



# Bulletin

**NUMBER**

#16-68-12

**DATE**

June 30, 2016

**OF INTEREST TO**

County Directors

Social Services Supervisors  
and Staff

Tribal Social Services  
Directors, Supervisors, and  
Staff in American Indian  
Child Welfare Initiative:  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe  
and White Earth Nation

**ACTION/DUE DATE**

Read information and  
prepare for implementation

**EXPIRATION DATE**

June 30, 2018

## Guidance for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

**TOPIC**

Local social service agency responsibilities for implementing the NYTD requirements.

**PURPOSE**

To provide counties and tribes with information, training and tools for implementing the NYTD. Counties and tribes will be instructed on how to use the Social Service Information System (SSIS) to enter independent living services data, plus survey and contact information for 17-year-old youth in foster care.

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**SIGNED**

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Children and Family Services Administration

**TERMINOLOGY NOTICE**

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

## **I. Introduction**

Youth who are in foster care as they attain age 18 are challenged to survive in an adult world, often without the support of a permanent family. These youth have lived with a disrupted childhood, and may feel disenfranchised from the system that has been providing foster care and associated services. Once on their own, foster care youth often experience a lack of adequate housing, medical care, financial support and a supportive family. NYTD requires a survey of these youth at age 17, to be followed by second and third surveys at ages 19 and 21. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is seeking county and tribal agency assistance by participating in the NYTD baseline survey with these youth at age 17 and by documenting services, survey and contact information in SSIS. County and tribal agency participation in meeting the NYTD requirements will inform the state of the effectiveness of Minnesota's transition resources, and provide a basis for continuous quality improvement in the SELF (Support for Emancipation and Living Functionally) and Healthy Transition Homeless Prevention (HTHP) programs.

This is the third cohort of foster youth to be surveyed. The first cohort turned 17 between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011. Local social service agencies were successful in exceeding the federal threshold on obtaining survey information, thus avoiding a fiscal penalty. However, the second cohort (those turning 17 between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014) was not as successful. Due to surveys not being done in a timely manner (within 45 days after a youth's 17th birthday), Minnesota was penalized 1.25 percent of Chafee/SELF funds (approximately \$23,000). This fiscal penalty was passed on to county agencies deemed to have not met the federal standard. DHS staff are hopeful that Minnesota will meet the federal threshold for cohort three, which begins October 1, 2016, and avoid another fiscal penalty, which can be up to 5 percent of Chafee/SELF funds (approximately \$100,000).

Minnesota was successful in gathering data from the 19- and 21-year-olds in cohort one, which concluded on September 30, 2015. Data collection of 19-year-olds in cohort two is currently underway. This follow-up survey work is conducted by The Improve Group, under contract with DHS.

## **II. Background**

The federal John H. Chafee Foster Care to Independence Act, passed in 1999, provides funding and governs the program known as SELF in Minnesota. The Act requires a client-specific data collection system to track the independent living services provided to youth, and defined outcomes that measure each state's performance in preparing youth for successful transition to adulthood, from foster care to independent living. States received program instructions on the NYTD reporting requirements in 2008 with the stipulation that data reporting would begin on October 1, 2010. The law mandates reporting of required

information through the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), known as SSIS in Minnesota.

The majority of counties and a few tribal social service agencies receive SELF funding to carry out programs designed to prepare foster youth for transition from foster care to adulthood. If Minnesota is not successful in meeting these requirements, federal regulations require the Administration of Children and Families to impose a fiscal penalty on the annual allotment of Chafee/SELF funds. Fiscal penalties to Minnesota's Chafee allocation will result in fewer funds for county and tribal agencies in subsequent years.

In an effort to customize the federal NYTD regulations to Minnesota's efforts, DHS has adopted the acronym MNYTD to reflect the Minnesota Youth in Transition Database. Hereafter, MNYTD represents Minnesota's procedures and processes to comply with federal policy.

