



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
1250 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

October 1, 2010

Dear Child Welfare Administrator:

In 1999, the Foster Care Independence Act (Public Law 106-169) was enacted, establishing the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program at section 477 of the Social Security Act. The law not only doubled the amount of Federal dollars available to support State independent living programs but mandated that States provide services to youth who aged out of foster care until age 21. The law also required the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to implement a data collection system to track the independent living services States provide to youth and to develop outcome measures that may be used to assess State performance in operating their independent living programs.

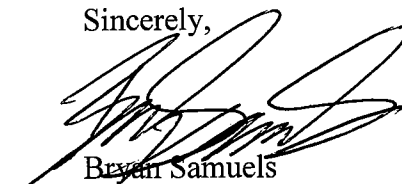
Beginning in 2000, ACF initiated national consultations with State child welfare agencies, private agency youth service providers and current and former foster youth, to develop this data collection system. In 2008, this collaborative work culminated in the publication of the regulation implementing the data collection requirements of the Foster Care Independence Act; a reporting system we now know as the **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)**. Today, we mark another important milestone in the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program with official start of NYTD data collection.

On October 1, 2010, NYTD joins the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a reporting system that will assist us in gaining a more complete, national picture of youth served by child welfare agencies and the outcomes of these youth. As the first national data collection dedicated to understanding the transitions of youth from foster care to independent living, NYTD contributes to filling an important knowledge gap in the field of child welfare, building on the knowledge generated from a number of regional or site-specific studies including the *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth* and the *Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs*.

We view NYTD as an important tool for identifying areas where independent living programs and services can improve youth outcomes by increasing financial self-sufficiency, educational attainment, connections with adults and access to health insurance, as well as by helping youth avoid homelessness and high-risk behaviors. It is also our hope that through the process of engaging youth in outcomes data collection, NYTD will also be a tool for involving youth more closely in preparations for transitions to independent living and for cultivating more positive relationships with the agency itself.

We acknowledge all the hard work undertaken by States to implement the NYTD youth outcome survey and to develop information systems to collect and manage NYTD data. As we look ahead to the first reporting period deadline of May 15, 2011, we also look forward to continuing our support of NYTD implementation through training and technical assistance. We believe the implementation of NYTD is a part of an ongoing partnership to improve our collective understanding of youth in transition through the collection of data. On the occasion of the launch of NYTD, I want to extend my congratulations to States undertaking this historic data collection effort.

Sincerely,



Bryan Samuels
Commissioner