

# 2012

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## Independent Living Services Advisory Council



2012

Report of Independent Living Services  
for Florida's Foster Youth

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

## Table of Contents

<b>Background</b> .....	3
Legislative Action .....	3
# Teens in Out-of-Home Care, Eligible Young Adults, and Removals of 17 year old Teens.....	3
<b>Independent Living Transition Services</b> .....	4
Preindependent Living Preindependent Living Services.....	4
Life Skills Services .....	4
Subsidized Living Services .....	5
Aftercare Support Services .....	5
Transitional Support Services .....	6
Road-to-Independence Program.....	6
<b>Overview of Available Survey Data</b> .....	7
Survey Results for Teens 13-17 .....	8
Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and My Services.....	
Education .....	8
Employment .....	8
Health and Dental Care.....	8
Normalcy.....	9
Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System Involvement .....	9
Survey Results for Young Adults 18-22.....	9
Florida National Youth in Transition Database Survey .....	
Education .....	9
Employment.....	10
Health and Dental Care.....	11
Housing & Transportation.....	11
Involvement in the Criminal Justice System .....	12
<b>Independent Living Budget</b> .....	12
Allocated Funds and Expenditures.....	12
Distribution of Expenditures .....	13
<b>Independent Living Services Advisory Council</b> .....	14
Membership on the Independent Living Services Advisory Council.....	14
2012 Meetings of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council .....	15
Postsecondary Education Subgroup .....	15
Recommendation.....	16

## Background

### Legislative Action

#### **The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (1999)**

In 1999 the federal government enacted the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act. This legislation gave states increased funding to provide foster teens and young adults that have “aged out” of the foster care system with better access to programs that are designed to promote the development of adult self-sufficiency. Available Independent Living training opportunities, programmatic supports, and direct services covered by the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act include: educational training and supports; preparation for post-secondary education; daily life skills training; employment training; substance abuse services; pregnancy prevention and preventive health activities; and programs that are designed to connect foster teens and young adults that have aged out of the foster care system with positive and permanent adult mentors.

#### **Road to Independence Act (2002)**

In 2002 Florida passed the Road to Independence Act. This state based program established a system of independent living transition services to enable older children in foster care and young adults who exit foster care at age 18 to make the transition to self-sufficiency as adults. The Road-to-Independence (RTI) Program is also designed to provide direct stipend payments to young adults that have aged out of the foster care system while they pursue fulltime educational opportunities in the areas of continuing adult education (GED), vocational training/certification, or post-secondary associate/bachelor degrees.

- 78.6% of those aging out of foster care initially receive RTI funds;
- At age 19, over half, (51.2%) of those who aged out of care are still receiving benefits;
- By age 20, the percentage drops to 38.1%;
- By age 21, only 37.2% of the youth are receiving benefits;
- By age 22, only slightly over a quarter of the youth (26.2%) who aged out of foster care continue to receive RTI support.

#### ***Number of Teens in Out-of-Home Care, Eligible Young Adults, and Removals of 17 year old Teens***

- **5,000** - Approximate number of teens between the ages of 13-17 residing in out-of-home care placement on any given day over the past year.
- **5,500** - Approximate number of young adults who are eligible to receive Independent Living services on any given day over the past year.
- **4,000** - Approximate number of young adults accessing Road to Independence services on any given day over the past year.
- **350-450** - Total removals involving teens that are 17 years of age (2-3% of the statewide annual total).

## **Independent Living Transition Services**

The Florida Department of Children and Families contracts with Community-Based Care Lead Agencies in Florida to provide Independent Living services for current and former foster youth and young adults. As set forth in statute, six categories of Independent Living services are available in Florida including:

- Preindependent Living Services
- Life Skills Services
- Subsidized Living Services
- Aftercare Support Services
- Transitional Support Services
- Road-to-Independence Program

### ***Preindependent Living Services***

Preindependent Living Services are primarily centered on general life skills training and educational services that are designed to support and promote educational attainment and post-secondary educational goal setting. Services are limited to youth in the foster care system, between the ages of 13-14, who are currently placed in out-of-home care. The services available include general life skills training, educational field trips and educational conferences.

