

Community Response Independent Living Program

Participant Manual



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Welcome

Welcome to the Community Response Independent Living Program. We are pleased to have you as part of our family. You will be supported as you grow and obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to live on your own. We know that living on your own can sometimes be a frightening and lonely experience. However, you will always have the support of the Community Response staff. Our Case Manager will keep in contact with you through phone calls and visits. You will also have the chance to participate in outings with other program Participants. You will not lose the support of your Children's Division (CD) worker. Your CD worker will continue to visit and support you, as needed. You will be expected to show that you are responsible and trustworthy by following program rules. If you are unclear about anything, it is *your* responsibility to bring it to the attention of our staff. Remember, you are being prepared to live on your own- that requires being responsible. You were selected for this program because we know that you will be successful. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help you.

WELCOME!!!!

Goals of Independent Living

The goal of our Independent Living Program (ILP) is to prepare you for life on your own after you exit the foster care system. Children's Division expects Community Response and other agencies help ILP participants obtain the following outcome: THE SIX MAJOR GOALS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING, according to the Children's Division ARE:

1. Self-Sufficiency

Youth will be productive members of the community and not be dependent on public assistance for basic needs, or cost to the community due to incarceration/Institutionalization. Youth will have a place to live and not be dependent on a homeless shelter.

2. Education

Youth are encouraged to obtain a high school diploma as a first priority and to pursue vocational/educational goals.

3. Employment

Youth are to maintain employment for at least one year.

4. Young Parenthood

Youth are able to avoid teenage parenthood (becoming pregnant or getting someone pregnant). If you are sexually active, CR staff can help you explore birth control options in order to prevent pregnancy (as well as STD's and other issues). Our focus is on helping YOU become prepared for life on your own.

5. External Support

The importance of families in youth's life is understood and encouraged. Youth have at least one identified external resource person in their life.

6. Health Care

Youth are able to access and obtain health care as needed.

Obtaining these outcomes cannot be done if the ILP participant and CR Case Manager do not work together. IT is Community Response's responsibility to provide you with the support, structure, knowledge and skills to become self-sufficient and it is YOUR responsibility to be receptive to what is being offered and take responsibility for your own future.

STRUCTURED VS UNSTRUCTURED ILP

Community Response offers Structured and Unstructured Independent Living Services for participants needing varying levels of support.

Our Structured Program is for young adults who may require more structure and support. This program is for foster youth who are new to living on their own, and may benefit from more visits and hands on living and social skills instructions. The structured program requires the following:

- Home Visits every 3 days (72 hours)
- Must submit weekly work and/or school schedules

Clients will stay at that structured level for a minimum of 60 days. If it is determined that you have made adequate progress in the Structured program, a recommendation will be made to our Unstructured program.

Foster youth in our UNSTRUCTURED program will receive the following:

- Scheduled weekly home visits

If you fail to succeed with the level of independence that this program offers, a referral to the structured program may be needed.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES and SAVINGS REQUIREMENTS

Community Response is not in the business of enabling young adults to become dependent on social systems. This is INDEPENDENT LIVING and our purpose is to help you become responsible, independent and self-sufficient citizens. You will never pay RENT while in the Community Response ILP program.

Every youth working at least 10 hours per week will pay utility expenses. This is to allow youth the skill of budgeting and managing housing expenses. Community Response will reimburse utilities up to \$150 per month, IF proof of payment is made within 60 days of paying the bill. The exact amount paid for utilities will be saved for youth in an agency-managed account. Funds saved will be documented and monitored by youth and their Case Manager. Funds will be maintained by Community Response until you exit our program.

However, you are expected to SAVE towards your future living expenses. We will work together to determine a fair amount to save.

CR staff will assist you with understanding how to pay bills, how to budget for monthly expenses and how to manage household expenses.

When working, the MINIMUM amount that participants will save monthly is \$100/monthly. This is the minimum. MOST participants will save well above the minimum. EVERY participant is expected to have saved a minimum of \$1200 prior to renewal of their lease.