### III. Target Populations

For purposes of MNYTD, agencies have responsibility for the following youth:

**Served youth** – All youth receiving an independent living service paid for or provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and your agency. This includes all independent living services and activities provided by your agency (whether with SELF funding or not) and independent living services provided by an agency receiving grant funds from DHS. Services provided by foster parents and group home staff also need to be recorded on an ongoing basis. DHS collects some service information from grantees on a quarterly basis.

**Baseline youth** – All youth in placement on or within 45 days after their 17th birthday (but not before their 17th birthday), regardless of whether youth received independent living services. This also means youth who are in voluntary placements, corrections youth in foster care, and youth who have temporarily run from placement. Youth are in the baseline population if they are in the care of another public agency and that agency receives Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments. States will collect information on a new baseline of youth meeting the above criteria every three years.

**Follow-up youth at ages 19 and 21** – Youth who were in the baseline population of 17-year-olds in care and completed the MNYTD survey are asked to respond to the survey again at ages 19 and 21, regardless of whether they are still in care. DHS contracts with a vendor, the Improve Group, to locate, communicate with, survey and administer incentives to these youth annually until they reach age 21. County and tribal agency staff may become aware of contact between the Improve Group and youth on their caseloads. The Improve Group may also contact agency staff in an attempt to locate these youth. Because the Improve Group is under contract with DHS, agency staff are allowed to share information with them.

## IV. Agency Responsibilities

### a. Served Youth

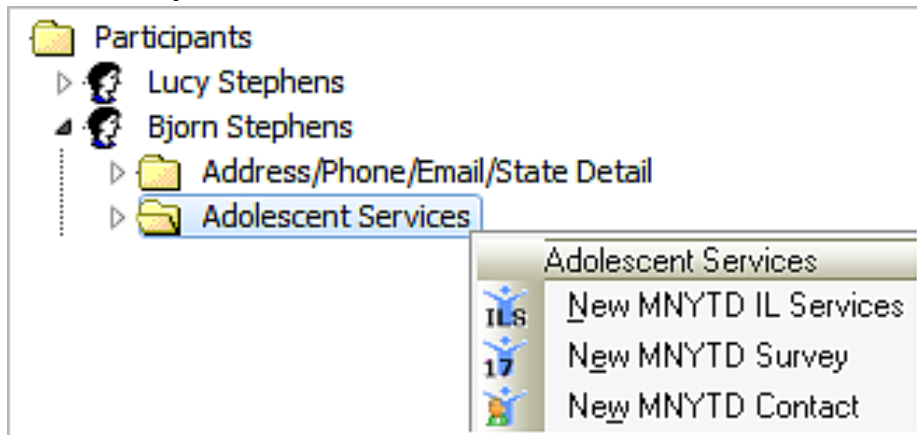
MNYTD requires that any independent living services provided to transitional youth be entered in SSIS. Services may be quickly and easily entered on the IL Services screen. A new IL Services screen must be created for each federal reporting period. Blue context sensitive help contains definitions of these services. This is on the same reporting schedule as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Local county and tribal agencies have no responsibility to enter services provided by agencies contracted through DHS. These agencies provide data directly to DHS.

#### SSIS Screens

Agency staff should be familiar with the MNYTD IL Services, Survey and Contact folders. To access these folders quickly, expand the youth's Client node and right-click on the Adolescent Services folder to access the Action menu as shown in the screen shot below.

#### SSIS Participants Folder – Adolescent Services Subfolder – Action Menu



The screen below is the MNYTD Services screen, which can be modified on an ongoing basis and must be reviewed and completed for every six-month federal reporting period while an adolescent receives any independent living skills training (whether SELF funds are used or not). After selecting the reporting period and Independent Living Services Worker, check all that apply of the services that were provided during the reporting period.

(Reporting periods are semesters of the federal fiscal year: October 1 – March 31 and April 1 – September 30.) Services may have been provided directly by foster parents or workers, or they may have been arranged or purchased by an agency.