### ***Life Skills Services***

Life Skills Services are general services that provide youth in the foster care system with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills needed to function as an independent adult should they “age out” of the foster care system. Services are limited to youth in foster care, between the ages of 15-17 years, who are currently placed in out-of-home care. The services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Banking and budgeting skills
- Interviewing skills
- Parenting skills and employment training
- Educational support
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling

Prior to a child “aging out” of the foster care system there is an extensive judicial review process that is required to occur within 3 months of a foster care child turning 17. Required documents and information that must be covered and/or addressed prior to this required court hearing include ensuring that:

- The youth has a current Medicaid card and all information necessary to apply for Medicaid coverage once they reach 18.
- The youth has a certified copy of their birth certificate.
- The youth has a Florida's driver's license or a Florida identification card.
- The youth has all necessary information needed to apply for Social Security Insurance benefits payments, if eligible.
- The youth has information and training related to budgeting skills, interview skills, and parenting skills.
- The youth has received information regarding the Road-to-Independence Program, including eligibility requirements, forms, and assistance in completing the forms.
- The youth receives information confirming that those who qualify for the Road-to-Independence Program may continue to reside with their foster family or group care provider or a different foster family or group care provider.
- The youth has an active checking and savings account and has received essential banking skill training.
- The youth has received information on public assistance and how to apply.
- The youth has a clear understanding of where they will be living when they turn 18 and how they intend to pay for living expenses.
- The youth has been told that they have the right to request extended jurisdiction of the juvenile court for an additional year.
- The youth has been encouraged to attend all juridical review hearings over the course of the next year.

### ***Subsidized Independent Living Services***

Subsidized Independent Living Services are financial support payments made under the control of an approved and monitored budget to youth residing in foster care who have demonstrated a high degree of maturity that allows the youth to live on their own independent daily adult supervision. Only youth in the foster care system, between the ages of 16-17 years, who have demonstrated a high degree of maturity are considered for eligibility in this program. The minimum standards for demonstrating the necessary level of maturity include attainment of stable employment, attending school fulltime while maintaining high grades and has no past behavioral issues are considered for placement into this program.

### ***Aftercare Support Services***

Aftercare Support Services are temporary and/or emergency support payments and services that are designed to prevent homelessness and/or meet the immediate needs of young adults formerly in foster care. The amount of funds available is contingent on the availability of funds. Should the need of services appear to be more long-term in nature the young adult is required to apply for Transitional Support Services. Eligibility for these services is limited to young adults formerly in foster care, between the ages of 18-22 years, that have "aged out" of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed in with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. The services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Temporary financial assistance such as emergency payments to prevent homelessness, termination of utilities or approved car repairs
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Mental health services and substance abuse counseling
- Life skills classes, including credit management and preventative health activities
- Parenting classes
- Job skills training

### ***Transitional Support Services***

Transitional Support Services are short-term services that are available to young adults formerly in foster care who are able to demonstrate a critical need for service supports that are designed to develop a personal support system and allow them to achieve self-sufficiency. Services delivered under this heading are subject to the development of a specific case plan that is subject to a minimum 3 month review. Eligibility is limited to young adults formerly in foster care between the ages of 18-22 years that have “aged out” of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. The types of services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Financial assistance
- Housing
- Counseling
- Employment
- Education
- Mental health counseling
- Disability assistance
- Other services, if the young adult demonstrates that the services are “critical” to achieve self-sufficiency

### ***Road-to-Independence Program***

The Road-to-Independence Program provides educational support payments to former foster care young adults that are enrolled full-time in a certified continuing adult education class or post-secondary institution. Students with a diagnosed disability are eligible under part-time attendance in a certified continuing adult education class or post-secondary institution. The current maximum allowable monthly stipend payment may not exceed \$1,256 per month with payment totals subject to a needs based assessment. All Road-to-Independence educational support payments are subject to an annual review that reviews the students financial need, attendance, and academic progress. Program eligibility is limited to former foster care young adults who are residents of the state of Florida between the ages of 18-22 that have “aged out” of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed in with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. Young adults over the age of 22 are only eligible to receive support payments if they applied for support payments prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

## **Overview of Available Survey Data**

### **Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist (2007-2010)**

In 2007, Florida created the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist. This survey was designed to analyze and capture how those youth that had aged out of foster care (ages 18-22) were doing in establishing adult self-sufficiency. Current foster teens (ages 13-17) were also surveyed in an effort to get a better understanding of how well foster teens were being prepared for the possibility of aging out of foster care as well as to get a better understanding of foster teens viewed the overall of quality of services provided by the foster care system. The paper based Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist was last administered in 2010 and has since been replaced by the following three separate online surveys.

