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AN ACT

RELATING TO YOUTH; PROVIDING FOR COURT VENUE; EXTENDING
PAYMENTS FOR SUBSIDIZED ADOPTIONS; AMENDING THE FOSTERING
CONNECTIONS ACT; REVISING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE FOSTERING
CONNECTIONS PROGRAM; CLARIFYING DUTIES OF AND SERVICES
PROVIDED BY THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT;
PROVIDING FOR APPEALS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 32A-1-9 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993,
Chapter 77, Section 18, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-1-9. VENUE AND TRANSFER.--

A. Proceedings in the court under the provisions
of the Children's Code shall begin in the county where the
child resides, or in the case of an eligible adult pursuant
to the Fostering Connections Act, where the eligible adult
resides. If delinquency is alleged, the proceeding may also
be begun in the county where the act constituting the alleged
delinquent act occurred or in the county in which the child
is detained. Neglect, abuse, family in need of court-ordered
services or mental health proceedings may also begin in the
county where the child is present when the proceeding is
commenced. A transfer may be made if the residence of the
child or eligible adult changes or for other good cause.

B. In neglect, abuse, family in need of

1 court-ordered services or adoption proceedings for the
2 placement of an Indian child, the court shall, in the absence
3 of good cause to the contrary, transfer the proceeding to the
4 jurisdiction of the Indian child's tribe upon the petition of
5 the Indian child's parent, the Indian child's guardian or the
6 Indian child's tribe. The transfer shall be barred if there
7 is an objection to the transfer by a parent of the Indian
8 child or the Indian child's tribe."

9 SECTION 2. Section 32A-5-45 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993,
10 Chapter 77, Section 172, as amended) is amended to read:

11 "32A-5-45. ADMINISTRATION OF SUBSIDIZED ADOPTIONS.--

12 A. The department shall promulgate all necessary
13 regulations for the administration of the program of
14 subsidized adoptions or placement with permanent guardians.

15 B. Subsidy payments may include payments to
16 vendors for medical and surgical expenses and payments to the
17 adoptive parents or permanent guardians for maintenance and
18 other costs incidental to the adoption, care, training and
19 education of the child. The payments in any category of
20 assistance shall not exceed the cost of providing the
21 assistance in foster care. Payments shall not be made under
22 this section after the child reaches eighteen years of age,
23 except as provided in Subsection C of this section.

24 C. Payments may extend until the child is
25 twenty-one years of age if:

1 (1) the child is enrolled in the medically
2 fragile waiver program; or

3 (2) the adoption assistance agreement was in
4 effect when the child was at least sixteen years of age and,
5 when the child is at least eighteen years of age and under
6 twenty-one years of age, the child is:

7 (a) completing secondary education or
8 an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

9 (b) enrolled in an institution that
10 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

11 (c) participating in a program or
12 activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to
13 employment;

14 (d) employed for at least eighty hours
15 per month; or

16 (e) incapable of doing any of the
17 activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this
18 paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is
19 supported by regularly updated information in a transition
20 plan as provided in the Fostering Connections Act.

21 D. A written agreement between the adoptive family
22 or permanent guardians and the department shall precede the
23 decree of adoption or permanent guardianship. The agreement
24 shall incorporate the terms and conditions of the subsidy
25 plan based on the individual needs of the child within the

1 permanent family. In cases of subsidies that continue for
2 more than one year, there shall be an annual redetermination
3 of the need for a subsidy. The department shall develop an
4 appeal procedure whereby a permanent family may contest a
5 division determination to deny, reduce or terminate a
6 subsidy."

7 SECTION 3. Section 32A-26-1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
8 Chapter 149, Section 1) is amended to read:

9 "32A-26-1. SHORT TITLE.--Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA
10 1978 may be cited as the "Fostering Connections Act"."