## SSIS Adolescent Services Screen

Federal Reporting Period: Oct 2013 - Mar 2014

IL Services Worker:

Services Provided

[Select all services provided during the federal reporting period:](#)

- Academic support
- Budget and financial management
- Career preparation
- Driver's education/public transportation use
- Employment program/vocational training
- Family support/healthy marriage education
- Financial assistance - educational/ETV
- Financial assistance - room and board
- Financial assistance - other
- Health education and risk prevention
- Housing education/home management trg
- Independent living needs assessment
- Mentoring
- Post-secondary educational support
- Supervised independent living
- Other

Other Description:

Highest Education Level Completed:

[Does the youth have a specialized education plan?:](#)  Yes  No

[Has the youth ever been adjudicated delinquent?:](#)  Yes  No

### b. Baseline Youth

DHS staff understand that agency staff generally know when youth on their caseloads turn 17 years old. SSIS offers a search that lists all youth in placement who must be surveyed by unit and social worker assigned. Agency staff can search by date ranges and can use the search filter to locate only youth currently in care. Data Cleanup also assists in identifying youth who are to be surveyed.

The screen below displays a portion of the MNYTD Baseline Survey. Survey responses are entered based on answers provided by the youth, not the caseworker. Note the available responses in the Reporting Status field. When the cursor is moved over a question on the MNYTD Survey the text displays in blue and is underlined. Clicking on the blue text displays help text which provides further definition to help answer each question. Enter the youth's responses.

### SSIS MNYTD Survey Screen

Population:  Sample Follow-up:  Yes  No

**Survey Status**

Reporting Status:  →

Collection Date:  Survey Entry Date:

**Employment**

[Currently are you employed full-time?](#)  Yes  No Youth participated  
Youth declined  
Parent declined  
Youth incapacitated  
Incarcerated  
Runaway/missing  
Unable to locate/invite  
Death

Currently are you employed part-time?  Yes  No Unanswered

In the past year, did you complete an apprenticeship, internship, or other on-the-job training, either paid or unpaid?  Yes  No Unanswered

**Financial Support**

Currently are you receiving social security payments (Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or dependents' payments)?  Yes  No  Decline  Unanswered

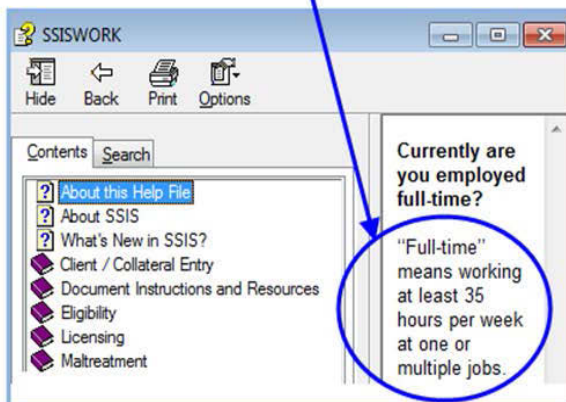
Currently are you using a scholarship, grant, stipend, student loan, voucher, or other type of educational financial aid to cover any educational expenses?  Yes  No  Decline  Unanswered

Currently are you receiving any periodic and/or significant financial resources or support from another source not previously indicated and excluding paid employment?  Yes  No  Decline  Unanswered