### **Federal National Youth in Transition Database (2011-current) (Biennial)**

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey is a federally required survey with 88 questions. The federal NYTD survey is administered every other year by Connected by 25, a technical assistance and training provider for agencies serving at-risk youth, to current and former foster teens in predetermined cohorts of 17, 19, and 21 years in an online format. The objective of the survey is to gain a better understanding of how this population is moving towards achieving the goal of adult self-sufficiency. Categories and questions covered by the survey address areas related to health, housing & transportation, education, employment; and involvement with the Juvenile/Criminal Justice System.

### **Florida National Youth in Transition Database (2011-current) (Annual)**

In an effort to ensure that all of the federally required NYTD survey populations were being properly tracked, Florida made the decision to have Connected by 25 administer the federal NYTD survey on an annual basis to all former foster care youth (ages 18-22) that could be located and were willing/able to complete the 88 question survey. The Florida NYTD survey is administered annually (spring) by Connected by 25 in an online format and mirrors the categories and questions covered by the federal NYTD survey.

### **My Services (2011-current) (Biannual)**

My Services is a 200+ question online survey that is administered by Connected by 25 on a biannual basis (spring and fall) that attempts to survey all foster teens (ages 13-17). The survey provides general information on how well teens are being prepared for adult self-sufficiency as well as how they view the overall quality of services that are being provided by the foster care system. Categories and questions covered by the survey include:

- Case management practices and general documentation requirements
- Educational attainment services and progression planning
- Employment preparation and employment supports
- Financial literacy training, Life skills training

- General foster care support and quality
- Ability to participate in normal teen activities
- Health/dental care service
- Involvement with the Juvenile/Criminal Justice system
- Preparation for aging out of the foster care system

## ***Survey Results for Teens 13-17***

### ***Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and My Services Surveys***

The following survey findings are derived from a combination of both the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and the My Services surveys. Though not all of the questions contained within both these surveys are identical, there is enough available information contained with both of these tools so as to allow for a very general review of how foster teens are being prepared for adult self sufficiency as well as how they view the overall of quality of services that are being provided by the foster care system.

Unless otherwise noted all results listed below for 2007-2010 are derived from the annual Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and all 2011-2012 results are derived from the biannual My Services survey.

#### **Education**

An analysis of the survey results indicate that approximately three-fourths of foster teens reported that their grades or report cards were reviewed by their placement or caseworker. The surveys also indicated that teens appear to be unaware or disconnected from the educational planning process given that only about one-third to one-half of the respondents indicated they had an Education & Career Path Plan or Individualized Education Plan. Teens also indicated that school stability appears to be a major problem with nearly one-half of them reporting they had changed schools within the past year.

#### **Employment**

Only a very small percentage of foster teens reported that they are currently employed (7%). However, nearly three-fourths of foster teens indicated they are given the opportunity to earn money through alternative activities such as baby-sitting or yard work. One troubling finding from the survey is that only about one-half of foster teens indicated that they have received formalized training on how to apply and interview for a job.

#### **Health and Dental Care**

Eighty-six percent of foster teens indicate that they are receiving the medical care that they need and a similar number reported that they have had a dental exam within the last year. Teens who reported that they were currently taking a prescription medication indicated that they have a good understanding of their medication's possible side effects. The percentage of respondents reporting that they are receiving the mental health or substance abuse services that they need was not nearly as strong with only about a one-half reporting that they feel that they are getting the services that they need in these two areas.



## Normalcy

In general foster teens report that the effort to establish a more normal living environment within the foster care system is still lagging. The percentage of teens that reported that they have a written approved activities plan has not changed substantially over the past three years and remains in the 60% percent range. In 2012, slightly more than half (53%) of the foster care youth reported that they receive the statutorily required weekly allowance. Teens that reported that they have a Florida Identification (39%), Learners Permit (10%), or Drivers' License (3%) were also low.

## Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System Involvement

About of one-quarter of foster teens report that they have been arrested within the last year or are currently under some type of Department of Juvenile Justice supervision.

## Survey Results for Young Adults 18-22

### Florida National Youth in Transition Database Survey

The following survey findings are derived from a combination of both the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and the 2011 Florida National Youth in Transition Database surveys. Though not all of the questions contained within both of these surveys are identical, there is enough available information contained with both of these tools so as to allow for a very general review of how young adults that have aged out of the foster care system are progressing towards self-sufficiency.

### Education

While almost three-fifths (57%) of the young adults formerly in foster care reported in 2012 that they had graduated or received a GED, increasing that percentage remains a priority. In 2012, a small percentage (7%) of the young adults reported that they had completed post-secondary education.