11 SECTION 4. Section 32A-26-2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
12 Chapter 149, Section 2) is amended to read:

13 "32A-26-2. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Fostering
14 Connections Act:

15 A. "active efforts" means a heightened standard
16 that is greater than reasonable efforts that include
17 affirmative, active, thorough and timely efforts;

18 B. "eligible adult" means an individual who meets
19 the eligibility criteria for participation in the fostering
20 connections program;

21 C. "foster care maintenance payment" means a
22 payment for the care and support of an eligible adult, which
23 is based on the needs of the eligible adult;

24 D. "host home" means a setting in an eligible
25 adult's former foster home or in another residence in which

1 an eligible adult:

2 (1) shares a residence with another adult or
3 adults; and

4 (2) agrees to meet the basic expectations
5 established by the:

6 (a) eligible adult;

7 (b) other adult or adults sharing the
8 residence; and

9 (c) department;

10 E. "placement and care" means the day-to-day care
11 and protection of the child or eligible adult, including
12 responsibility for placement decisions about the child or
13 eligible adult;

14 F. "supervised independent living setting" means
15 an age-appropriate setting that the department approves for
16 placement of an eligible adult, which setting:

17 (1) is consistent with federal law and
18 guidance for a supervised setting in which an eligible adult
19 lives independently; and

20 (2) may be a residence where the eligible
21 adult lives alone or shares a residence with others,
22 including:

23 (a) a host home;

24 (b) a college dormitory or other
25 post-secondary education or training housing; or

1 (c) the home of a parent of the
2 eligible adult;

3 G. "transition plan" means a written,
4 individualized plan developed collaboratively between the
5 department and the eligible adult that assesses the eligible
6 adult's strengths and needs, establishes goals and identifies
7 the services and activities that will be provided to the
8 eligible adult to achieve the established goals, the time
9 frames for achieving the goals and the individuals or
10 entities responsible for providing the identified services
11 and activities as provided by rule;

12 H. "voluntary services and support agreement"
13 means a written agreement, binding on the parties to the
14 agreement, between the department and an eligible adult,
15 which agreement is consistent with the requirements of a
16 voluntary placement agreement pursuant to federal law and
17 which specifies, at a minimum, the legal status of the
18 eligible adult and the rights and obligations of the eligible
19 adult and the department while the eligible adult is
20 participating in the fostering connections program; and

21 I. "young adult" means an individual who is at
22 least eighteen years of age and who is under twenty-one years
23 of age and is not currently participating in the fostering
24 connections program pursuant to Section 32A-26-3 NMSA 1978."

25 SECTION 5. Section 32A-26-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,

1 Chapter 149, Section 3) is amended to read:

2 "32A-26-3. FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--
3 ELIGIBILITY.--

4 A. The "fostering connections program" is
5 established in the department. The department shall make the
6 fostering connections program available, on a voluntary
7 basis, to an eligible adult who:

8 (1) has attained at least eighteen years of
9 age and who is younger than:

10 (a) as of July 1, 2020, nineteen years
11 of age;

12 (b) as of July 1, 2021, twenty years of
13 age; and

14 (c) after July 1, 2022, twenty-one
15 years of age;

16 (2) meets one of the following criteria:

17 (a) has attained at least eighteen
18 years of age and: 1) was adjudicated pursuant to the
19 Children's Code or its equivalent under tribal law; 2) was
20 subject to a court order that placement and care be the
21 responsibility of the department or the Indian tribe that
22 entered into an agreement with the department; and 3) was
23 subject to an out-of-home placement order; or

24 (b) attained at least fourteen years of
25 age when a guardianship assistance agreement or adoption

1 assistance agreement was in effect and whose guardianship
2 assistance agreement or adoption assistance agreement was
3 terminated or the guardian or parents are no longer willing
4 to provide emotional or financial support after the child
5 attained eighteen years of age;

6 (3) is:

7 (a) completing secondary education or
8 an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

9 (b) enrolled in an institution that
10 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

11 (c) employed for at least eighty hours
12 per month;

13 (d) participating in a program or
14 activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to
15 employment; or

16 (e) incapable of doing any of the
17 activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this
18 paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is
19 supported by regularly updated information in the transition
20 plan; and

21 (4) enters into a voluntary services and
22 support agreement with the department pursuant to the
23 Fostering Connections Act.

24 B. The citizenship or immigration status of a
25 young adult shall not be a factor when determining the young

1 adult's eligibility pursuant to this section."