**Education**

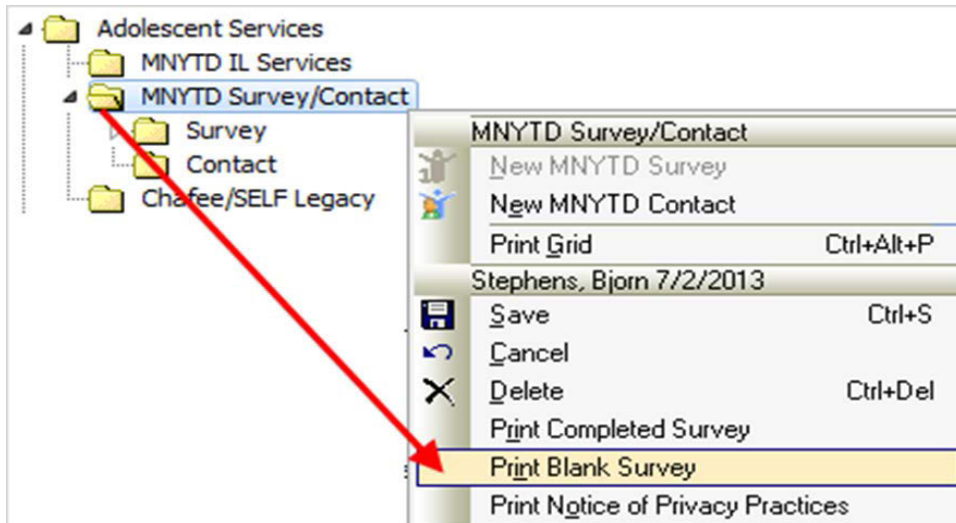
What is the highest educational degree or certification that you have received?:

Currently are you enrolled in and attending high school, GED classes, post-high school vocational training, or college?  Yes  No  Decline  Unanswered



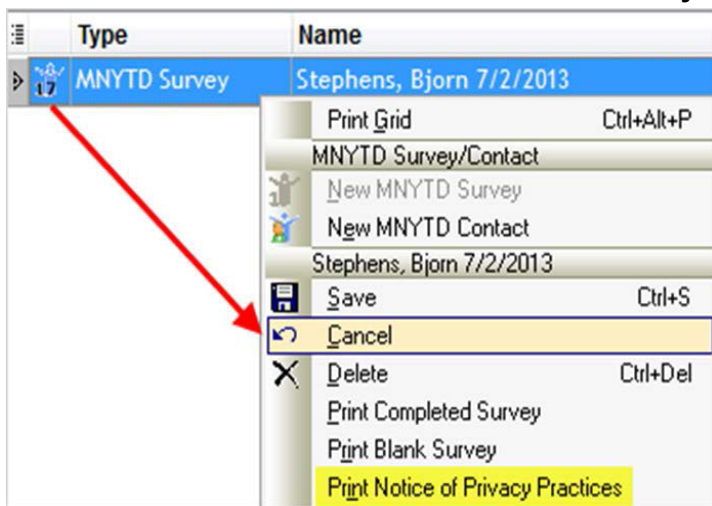
The survey must be completed in its entirety before being saved in SSIS. It is recommended that caseworkers print a blank MNYTD Survey first to complete with youth and then enter the youth's responses into SSIS. Blank MNYTD Surveys are available by first opening a new MNYTD Survey and right-clicking on the Contact/Survey folder. Select Print Blank Survey from the Action menu. Note that you may also select Print Completed Survey and Print Notice of Privacy Practices from this location. The Notice of Privacy Practices and Blank Survey are also available from Tools – General Reports.

### SSIS Tree View – MNYTD Survey/Contact Folder – Print Blank Survey



Right-click on the Survey node in the Tree View or in the grid (shown below) and select Cancel to exit the survey after printing a blank MNYTD Survey.

### SSIS Grid – Action Menu – Cancel MNYTD Survey



The screen below is of the MNYTD Contact Screen. Contact information provided by youth is very important because it is used to locate them at ages 19 and 21 for the follow-up surveys. Encourage youth to provide as many contacts as possible and as much information regarding each as is known. Select Action – New Contact to continue to enter additional contacts in SSIS. Note the Social Network field. The drop-down menu suggests potential contacts through several common social networks.