APARTMENT:

Community Response is responsible for ensuring that program youth qualify for an apartment in the community of their choice. It is our goal to place youth in a position to establish positive rental history, by having the lease in their name. In most cases, Community Response will serve as guarantor. Community Response will be responsible for the prompt payment of monthly rents and application fee and security deposit.

You are expected to qualify for your apartment after being in the independent program for 1-2 years. Community Response will not sign a lease for a 20-year-old, UNLESS that person has the funds saved to pay the balance of their lease amount past their 21st birthday. We may consider placing you in an apartment of

OUR choice with a month-to-month lease if you are unable to qualify for an apartment on your own.

Remember, most apartments require that you earn 2-3times your rent. It is important not to waste time when you enter the program, to ensure that you are in position to obtain an apartment without a cosigner, when the time comes.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WILL I HAVE MY OWN APARTMENT OR A ROOMMATE?

Participants in our ILP are not required to have a roommate. In certain instances (for example sibling groups), we can accommodate youth who choose to have a roommate.

HOW OFTEN WILL MY CR CASE MANAGER VISIT?

Your Community Response ILP Case Manager can visit you at any time. It is important to understand that although you will have your own apartment our Case Manager will provide regular visits to you in order to make sure that you are working towards the goals in your client-centered plan. During the first 45-60 days in the program, you can expect several visits (some unannounced) and phone calls.

Unstructured program participants receive a minimum of 1 weekly visit. Visits may be in-person in the youth's apartment, in the community, or virtually/by phone. Most visits will be in person, in the youth's apartment.

Failure to be present for scheduled meetings with your Case Manager will result in a write up. 3 write ups for missed appointments will be grounds for disciplinary action.

WILL ANYONE HAVE A KEY TO MY APARTMENT?

For safety purposes, the Independent Living Program Director will keep a key to your apartment. You should make an extra copy of your keys in case you misplace one set. Do not allow anyone access to your keys to enter your apartment. If you lose your keys and are unable to get to your extra set, apartment management may charge you a lock out fee of \$25 or more.

CAN I HAVE OVERNIGHT GUEST(S) ?

Occasional overnight guests are allowed as long as their presence does not interfere with your productivity in the program. No one is allowed to stay in your apartment when you are not home. Program participants are not permitted to share an apartment with anyone.

CAN I STAY OVERNIGHT WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

Community Response staff and your CD Case Manager will want to discuss your plans to stay away from your apartment for anytime more than 2 nights. As a courtesy and to ensure safety, please call/text your CR Case Manager with the name, address, and phone number for your overnight stay. In some cases, your CD worker may require a background check of the person you plan to visit.

WILL I STILL RECEIVE VISITS FROM MY CD CASE MANAGER?

You will continue to receive visits from your CD worker, in addition to your Community Response Case Manager. Your CR Case manager will also attend meetings with your CD worker and other involved parties (For example, your Guardian ad Litem and DJO).

WHAT IF I DON'T FOLLOW PROGRAM RULES?

We expect you to follow program rules at all times. Breaking rules can lead to termination from the program.

WHAT EXPENSES WILL I BE REQUIRED TO PAY?

The goal of Independent Living is to prepare you to be independent, and acquire the skills necessary to manage your household. Community Response will pay your full rent and utilities while you are in the program. As time goes on, you will be expected to save the funds you would normally pay towards your rent and utilities.

DO I PURCHASE MY OWN FOOD?

Participants in our program receive a \$225 monthly food allowance. \$125.00 grocery allowance on/about the 1st and \$100 on 15th of each month. This allowance is expected to provide you with groceries for the entire month. We realize that some people may want to add additional funds in order to purchase more groceries; feel free to add to that amount. CR staff will arrange shopping trips, if needed to teach budgeting and shopping skills. *NOTE:* You are not allowed to receive food

stamps while in our program. Do not apply for food stamps. If you do, you are responsible for any consequences imposed by the State of Missouri. In cases where a program participant has a baby, that youth may be able to apply for the baby, but not him/herself.

