provided (or, in the case of existing programs, to continue offering or providing services).
3. The *Community Program Screening Tool* will be used to evaluate the following community program components:
 - a. content/curriculum and applicability to youth in DCS care and custody and/or young adults in extended foster care;
 - b. goals, objectives, and expected outcomes;

- c. target population to be served;
- d. compatibility with DCS practice standards;
- e. procedures to obtain consent from clients/guardians prior to receiving services;
- f. staff and volunteer selection, training, and supervision;
- g. location, availability, and accessibility;
- h. timelines for service delivery;
- i. measurements of program outcomes;
- j. plan to communicate with assigned DCS Specialist and other professionals regarding the youth's participation and progress;
- k. plan to report aggregate data to DCS regarding program outcomes, if applicable;
- l. commitment to continuous quality improvement;
- m. commitment to cultural competence and diversity;
- n. history, mission, goals, and record of accomplishments in working in collaboration with DCS and/or relevant projects with other entities; and
- o. history of working with youth who have experienced trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and/or have special needs.

B. Community Program Requirements

1. DCS shall evaluate whether community programs are capable of rendering high-quality services in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and DCS policies, including the DCS Volunteer Management Policy ([DCS 11-08](#)). Community programs shall familiarize themselves with this policy and ensure that their volunteers observe its requirements.
2. Community programs must hold any necessary licenses and/or registrations to conduct business in the State of Arizona.
3. Community programs shall submit to DCS an organizational chart detailing job titles and reporting lines.

4. Community programs shall inform DCS of the existence of any licenses, certifications, and certificates of insurance necessary to conduct their business operations; they shall immediately report to DCS any suspension or revocation of license, certification, or insurance coverage that impairs their ability to deliver services.
5. Unless the proposed service is targeted for a specific population, community programs shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sex, genetic information, pregnancy, military or veteran status, or any other category protected under applicable federal, state, or local law.
6. Community programs shall not adjust their program model and service delivery without the prior permission and approval of DCS.
7. If transportation is required, the community program shall provide it.
8. Community programs shall not take any photographs or video recordings of children or young adult receiving DCS services, nor may they transmit to any person or entity outside of DCS any personally identifiable information they may glean about said children or young adults.

C. Training

DCS shall evaluate whether community program employees have received the training necessary to deliver the proposed services. Community programs shall provide a description of all educational and experiential requirements for program staff, if applicable.

D. Central Registry Background Checks

Employees and volunteers of community programs who have direct access to children and youth in DCS care and custody, and/or young adults in extended foster care, shall undergo a DCS Central Registry check. A record of substantiated child abuse or neglect in the Central Registry will disqualify an individual from having any access to children and youth in DCS care and custody, and/or young adults in extended foster care. Moreover, any individual with a substantiated Central Registry report in any state or jurisdiction, or who is the alleged perpetrator in a pending investigation or appeal of a report of child abuse or neglect, will also be automatically disqualified from any access to children and youth in DCS care and custody, and/or young adults in extended foster care.

E. Fingerprint Clearance Cards

Employees and volunteers of community programs are required to obtain a Level 1 Fingerprint Clearance Card from the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) prior to having *any* access to children, youth, or young adults in DCS care. Inability to obtain a Level One Fingerprint Clearance Card pursuant to [A.R.S. § 41-1758.07](#) will disqualify an individual from having any access to children, youth, or young adults in DCS care.

Community programs shall maintain up-to-date records of the fingerprint clearance cards of their employees and volunteers, and are responsible for conducting periodic reviews to ensure that clearance cards have not been suspended, revoked, or reached expiration.

F. Confidentiality

1. All community programs shall maintain the confidentiality of information gathered and developed in the course of providing services. This includes all protected health information (PHI) in accordance with applicable federal laws including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Community providers shall sign a [Community Program Acknowledgement of Confidentiality](#) form affirming their commitment to maintain the confidentiality of all DCS information. If the community program wishes to use any data or information gleaned through the provision of services for research purposes, the provisions of the Research Review Requests ([DCS 14-02](#)) policy shall apply.
2. All requests for release of information must be reviewed and approved by DCS in advance. All consents or authorizations to release client records must conform to applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing the release of records.
3. Community programs shall ensure that all of their records meet applicable federal and state laws and regulations related to storage, transmission, and maintenance, and retention.
4. Community programs shall train their employees and volunteers on the responsibility of safeguarding confidential information. All employees and volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement attesting that they have read, understand, and will abide by confidentiality policies.

