

By: J. Johnson of Harris

H.B. No. 1597

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to transitional living services provided to foster youth
3 transitioning to independent living.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Section 264.121(a), Family Code, is amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (a) The department shall address the unique challenges
8 facing foster children in the conservatorship of the department who
9 must transition to independent living by:

10 (1) expanding efforts to improve transition planning
11 and increasing the availability of transitional family group
12 decision-making to all youth age 14 or older in the department's
13 permanent managing conservatorship, including enrolling the youth
14 in the Preparation for Adult Living Program before the age of 16;

15 (2) coordinating with the commission to obtain
16 authority, to the extent allowed by federal law, the state Medicaid
17 plan, the Title IV-E state plan, and any waiver or amendment to
18 either plan, necessary to:

19 (A) extend foster care eligibility [~~and~~
20 ~~transition services for youth~~] up to age 21 and develop policy to
21 permit eligible youth to return to foster care as necessary to
22 achieve the goals of the Transitional Living Services Program;
23 [~~and~~]

24 (B) extend transition services for youth up to

1 age 26 and develop policy to permit eligible youth who have exited
2 foster care to continue to participate in the Transitional Living
3 Services Program as necessary to achieve the goals of the program;
4 and

5 (C) extend Medicaid coverage for foster care
6 youth and former foster care youth up to age 26 [~~21~~] with a single
7 application at the time the youth leaves foster care; and

8 (3) entering into cooperative agreements with the
9 Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce development boards
10 to further the objectives of the Preparation for Adult Living
11 Program. The department, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the
12 local workforce development boards shall ensure that services are
13 prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of foster care and former
14 foster care children and that such services will include, where
15 feasible, referrals for short-term stays for youth needing housing.

16 SECTION 2. Section [264.121\(b\)\(3\)](#), Family Code, is amended
17 to read as follows:

18 (3) "Transitional Living Services Program" means a
19 program, administered by the department in accordance with
20 department rules and state and federal law, for youth who are age 14
21 or older but not more than 26 [~~21~~] years of age and are currently or
22 were formerly in foster care, that assists youth in transitioning
23 from foster care to independent living. The program provides
24 transitional living services, Preparation for Adult Living Program
25 services, and Education and Training Voucher Program services.

26 SECTION 3. Section [264.121\(c\)](#), Family Code, is amended to
27 read as follows:

1 (c) At the time a child enters the Preparation for Adult
2 Living Program, the department shall provide an information booklet
3 to the child and the foster parent describing the program and the
4 benefits available to the child, including extended Medicaid
5 coverage until age 26 [~~21~~], priority status with the Texas
6 Workforce Commission, and the exemption from the payment of tuition
7 and fees at institutions of higher education as defined by Section
8 [61.003](#), Education Code. The information booklet provided to the
9 child and the foster parent shall be provided in the primary
10 language spoken by that individual.

11 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.