CONDITION OF APARTMENT

You are responsible for the condition of you apartment. You should maintain a clean and neat apartment. It is your responsibility to ensure that your apartment is in the same condition prior to move-in. Report damages to your worker as soon as possible. Any damages to your carpet, walls and apartment will be your financial responsibility at move-out. Funds may be taken from your Savings account to satisfy damage charges.

BUS PASSES

Community Response will provide monthly bus passes to program participants who are working and/or attending school. Program participants may qualify for a FREE bus pass or a discounted semester bus pass in certain participating colleges/universities. In those cases, the program participant will be expected to utilize that benefit.

APARTMENT RULES/PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

Every program participant is expected to follow the rules of your Apartment complex and the Community Response ILP. The Community Response Independent Living Program rules are as follows:

- 1.) **NO SHARING YOUR APARTMENT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS.** Your apartment is **ONLY** for you. You are not allowed to share your apartment with family and/or friends. Clothing or belongings (other than yours) should not be in your apartment. If items are found in your apartment, it will be assumed that someone is living with you. Sharing your apartment is grounds for dismissal from our program.
- 2.) **DO NOT LEAVE GUEST(S) IN APARTMENT WHEN YOU ARE NOT HOME**
- 3.) **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES/DRUGS OF ANY KIND - THIS INCLUDES GUEST(S)**

- 4.) NO GUNS OR OTHER ILLEGAL WEAPONS - THIS INCLUDES GUEST(S)
 - 5.) YOU MUST PROVIDE ENTRY INTO YOUR APARTMENT AS NEEDED
 - 6.) MAINTAIN A CLEAN, ORDERLY AND SAFE APARTMENT
 - 10.) NOTIFY CR CASE MANAGER (AS SOON AS POSSIBLE) OF ANY APARTMENT CONCERNS
 - 11.) NO LOUD TALKING, MUSIC, OR OTHER NOISE DURING RESIDENT QUIET HOURS (AS STATED IN YOUR LEASE AGREEMENT)
 - 12.) FURNITURE REMAINS THE PROPERTY OF COMMUNITY RESPONSE FOR ONE YEAR AFTER YOUR ADMISSION INTO THE PROGRAM. IF YOU LEAVE THE PROGRAM, FOR ANY REASON, THE FURNITURE WILL REMAIN THE PROPERTY OF COMMUNITY RESPONSE. AFTER ONE YEAR IN THE PROGRAM, ANY FURNITURE PURCHASED BY COMMUNITY RESPONSE IS YOURS. THE ONLY EXCEPTION, IS IF YOU ARE TERMINATED FROM THE PROGRAM.
 - 13.) YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONDITION OF YOUR APARTMENT; YOU WILL PAY THE COST OF DAMAGES FROM YOUR "FUTURE EXPENSES" ACCOUNT AND/OR PERSONAL SAVINGS.
 - 14.) YOU HAVE 60 DAYS TO LOCATE EMPLOYMENT UPON ENTERING PROGRAM (EXCEPTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO BE DETERMINED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS)
 - 15.) YOU MUST HAVE A SAVINGS/CHECKING ACCOUNT OPENED WITHIN 60 DAYS OF ENTERING THE PROGRAM
 - 16.) YOU MUST KEEP ALL APPOINTMENTS WITH YOUR CASE MANAGER
 - 17.) COMMUNITY RESPONSE STAFF CAN CHANGE PROGRAM RULES AND EXPECTATIONS AT ANY TIME
- ***REFUSAL TO FOLLOW APARTMENT RULES CAN LEAD TO TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM***

CASE MANAGER ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You will be assigned a Case Manager upon being accepted into the Community Response Independent Living Program. Your Case Manager will meet with you a minimum of once a week and will help you address your goals. Your Case Manager will also attend meetings with your CD Worker as well as Court hearings and Family Support Team (FST) meetings.

YOUR ASSIGNED CASE MANAGER WILL:

- Help you complete the goals on your client-centered plan
- Help you find employment/register for school
- Help you obtain other goals (i.e., obtaining a driver's license, enrolling in school)
- Teach you how to manage your apartment (i.e., shop, clean, cook, etc.)
- Instruct you on life skills (i.e., budgeting, money management, etc.)