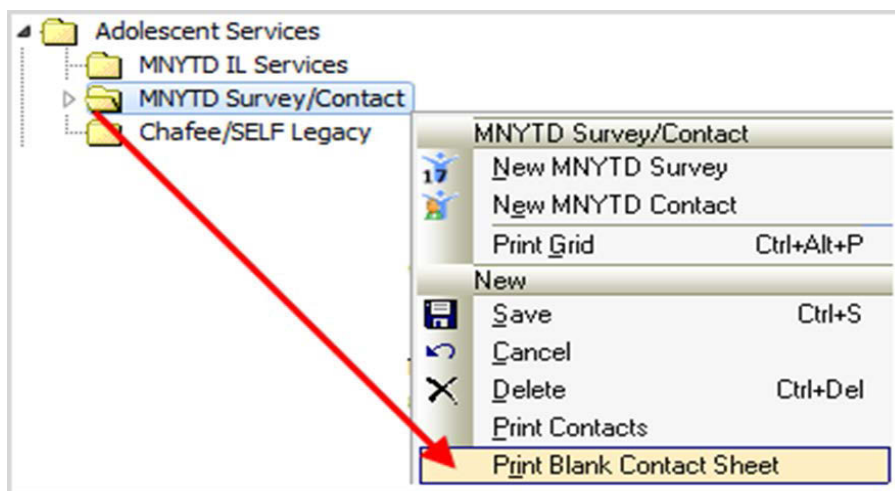
### SSIS MNYTD Contact Screen – Social Network Field Selections

The screenshot shows the following fields on the contact screen:

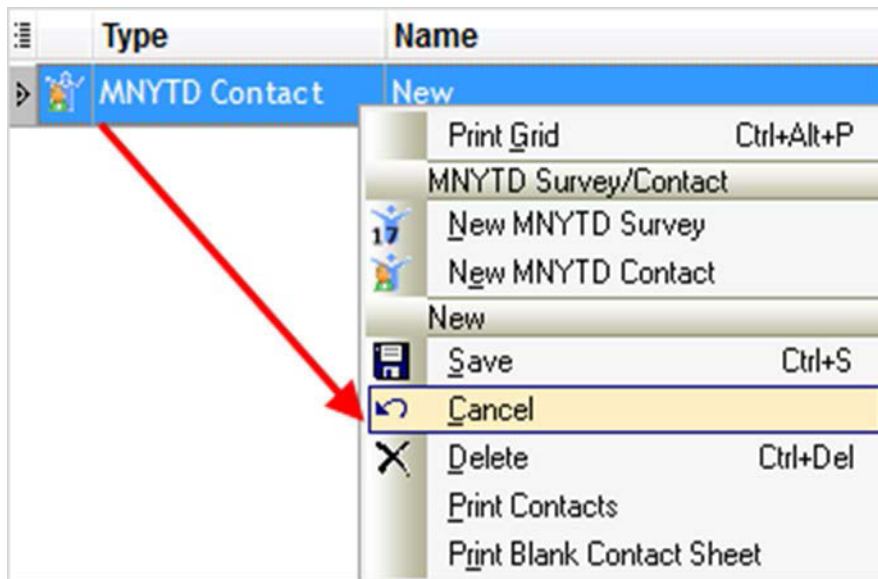
- Contact Type: [Dropdown menu]
- Updated On: 7/2/2013 [Dropdown menu]
- Person or Organization Name: [Text input field]
- Address Line 1: [Text input field]
- City: [Text input field]

The screen below demonstrates how to print a Blank Contact Sheet, which is also available from Tools – General Reports.

**SSIS MNYTD Survey/Contact Folder – Print Blank Contact Sheet**



Right-click on the Survey node in the Tree View or in the grid (shown on the next page) and select Cancel to exit the contact after printing a blank MNYTD Contact Sheet.