Education						
<b>Completed Grade 12 or Graduation Equivalency Diploma</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	52%	48%	48%	54%	57%
	Yes	979	744	568	1,093	1,041
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>1,547</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>
<b>Completed Post Secondary Education</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	5%	3%	3%	3%	7%
	Yes	86	48	33	54	65
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>1,547</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>

## Employment

There has been a steady decline in the percentage of young adults formerly in foster care who have a job of any kind, especially full-time. Of those that do have a full-time job, nearly one-half do not have benefits and the percentage who are only earning minimum wage has increased.

Employment								
<b>Any job: part-time, full-time, temporary, or seasonal</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida 2011	NYTD 2011	Florida 2012	NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	30%	22%	17%	14%		19%	
	Yes	572	342	203	195		346	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,920</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,199</b>	<b>1,398</b>		<b>1,821</b>	

<i>Employment continued</i>								
<b>Full time job</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida 2011	NYTD 2011	Florida 2012	NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	6%	3%	3%	4%		4%	
	Yes	124	54	40	61		1697	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,920</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,199</b>	<b>1398</b>		<b>1,821</b>	
<b>Of those having a full-time job, percent who have benefits</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida 2011	NYTD 2011	Florida 2012	NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	52%	60%	52%	No Longer Asked		No Longer Asked	
	Yes	57	27	16				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>31</b>				
<b>Minimum wage</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida 2011	NYTD 2011	Florida 2012	NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	31%	36%	36%	40%		35%	
	Yes	163	118	72	97		109	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>244</b>		<b>310</b>	

*Responses by young adults age 18-22*

## Health and Dental Care

The percentage of young adults that have aged out of the foster care system who have health insurance coverage remains high at 86% in 2012. The required Medicaid coverage for young adults between the ages of 18-20 years that have aged out of the Florida foster care system accounts for a sizeable portion of this percent. While there has been steady improvement to the number of former foster care young adults who are receiving dental care, from 31% in 2008 to 39% in 2012, there is still room for significant improvement in these areas.

## Housing & Transportation

The percentage of former foster young adults that reported that are residing in safe housing declined substantially in 2011. Additionally, access to reliable work transportations continues to be a significant issue for this population.

<b>Housing &amp; Transportation</b>							
<b>Safe Housing</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012	
	Percentage Yes	95%	96%	97%	90%	92%	
	Yes	1,777	1,465	1,140	1,806	1,683	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,877</b>	<b>1,528</b>	<b>1,178</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>	
<i>Housing &amp; Transportation continued</i>							
<b>Stable Housing</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012	
	Percentage Yes	91%	91%	93%	No Longer Asked	No Longer Asked	
	Yes	1,677	1,381	1,094			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,853</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>1,176</b>			
<b>Spent at least one night homeless in past 12 months Question Changed in 2011 to have you ever been homeless</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012	
	Percentage Yes	14%	14%	10%	28%	28%	
	Yes	267	218	121	561	492	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>1,530</b>	<b>1,177</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>	

Responses by young adults age 18-22

<i>Housing &amp; Transportation continued</i>							
<b>Have reliable means of transportation to school Question Changed in 2011 to Reliable means of Transportation to school and/or Work</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012	
	Percentage Yes	80%	84%	87%	73%	80%	
	Yes	1,519	1,309	1,033	1,473	1,379	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>1,556</b>	<b>1,192</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>	

<i>Housing &amp; Transportation continued</i>						
<b>Have a reliable means of transportation to work</b> <i>Question Changed in 2011 to Reliable means of Transportation to school and/or Work</i>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	45%	36%	31%	73%	80%
	Yes	645	558	366	1,473	1,379
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,437</b>	<b>1,533</b>	<b>1,193</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>
<b>Have a driver's license</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	75%	69%	70%	44%	47%
	Yes	731	556	402	891	872
	<b>Total</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>

*Responses by young adults age 18-22*

## Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

Within any given year approximately one-fifth of former foster care young adults report that they had been arrested within the last 12 months and roughly ten percent indicated that they are currently on probation or under court supervision.

<b>Criminal Justice</b>						
<b>Been arrested in the past 12 months</b> <i>Question changed in 2011 to have you ever been arrested</i>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	25%	23%	17%	43%	40%
	Yes	1,226	551	210	860	688
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,905</b>	<b>2,397</b>	<b>1,203</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>1,821</b>
<b>Currently on probation or under juvenile court supervision</b>	Year	2008	2009	2010	Florida NYTD 2011	Florida NYTD 2012
	Percentage Yes	10%	12%	10%	No Longer Asked	No Longer Asked
	Yes	155	227	117		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,548</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>1,200</b>		

*Responses by young adults age 18-22*

## Independent Living Budget

### ***Allocated funds and Expenditures***

The Legislature has appropriated \$30,170,469 annually in budget for the Independent Living Program since State Fiscal Year 2009-2010. Due to changes in Federal Grant Funding levels year-to-year a small portion of these appropriations have been unfunded and therefore not

allocated in Community-Based Care Lead Agency contracts. The actual allocation has ranged from \$30,170,469 to \$29,476,721. However the Community-Based Care agencies have the flexibility to spend other state funds from their DCF foster care and related services contracts including state carry forward funds for the independent living services. In State Fiscal Year 2011-2012, the allocated budget included \$8,181,242 of federal funding.