2 SECTION 6. Section 32A-26-4 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
3 Chapter 149, Section 4) is amended to read:

4 "32A-26-4. FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--SERVICES--
5 SUPPORTS.--

6 A. The fostering connections program shall provide
7 at least the following services and supports to eligible
8 adults:

9 (1) major medical and behavioral health care
10 coverage;

11 (2) housing, in one of the following
12 settings that the eligible adult chooses:

13 (a) a supervised independent living
14 setting;

15 (b) a transitional living program that
16 the department licenses or approves; or

17 (c) a residential facility or another
18 institution; provided that an eligible adult who is residing
19 in a residential facility upon leaving foster care may choose
20 to temporarily stay until the eligible adult is able to
21 transition to a more age-appropriate setting;

22 (3) foster care maintenance payments;
23 provided that these payments:

24 (a) shall be sent by the department,
25 all or in part, directly to: 1) the eligible adult, if the

1 eligible adult is living in a supervised independent living
2 setting; or 2) a transitional living program, if the eligible
3 adult is living in a transitional living program; and

4 (b) shall reflect the eligible adult's
5 status as a parent, if applicable; and

6 (4) services that include the development of
7 a transition plan, developed jointly by the department and
8 the eligible adult, that includes a description of the
9 identified housing situation or living arrangement, and the
10 resources to assist the eligible adult in the transition from
11 the fostering connections program to adulthood. The services
12 shall include assisting the eligible adult in effectuating
13 each element of a transition plan.

14 B. The department shall not require background
15 checks for other residents of a supervised independent living
16 setting or a transitional living program as a condition of
17 approving an eligible adult's living setting.

18 C. The department shall develop procedures to
19 provide extended subsidies to families for adoption and
20 guardianship until the eligible adult turns twenty-one years
21 of age if:

22 (1) an adoption assistance or guardianship
23 assistance agreement was in effect for the eligible adult
24 when the eligible adult was sixteen years of age or older;
25 and

1 (2) when at least eighteen years of age and
2 under twenty-one years of age, the eligible adult meets at
3 least one of the following participation criteria:

4 (a) completing secondary education or
5 an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

6 (b) enrolled in an institution that
7 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

8 (c) participating in a program or
9 activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to
10 employment;

11 (d) employed for at least eighty hours
12 per month; or

13 (e) is incapable of doing any of the
14 activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this
15 paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is
16 supported by regularly updated information in the transition
17 plan."

18 SECTION 7. Section 32A-26-5 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
19 Chapter 149, Section 5) is amended to read:

20 "32A-26-5. FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--
21 PARTICIPATION--VOLUNTARY SERVICES AND SUPPORT AGREEMENT--
22 PERIODIC REVIEWS.--

23 A. An eligible adult may participate in the
24 fostering connections program for any duration of time by
25 entering into a voluntary services and support agreement

1 immediately upon turning eighteen years of age or any time
2 thereafter.

3 B. There is no limit to the number of times an
4 eligible adult may opt out of and reenter the fostering
5 connections program.

6 C. When an eligible adult elects to participate in
7 the fostering connections program, the department and the
8 eligible adult shall execute, and the eligible adult shall be
9 provided with a signed copy of, a voluntary services and
10 support agreement that sets forth, at a minimum, the
11 following:

12 (1) a requirement that the eligible adult
13 continue to be eligible in accordance with the Fostering
14 Connections Act for the duration of the voluntary services
15 and support agreement;

16 (2) the services and support that the
17 eligible adult will receive through the fostering connections
18 program;

19 (3) the voluntary nature of the eligible
20 adult's participation and the eligible adult's right to
21 terminate the voluntary services and support agreement at any
22 time; and

23 (4) conditions that may result in the
24 termination of the voluntary services and support agreement
25 and the eligible adult's early discharge from the fostering

1 connections program pursuant to Section 32A-26-6 NMSA 1978.

2 D. As soon as possible and no later than
3 forty-five days after the eligible adult and the department
4 execute the voluntary services and support agreement, the
5 department shall conduct a determination of income
6 eligibility for purposes of compliance with federal foster
7 care and transitional care assistance; provided that within
8 fifteen days after execution of the voluntary services and
9 support agreement, the department shall provide those
10 services and supports set forth in that agreement.

