

DCF Computer Camps Help Youth in Foster Care Prepare for Adulthood

Hundreds of young people age out of the Kansas foster care system each year. Many of them leave with a lack of support systems and resources to start their lives as independent adults. In an effort to get them started on the right foot, the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) recently offered several computer camps across the state, where the youth (ages 16 to 20) receive free computers and instruction.

“We want all youth in care to be supported and thrive,” DCF Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel said. “Each year we hold these camps to help ensure that youth aging out of the foster care system have the right tools to succeed.”

The first camp was held Monday, July 9, in Wichita. A second camp was held Wednesday, July 11, in Overland Park, and the final camp took place Friday, July 13, in Topeka. The camp includes eight hours of instruction on word processing, spreadsheets and Power Point applications to prepare them for employment, managing personal finances and pursuing post-secondary education. Youth also learn how to search and apply for work and complete job applications. One assignment during the camp involves developing a personalized budget. Instructors also educate participants on internet safety and security. At the end of the camp, participants receive a laptop, two-year warranty, printer, mouse and a laptop backpack. This year, 142 young people participated in the computer camps.

“The youth that participate in these camps are not only given technology, but they are armed with the necessary tools to navigate adulthood. To ensure that all youth aging out of the foster care system receive all the necessary supports and services, we encourage youth to enroll for our Independent Living services,” said Prevention and Protection Services (PPS) Director Patricia Long.

This initiative is paid for by the federal Chafee grant, which is 80 percent federal funds, with a mandatory 20 percent State General Funds match. This is the 14th year for the camp.

Additional services are offered to youth who age out of foster care, through the DCF Independent Living program.

- Financial support for post-secondary education and/or certified training programs**
- Room and board assistance**

- **Transportation costs**
- **Books and materials related to education**
- **Leadership opportunities**
- **Medical services through the age of 26.**

To be eligible for Independent Living services, young people must have been in foster care after age 15 and likely to age out of care, graduated from high school or completed their GED while in foster care, or had a finalized adoption or guardianship placement after the age of 16.

***Due to DCF's obligation to protect the privacy of youth in foster care, these camp sessions were not open to the media.**