

## Department of Human Services

### Recommendations for shelter services for unaccompanied homeless minors

#### Recommendation 1:

Scope for Supportive Services (House Bill 911; (2) (I-X) should include timeliness requirement for the provision of services to the youth and should clarify that these shelters are working immediately toward permanency through the youth's return to family. Supportive services should be expanded to include well-being services, child welfare and permanency services. This aligns with other state efforts. Additional recommendations for scope of services include:

- Restricting age to 16 for services
  - Shelter facilities would have to obtain written consent from youth
  - Establishing a written plan for services to support the youth
- Contacting law enforcement to inquire if presenting youth has been reported missing
- Contacting parent/guardian within 72 hours of youth's entry into facility
  - Obtaining written parental consent to keep the youth, not exceeding 90 days excluding the initial 72-hour period
  - Contacting the local department of social services immediately upon receipt of information if child maltreatment is suspected of youth or any siblings of the youth (following current mandated reporter laws)

Contact the local department of social services if, within the initial 72-hour period following the youth's entry into the facility, no parent/guardian is available or willing to consent for services for the youth and the youth is unwilling to return to the care of a parent/guardian who is deemed appropriate upon discharge from the program

#### Rationale:

These recommendations/additions to the statute set forth parameters, expectations, and the expected levels of engagement with youth, parents/guardians, local departments of social services, and the service providers. These additions also create an understanding that these services shall assist families in helping them develop solutions for the challenges they face and provide another avenue through which they can access services that may ultimately prevent maltreatment and the need for separation through foster care. Providing supportive shelter services at age 16 is consistent with statutes that allow youth at age 16 to consent for medical and mental health services.

#### Recommendation 2:

Strike all provisions that exclude immunity of shelter facility and or employees from liability.

#### Rationale:

Youth are a vulnerable group and we want to encourage continuous support and protection of them. Shelter facilities should be insured and bonded to operate and provide services. As supported through shelter provider insurance regulations in alignment with COMAR 14.31.5.4B(4). Liability and Indemnification provisions should be leveraged so that the licensing

agency holds no liability and service provider maintains all liability. They should have standard operating procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all youth being served. Allowing for the provision for the parent or youth to file negligence claims against the facility or any person working on behalf of the facility provides the youth and families with appropriate recourse in the event that they suffer from sort of harm.

**Recommendation 3:**

Utilize the expertise of OLM or other administrative entity to establish service provider criteria for the registration and licensing of facilities. This aligns with other states' efforts.

**Rationale:**

Issuing regulations for service providers and facilities will allow for general oversight. *Fiscal impact would need to be explored as well as OLM capacity for this type of expansion.* Examples of minimum requirements:

- Official Youth shelter program registry - maintained by DHCD
- Be recognized and active member of the Continuum of Care and receive a letter of support to provide youth shelter services
- At a minimum share data with Maryland Youth Reach/DHCD on demographics on youth served
- Register with the Office of Tax and Assessments and be in good standing