11 E. The department shall assign an eligible adult a
12 case manager, who shall be trained in primarily providing
13 services for transition-aged eligible adults.

14 F. The department shall make active efforts to
15 assist eligible adults in achieving permanency and creating
16 permanent connections.

17 G. The department and at least one person who is
18 not responsible for case management, in collaboration with
19 the eligible adult and additional persons identified by the
20 eligible adult, shall conduct periodic reviews of the
21 transition plan not less than once every one hundred eighty
22 days to evaluate progress made toward meeting the goals set
23 forth in the transition plan. The department shall use a
24 team approach in conducting periodic reviews of the
25 transition plan and shall facilitate the participation of the

1 eligible adult.

2 H. The department shall hold the periodic review
3 of the transition plan no more than thirty days before and no
4 less than five days before each review hearing."

5 SECTION 8. Section 32A-26-6 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
6 Chapter 149, Section 6) is amended to read:

7 "32A-26-6. TERMINATION OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES AND
8 SUPPORT AGREEMENT--NOTICE--PROCEDURE.--

9 A. An eligible adult may choose to terminate the
10 voluntary services and support agreement and stop receiving
11 services and support under the fostering connections program
12 at any time. If an eligible adult chooses to terminate the
13 voluntary services and support agreement, the department
14 shall provide the eligible adult with a clear and
15 developmentally appropriate written notice informing the
16 eligible adult of:

17 (1) the potential negative effects of
18 terminating the voluntary services and support agreement
19 early;

20 (2) the option to reenter the fostering
21 connections program at any time before attaining twenty-one
22 years of age, so long as the eligibility requirements are
23 met;

24 (3) the procedures for reentering the
25 fostering connections program; and

1 (4) information about and contact
2 information for community resources that may benefit the
3 eligible adult.

4 B. As part of the case management processes, the
5 department shall identify as soon as possible any barriers to
6 maintaining eligibility that an eligible adult is
7 encountering and shall make active efforts to assist the
8 eligible adult to overcome identified barriers and maintain
9 eligibility. The department's efforts shall be documented in
10 the transition plan.

11 C. Academic breaks in post-secondary education
12 attendance, such as semester and seasonal breaks, and other
13 transitions between status that meet eligibility
14 requirements, including education and employment transitions
15 of no longer than thirty days, shall not be a basis for
16 termination.

17 D. If the department determines that a young adult
18 is no longer eligible for the fostering connections program,
19 the department shall:

20 (1) no more than fifteen days after the
21 determination and prior to requesting a discharge hearing,
22 provide to the young adult and the young adult's attorney a
23 clear and developmentally appropriate:

24 (a) written notice informing the young
25 adult of the department's intent to terminate the voluntary

1 services and support agreement; and

2 (b) explanation of the basis for the
3 termination; and

4 (2) make active efforts to meet in person
5 with the young adult to explain the information in the
6 written termination notice and to assist the young adult in
7 reestablishing eligibility if the young adult wishes to
8 continue participating in the program.

9 E. The department shall not terminate services
10 under the fostering connections program without court
11 approval after a discharge hearing.

12 F. If an eligible adult remains in the fostering
13 connections program until attaining twenty-one years of age,
14 at least sixty days before the eligible adult's twenty-first
15 birthday, the department shall provide the eligible adult
16 with:

17 (1) a clear and developmentally appropriate
18 written notice informing the eligible adult of the
19 termination of the voluntary services and support agreement
20 at twenty-one years of age;

21 (2) an updated plan with ongoing goals; and

22 (3) information about and contact
23 information for community resources that may benefit the
24 young adult, including information regarding state programs
25 established pursuant to federal law that provide transitional

1 foster care assistance to young adults."

2 SECTION 9. Section 32A-26-7 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2019,
3 Chapter 149, Section 7) is amended to read:

4 "32A-26-7. FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--CHILDREN'S
5 COURT PETITION--JURISDICTION--CONTENTS--PROGRAM FILE.--

6 A. An eligible adult participating in the
7 fostering connections program shall remain under the
8 jurisdiction of the children's court while participating in
9 the program. The eligible adult is the eligible adult's own
10 legal custodian.

