



Department of

**Children's Services**

# Gateway to Independence

College, Careers and Life Skills for Juvenile Justice Youth

# Situation

Every year, many of youth in juvenile justice custody complete their high school requirements while in DCS facilities.

They still have time to spend with DCS, and until they are discharged our staff has plenty more to teach them about responsible life in the real world.

# Situation

Our youth need to prepare for college and participate in college.

Many are eager to learn a trade.

All of them could use help in learning how to take care of themselves and their families – including how to make sound financial decisions.

# Situation: Need to Attend College

We can help youth get into college.

We can set them up with online courses once they are enrolled.

We also have options that enable them to attend nearby colleges to study.

# Situation: Need to Choose a Career

Young people have big career decisions to plan for as they leave a youth development center.

We have the tools and the structure to help guide them.

They can learn about their options. They can try new disciplines to see what they like.

# Situation: Need to Learn Life Skills

Many of our youth need to learn the basics. For example:

- How to find a place to live
- How to open a checking account
- How make and follow a budget
- How to get a driver's license
- How to write a business plan
- How to write a resume
- How to sit for a job interview

# Mission: Gateway to Independence



At DCS, we want to do all that we can to get these young people a fresh, productive start in life.

We have created Gateway to Independence to address the needs of older juvenile justice youths.

Gateway to Independence will make their time in the youth development centers more productive.

They will be busier and more engaged while they are in custody.

And, they will be better prepared when they leave.

# How We Do It

Our counselors, teachers, principals and superintendents will identify the youth who are ready for Gateway to Independence.

We know these young people have lots of questions about their opportunities.

We will provide the experts who can help them weigh their options and make decisions about their futures.

# How We Do It

The program is already underway. By the summer of 2016, we expect to have ready a newly refurbished facility dedicated to this program.

It will be the New Visions Youth Development Center, next door to Woodland Hills Youth Development Center in Nashville. We are staffing it and equipping it now especially for Gateway to Independence.

We are coordinating with our three youth development centers across to the state to begin preparing their qualified youth for Gateway to Independence.

# How We Do It: College

The education staff can prepare students for college entrance exams. We can help them get their college applications completed and submitted.

Youth will be able to take online classes.

We can also make arrangements -- for those who qualify -- to attend local college classes.

# How We Do It: Career and Vocations

Many of our youth tell us they are eager to get started. The careers they seem most interested in are barbering, construction, and technology.

Gateway to Independence offers training in those fields, and when we hear of other interests, we can consult with local colleges and programs to find a way to make other career training available as needed.

# How We Do It: Certifications

We know that our youth need specialized certifications as they prepare for the working world.

We offer a wide range of certifications, such as for Microsoft Word and Excel.

We can get our youth certified for specialized fields such as networking and telephone cabling.

# How We Do It: Life Skills

DCS has a robust life-skills training program that it offers to its foster-care and juvenile justice youth.

Our Independent Living staff and our provider partners are experienced in working with young people as they begin to reach adulthood and as they enter their post high-school life.

Gateway to Independence students will have direct access to counselors who know what it takes for determined young people to get on their feet and be successful in the real world.

# How to Get Started

Students should check with their case managers, principal or youth development center superintendent to get started with Gateway to Independence.

Students should tell them the top three things they're interested in doing, and DCS will work hard to match them with the right training or coursework to get their lives back on track for success.

# How to Get Started



Visit the [Gateway to Independence](https://tn.gov/dcs) pages on [tn.gov/dcs](https://tn.gov/dcs)