**SSIS Grid – Action Menu – Cancel****Agency Actions:**

When agency staff become aware that a youth on their caseload is turning 17 (or was in placement within 45 days after turning 17) complete the following steps:

1. Make an appointment with the youth to complete the 22-item survey and MNYTD Contact Sheet. Staff should locate and familiarize themselves with the MNYTD Notice of Privacy Practices, Survey and Contact Sheet. Because federal law require that all youth in foster care receive at least one face-to-face contact each month, DHS staff recommend that MNYTD forms be completed with youth at the monthly visit immediately following their 17th birthday. Completing this process provides an opportunity to revisit the youth's independent living plan and engage in the important conversation about whether they plan to remain in or leave foster care. Although the Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18 is not required until six months prior to a youth's 18th birthday, discussion about the transition to independent living should begin well before age 18.

Social workers may want to have the youth come to their office to collaborate on the survey while the social worker is in SSIS. Staff with laptops and remote SSIS access will be able to record the information directly into SSIS from the field. Staff without these capabilities may need to print the forms from SSIS or e-Docs.

2. At the visit with the youth, introduce the MNYTD Notice of Privacy Practices, explaining the purpose of the MNYTD survey process. Assure the youth that their personal information and identity is protected while reporting to the federal government. Emphasize that their participation will help other youth in foster care by giving the state information about the circumstances of youth as they grow older and leave foster care. Inform the youth that they may be selected to participate in a

second and third MNYTD survey at ages 19 and 21, and that there will be financial incentives for their continued participation.

3. Engage the youth in completion of the 22-item survey. It is important that the youth's full responses are recorded, regardless of the opinion of the worker. The worker may clarify the questions but should not coach the youth on answers, even if the worker knows that the information the youth is providing is not accurate. "Decline" and "don't know" are valid responses to survey questions. Avoid the temptation to coach youth on questions if they indicate one of these responses.
4. Once the youth completes the survey, staff should complete the Survey Status box, indicating the appropriate response as follows:
  - **Youth participated.** The youth participated in the outcomes survey, either fully or partially.
  - **Youth declined.** The youth was invited but declined to participate.
  - **Parent declined.** The youth was invited to participate, but the youth's parent or guardian declined to grant permission to participate in data collection. (This will not ordinarily apply for youth in care.)
  - **Incapacitated.** The youth has a permanent or temporary mental or physical condition that prevents participation in the survey.
  - **Incarcerated.** The youth is unable to participate because of his/her incarceration.
  - **Runaway/missing.** The youth in foster care is known to have run away or is otherwise missing from his/her foster care placement.
  - **Unable to locate/invite.** The agency could not locate the youth who is no longer in foster care.
  - **Death.** The youth died prior to participation in the survey.
5. It is essential that the youth, together with the worker, foster parent and/or supportive adult provide data on the MNYTD Contact Screen. Accurate and complete data entry is vital to locating youth who are selected for the follow-up survey.
6. Follow standard monthly upload procedures for sending SSIS data to the data repository. No new state reporting procedures are required of agencies. DHS is responsible for assembling the statewide report and transmitting it to the federal level.

## **V. MNYTD VPC Training Dates**

Agency staff members with caseloads including older youth in foster care are strongly encouraged to attend one of two virtual presence communication (VPC) trainings offered by DHS. Training information is as follows:

- Tuesday, September 20, 2016, 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm or
- Wednesday, September 21, 2016, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Agency staff can register for either date on TrainLink. Select and register for the most convenient date and VPC site.

MNYTD training is designed to:

- Provide guidance on demographics and characteristics of youth eligible for independent living services and the baseline MNYTD survey
- Identify types of IL Services to report and who may provide these services
- Demonstrate completion of the MNYTD survey with youth in foster care at age 17
- Suggest methods for documenting MNYTD contact information for follow-up surveys
- Instruct SSIS navigation regarding MNYTD data entry as well as the use of MNYTD searches.

Training documentation will be available on the SSIS Training site one week prior to the VPC dates.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory**

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling 651-431-4670 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.