11 B. Within fifteen days after the voluntary
12 services and support agreement is executed, the department
13 shall file a petition initiating proceedings pursuant to the
14 Fostering Connections Act that shall be entitled, "In the
15 Matter of , an eligible adult", and shall
16 set forth with specificity:

17 (1) the name, birth date and residence of
18 the eligible adult; and

19 (2) the facts necessary to invoke the
20 jurisdiction of the court.

21 C. A petition filed pursuant to Subsection B of
22 this section shall be accompanied by a copy of the eligible
23 adult's voluntary services and support agreement and
24 transition plan.

25 D. There shall be no interruption in the foster

1 care maintenance payment, housing, medical assistance
2 coverage or case management for an eligible adult who is
3 eligible and chooses to participate in the fostering
4 connections program immediately following the termination of
5 children's court jurisdiction at age eighteen.

6 E. At the inception of a fostering connections
7 proceeding, the court shall appoint an attorney to represent
8 the eligible adult. If the eligible adult consents, the
9 attorney who previously served as the eligible adult's
10 attorney may be appointed.

11 F. Until excused by a court, an attorney appointed
12 to represent an eligible adult shall represent the eligible
13 adult in any subsequent appeals.

14 G. A hearing held pursuant to the Fostering
15 Connections Act shall be commenced within ninety days of the
16 filing of the petition, at which time the court shall review
17 the voluntary services and support agreement and determine
18 whether the agreement is in the best interests of the
19 eligible adult and the transition plan meets the requirements
20 of the Fostering Connections Act."

21 SECTION 10. Section 32A-26-8 NMSA 1978 (being
22 Laws 2019, Chapter 149, Section 8) is amended to read:

23 "32A-26-8. REVIEW HEARINGS.--

24 A. The court shall conduct a review hearing at
25 least once every six months.

1 B. The primary purpose of the review hearing shall
2 be to ensure that the fostering connections program is
3 providing the eligible adult with the needed services and
4 support to help the eligible adult move toward permanency and
5 a successful transition to adulthood. At the review hearing,
6 the department shall show that it has made active efforts to
7 comply with the voluntary services and support agreement and
8 effectuate the transition plan. A review hearing shall be
9 conducted in a manner that seeks the eligible adult's
10 meaningful participation by considering procedural
11 modifications and flexible times.

12 C. The department shall prepare and present to the
13 children's court a report addressing progress made in meeting
14 the goals in the transition plan, including an independent
15 living transition proposal, and shall propose modifications
16 as necessary to further those goals.

17 D. If the court finds the department has not made
18 active efforts to comply with the voluntary support and
19 services agreement and effectuate the transition plan, the
20 court may order additional services and support to achieve
21 the goals of the transition plan and the goals of state and
22 federal law.

23 E. At every review hearing that occurs after the
24 child attains sixteen years and six months of age, the court
25 shall make a finding that the child has been notified about

1 the fostering connections program and of the benefits of the
2 program.

3 F. At the review hearing that occurs no later than
4 three months before the child attains eighteen years of age,
5 the court shall make a finding of whether the child has
6 decided to participate in the fostering connections program
7 and whether the child has been provided an opportunity to
8 develop a voluntary services and support agreement."

9 SECTION 11. Section 32A-26-9 NMSA 1978 (being
10 Laws 2019, Chapter 149, Section 9) is amended to read:

11 "32A-26-9. DISCHARGE HEARING.--

12 A. At the last review hearing held prior to the
13 eligible adult's twenty-first birthday, or prior to an
14 eligible adult's discharge from the fostering connections
15 program, the court shall review the eligible adult's
16 transition plan and shall determine whether the department
17 has made active efforts to implement the requirements of
18 Subsection B of this section.

19 B. The court shall determine whether the
20 department made active efforts to assist the eligible adult
21 in effectuating each element of the transition plan.