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Requests to Provide Services

1. A community program will complete the *Community Program Application*, which can be accessed at the DCS website, and submit it electronically to: YouthServices@azdcs.gov.
2. The Permanency and Youth Services Manager shall acknowledge receipt of the request via email. The Unit shall attempt to review and respond to the application as expeditiously as possible, and preferably within ten business days of receipt. The community program will receive a letter via email stating whether the proposed service met Department standards and was accepted, or did not meet Department standards and was declined.
3. A record of all applications submitted will be maintained by the Permanency and Youth Services Manager.

B. Review and Consideration of Community Programs

1. The DCS Permanency and Youth Services Unit shall review the *Community Program Application* to assess the ability of the community program to deliver service to DCS youth in care. The aspects to be evaluated include:
 - a. the program's understanding of the needs of the target population and how the target population will benefit from receiving the services delivered by the program;
 - b. how the program intends to accomplish its objectives with interventions (e.g., mentoring, life skill development, educational/vocational training) designed to address the needs of the target population; and the program's procedures to make referrals to other services when necessary and appropriate;
 - c. the program's history of quality service delivery and the degree to which the program's interventions are evidence-based;
 - d. the activities and methods the program will use to engage youth who have been impacted by trauma, separation, loss, difficult family dynamics, and/or have specific needs (behavioral health, expectant/parenting, etc.);
 - e. the number, qualifications, and skills of all staff, consultants, sub-grantees and/or volunteers who will perform the proposed service

- activities, and the supervision methods that will be utilized;
- f. where and when program services are offered, and their general accessibility to the target population;
 - g. how the program will record data and maintain confidentiality of client records;
 - h. whether the timelines for service delivery meet the needs of the target population;
 - i. how the program will measure and assess its effectiveness;
 - j. how the program will coordinate with the assigned DCS Specialist, local community agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders;
 - k. how the program's interventions demonstrate a commitment to cultural competency and diversity;
 - l. the program's commitment to continuous quality improvement; and
 - m. how the program intends to conduct a program evaluation or report aggregated data on program delivery of outcomes.
2. Prior to accepting the program, the Permanency and Youth Services Unit verifies that a search of the Central Registry is made for each program employee or volunteer who will have direct access to children and youth in DCS care. Information obtained from the Central Registry is confidential and can only be released as authorized by law. Department employees who disclose or use information obtained from a Central Registry search for any purpose other than those outlined in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal. Impermissible dissemination of DCS information is a class 2 misdemeanor.
 3. The Permanency and Youth Services Unit will determine if the community program offers sufficient benefit to youth in DCS care and assists the Department in fulfilling its mission.

- a. If accepted as a community partner, the program will be notified via letter by the Permanency and Youth Services Unit. Acceptance will be valid for one year and will be reviewed annually by the Permanency and Youth Services Unit. The renewal process shall include an updated Central Registry and Fingerprint Clearance Card check for program staff who provide services. If the service is renewed, the Permanency and Youth Services Unit will submit an updated [Community Program Screening Employee/Volunteer Document Checklist](#).
- b. If the application is declined, the program will receive a letter from the Permanency and Youth Services Unit identifying the areas that need to be strengthened in order to gain acceptance. The program may re-apply in six months.

C. List of Approved Community Programs

If the Permanency and Youth Services Unit accepts the program as a community partner, the program will be added to a list of DCS-sanctioned community programs. Placement on the list does not guarantee referrals to the service; youth in care, and young adults in extended foster care, for whom the service is targeted must be willing to participate and shall not be required to do so.

DCS shall maintain this list on its website. The Permanency and Youth Services Unit will be responsible for maintenance and oversight of the list. DCS staff and providers are encouraged to contact programs on the list to make referrals. The purpose of community program screening is to provide program options that meet a standard set by the Department. Other programs not on the list may be selected by caregivers using the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

VII. FORMS INDEX

[Community Program Acknowledgement of Confidentiality \(DCS-2187\)](#)

[Community Program Application \(CSO-2145\)](#)

[Community Program Acceptance Letter \(DCS-2189\)](#)

[Community Program Rejection Letter \(DCS-2190\)](#)

[Community Program Screening Tool \(CSO-2144\)](#)

[Community Program Screening Employee/Volunteer Document Checklist \(CSO-3316\)](#)