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Regular contact with their Community Response Case Manager
- Respect by all CR employees
- Confidentiality
- Grow and learn
- Not be judged in a negative way
- Exercise freedom of choice when deciding personal, educational and career goals
- Participate in choosing the goals for client-centered plan

PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Be open and honest with CR staff regarding assistance needed
- Respect all program rules (curfew, visitation, etc.)
- Be available to meet with Case Manager and Mentor as needed
- Follow client-centered plan
- Put forth the effort needed to grow and be independent
- Keep the apartment clean (dishes washed, vacuumed, etc.)
- Seek information and support from Community Response staff when needed

FUTURE EXPENSE ACCOUNT/SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Each CR Participant will open a Program Managed savings account with Community Response. You will also receive instruction and support on opening your own checking and/or saving account that you will manage on your own. The Program Managed account will be where participant paid utility expenses will be reimbursed and saved. These funds will remain in your account until you exit the program. If you should need to withdraw funds for an emergency expense, we will first discuss this emergency need with your CD Case Manager and you.

Participants are not required to pay rent while in the CR ILP program. Let's talk numbers for a moment! The average monthly rent for a decent one-bedroom apartment can range between \$800 to \$900 per month. When you move in, most companies require you to pay 1st and last month's rent payment in advance. Therefore, if your apartment is \$800/month, you must pay \$1600.00 prior to moving in. This amount doesn't cover your electric, phone, food and/or gas.

The savings account is to prepare you for your exit from custody at age 21. The more you save, the more you will have. It is our goal that EVERY youth in our program save a minimum of 3 months housing reserves in a savings account, prior to aging out of foster care. For example, if your living expenses (rent, utilities, food, bus pass, etc.) are \$1500 monthly, you are expected to save a MINIMUM of \$4500 prior to exiting care.

Community Response is committed to coaching young adults in the way of acquiring and keeping a place for you and your family when the time comes.

Although the money that you make on your job while in our program is yours, we must provide this method to ensure housing stability.

SCHOOL/WORK OBLIGATIONS

Participants will be required to attend school and/or work. Every participant in our program will be required to first work towards a High School Diploma or GED before considering employment.

MAKING LARGE PURCHASES

Participants are required to consult with their Case Manager and ILP Director before making purchases over \$200 (For example, purchasing a vehicle) and before entering into a contractual agreement. Some businesses and persons prey on young people who may not know what to look for and/ or the questions to ask. Sharing your plans with CR staff may ultimately save you a lot of frustration and cash. Allow us to guide you through important decisions and large purchases.

Rule Violations

- Failure to attend scheduled meetings.
- Drugs/Alcohol in the apartment.
- Failure to produce grade reports, pay stubs or utility bill receipts
- Sharing an apartment with others.
- Failure to maintain employment.
- Damage to apartment or furniture.
- Failure to save money in account.
- Nuisance/Apartment violations.
- Failure to maintain automobile insurance..
- Disrespect towards program staff.
- Other _____

Three of the same violations in a 12-month period is grounds for termination from the Community Response Independent Living Program.

PARTICIPANT'S CONTRACT

I, _____, have reviewed the manual and discussed it with my Community Response Independent Living Program Case Manager and/or Program Director. I clearly understand what is expected of me. If there is an area that I need clarified in the future, it is my responsibility to ask. I am willing and able to follow all the rules in this manual. I understand that if I fail to follow rules of the Community Response Independent Living Program, I may be terminated from the program.

Participant's Signature

Date

CR Staff's Signature

Date

CONCLUSION

The Community Response Independent Living Program provides you with the tools needed to successfully live on your own. It is up to you to take advantage of what our program offers. We want you to succeed, and we know you can. But you must have a good attitude and make good choices in order to be successful in our program, and in life. Our goal is for you to exit our program with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to be a successful and productive citizen. Take this opportunity to grow, learn and prepare for life.

“What you intend for yourself determines what you get” (Anonymous).

WELCOME!