22 C. If the court finds that the department has not
23 made active efforts to assist the eligible adult in
24 effectuating each element of the transition plan and that
25 termination of jurisdiction would be harmful to the eligible

1 adult, the court may continue to exercise its jurisdiction
2 for a period not to exceed one year from the eligible adult's
3 twenty-first birthday or the eligible adult's discharge from
4 the fostering connections program; provided that the eligible
5 adult consents to continued jurisdiction of the court. The
6 court may dismiss the case for good cause at any time after
7 the eligible adult's twenty-first birthday or the eligible
8 adult's discharge from the fostering connections program."

9 SECTION 12. Section 32A-26-10 NMSA 1978 (being
10 Laws 2019, Chapter 149, Section 10) is amended to read:

11 "32A-26-10. FOSTERING CONNECTIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE--
12 MEMBERSHIP--APPOINTMENT--TERMS--DUTIES--MEETINGS--REPORT.--

13 A. By October 1, 2019, the secretary shall appoint
14 a "fostering connections advisory committee" to make
15 recommendations to the department and to the legislature
16 regarding the fostering connections program. The committee
17 shall meet on a biannual basis to advise the department and
18 the legislature regarding ongoing implementation of the
19 fostering connections program. By September 1, 2020 and each
20 September 1 thereafter, the committee shall provide a written
21 report to the governor, the legislature and the secretary
22 regarding ongoing implementation of the fostering connections
23 program, including the number of participants and the number
24 of early discharges.

25 B. By October 1, 2020, the committee shall develop

1 a proposal for qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data
2 to be collected to drive ongoing program design and
3 implementation. Each October 1 thereafter, the committee
4 shall develop specific recommendations for improving the
5 fostering connections program and outcomes for the eligible
6 adults it serves and expanding the fostering connections
7 program or improving outcomes for similar groups of at-risk
8 young adults.

9 C. The members of the committee shall include:

10 (1) the following seven voting members:

11 (a) the secretary, ex officio, or the
12 secretary's designee;

13 (b) three members who are appointed by
14 the secretary as follows: 1) two youth or young adults who
15 are currently or were previously placed in foster care; and
16 2) one representative of a child advocacy group; and

17 (c) three members who are appointed by
18 the secretary as follows: 1) one representative of a child
19 welfare advocacy organization; 2) one representative of the
20 department; and 3) one representative of an agency providing
21 independent living services; and

22 (2) the following nonvoting members:

23 (a) a legislator, appointed by the
24 New Mexico legislative council;

25 (b) a children's court judge, appointed

1 by the administrative office of the courts; and

2 (c) a subject-matter expert, appointed
3 by the secretary.

4 D. Members of the committee shall be appointed for
5 terms of two years; provided that the initial committee
6 members' terms shall be staggered so that no more than five
7 members' terms shall expire in any one year.

8 E. The secretary shall convene a first meeting of
9 the committee by December 1, 2019. At that first meeting,
10 the members of the committee shall choose a chair, and
11 members' terms shall be chosen by lot.

12 F. The secretary shall fill vacancies on the
13 committee as they occur.

14 G. A majority of the committee members constitutes
15 a quorum for voting purposes.

16 H. Members of the committee shall receive per diem
17 and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act and
18 shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance
19 for their service on the committee.

20 I. As used in this section:

21 (1) "committee" means the fostering
22 connections advisory committee; and

23 (2) "secretary" means the secretary of
24 children, youth and families."

25 SECTION 13. A new section of the Fostering Connections

1 Act is enacted to read:

2 "ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS.--A young adult may appeal an
3 adverse eligibility determination in accordance with rules
4 promulgated by the department. The department shall provide
5 the young adult, in the young adult's primary language, with
6 clear and developmentally appropriate verbal and written
7 information concerning the administrative appeal process."

8 SECTION 14. A new section of the Fostering Connections
9 Act is enacted to read:

10 "DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.--

11 A. The department shall notify every child in its
12 custody about the fostering connections program beginning
13 when the child attains sixteen years of age and at every
14 transition planning meeting thereafter.

15 B. Prior to attaining seventeen years and six
16 months of age, every child in the custody of the department
17 shall be provided detailed information about the fostering
18 connections program and given the opportunity to develop a
19 voluntary services and support agreement that would be
20 finalized and executed upon the child attaining eighteen years
21 of age." _____

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