



Guidelines for Independent Living and Group Homes

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Introduction:

This guidebook is about supporting Friends staff to place students and youth in the community as a form of alternative care that can transition them to live independently.

The purpose of independent living and group homes is for older youth to form relationships in the community, transition to independent living, develop living skills in a supportive environment and learn how to live safely in the community and adapt to adult life.

Independent living comes in two forms:

- Supported Independent Living- Independent living arrangements are for older children to live independently with support from their case manager.
- Group Homes - As per the RGC prakas on alternative care, Group Homes are small family style living arrangements where small number of children (2 – 8) children are provided care under the supervision of a case manager.

1. Identification of the suitable youth

Friends-International views institutional care, such as orphanages or transitional homes, as an absolute last resort for children. For some children over the age of 16, reintegration into the family may not be possible, and due to their age it may be more important to look at preparing them for adult life outside the family. **NOTE: this refers to their physical living space and does not mean that family counseling work to repair relationships should necessarily cease.**

Independent living refers to young people (16yrs and older) who have the skills to safely live alone or with other young people in a group home.

2. Preparation of Youth for Group Homes

Before making the agreement to move into a group home or independent living situation youth must:

- Be consulted and agree to placement
- Demonstrate self-care skills
- Have basic problem solving skills
- Visit the house/location

3. Finding a Suitable Property

When selecting the location of a property the following things should be considered:

- Avoid high risk locations for drugs.
- Avoid red light districts, even though rents can be cheaper.

4. Preparing the Property

As a form of supported alternative care, FI programs will support youth living in independent living homes with materials, as they would in a transitional home.

5. Transition of Youth to Independent Living

Once youth are prepared for moving into independent living the following should be carried out by the social worker to make sure the transition is risk free:

- Staff have only master key. No one else can change locks.
- Students/youth must agree to house rules with independent living social worker
- Student/Youth to be registered with photos to local authority and notify commune police.
- Meet with neighbors
- Clearly provide youth with emergency contact details (each house should have emergency numbers listed clearly)
- Advise case managers of students/youth location

6. Follow Up

Independent Living coordinator or case manager must conduct spot checks on group homes and independent living home a **MINIMUM of 2 times per week.**

The purpose of the spot checks is to ensure that the youth living there are maintaining their agreement of keeping the house in a good condition.

7. Move on

Like living in the TH, Supported Independent Living and Group Home are only a temporary living arrangement for youth beneficiaries.

Move on plans should be made on a case by case basis for all youth while they are living in Independent Living.

7 Tips for Independent Living

1. THINK! Identify children who are confident and responsible
2. THINK! Prepare the children so they can succeed
3. THINK! Select properties that are safe and suitable
4. THINK! Prepare the property so it can feel like home for the youth
5. THINK! Transition the youth gradually and with full support
6. THINK! Follow up to reduce risk to the youth and promote their independence
7. THINK! Allow enough time for a suitable and timely move on plan for the youth.

Supported living is not forever!