State Fiscal Year	From IL Budget	From Other CBC State Funds	Total	Funding	
				Federal	State
2009-10	\$30,170,469	\$21,709,631	\$51,880,100	\$9,042,586	\$42,837,514
2010-11	\$29,451,721	\$22,828,866	\$52,280,587	\$8,161,242	\$44,119,345
2011-12	\$29,476,721	\$19,562,437	\$49,039,158	\$8,181,242	\$40,857,916

### ***Distribution of Expenditures***

For FY11-12, approximately sixty-one (61%) percent of all Independent Living dollars were spent on Road to Independence stipends. Case coordination and life skills training costs accounted for nearly twenty-seven (27%) percent of total Independent Living expenditures with Transitional Support services accounting for approximately ten (10%) percent of the total amount spent. Aftercare and Subsidized Independent Living accounted for fewer than two (2%) percent of total dollars spent.

<b>Expenditures by Independent Living Program Area</b>						
State Fiscal Year	Road to Independence (RTI)	Case Coordination and Life Skill Training	Transitional	Aftercare	Subsidized IL (SIL)	Total
FY 09-10	\$35,260,682	\$10,738,650	\$4,265,864	\$877,447	\$737,457	\$51,880,100
FY 10-11	\$35,204,424	\$11,626,648	\$4,591,816	\$448,780	\$408,919	\$52,280,587
FY 11-12	\$29,858,300	\$13,066,982	\$5,208,321	\$628,794	\$276,761	\$49,039,158

<b>Expenditures (%) by Program Area</b>						
State Fiscal Year	Road to Independence (RTI)	Case Coordination and Life Skill Training	Transitional	Aftercare	Subsidized IL (SIL)	Total
FY 09-10	67.97%	20.70%	8.22%	1.69%	1.42%	100.00%
FY 10-11	67.34%	22.24%	8.78%	0.86%	0.78%	100.00%
FY 11-12	60.89%	26.65%	10.62%	1.28%	0.56%	100.00%

## Independent Living Services Advisory Council

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council was created in 2002 by the Florida Legislature. The Advisory Council is codified in §409.1451(7), Florida Statute. The Department of Children and Families provides administrative support to the Advisory Council.

The charge of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council is to review and make recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services. Each year the Advisory Council prepares and submits a report to the Florida Legislature and the Department of Children and Families on the status of the services being provided, including successes and barriers to these services.

In August 2012, Secretary David Wilkins appointed 18 new members to the Independent Living Services Advisory Council. Secretary Wilkins also appointed Bob Garner as the Chairman of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council in September 2012. As set forth in statute, the membership consists of representatives from the Department of Children and Families headquarters and district/circuit offices, Community Based-Based Care Lead Agencies, Department of Education, Agency for Health Care Administration, State Youth Advisory Board, Workforce Florida, Inc., Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, foster parents, recipients of the Road-to-Independence Program funding, and other advocates for foster children. Other appointed members include representatives from faith-based and community-based organizations, mentoring programs, higher education and the judicial system.

As of December 2012, below is a table of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council membership.

<b>Independent Living Services Advisory Council Membership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bob Garner, Advisory Council Chairman, Adjunct Professor, The Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship FSU College of Business, Tallahassee Community College/Flagler</li><li>• Barbara Alcena, Youth Advocate, Florida Atlantic University Student</li><li>• The Honorable Ronald V. Alvarez, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida</li><li>• Mary Cagle, Florida Department of Children and Families</li><li>• Joyce Hobson, Florida Department of Education</li><li>• Mathew Johns, 4Kids of South Florida, Inc.</li><li>• Carlos Martinez, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida</li><li>• Dehryl McCall, Workforce Florida, Inc.</li><li>• David Oropallo, Agency for Health Care Administration</li><li>• Trudy Petkovich, Florida State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association</li><li>• Ernst Pirrelouis, Youth Advocate, Florida State University Student</li><li>• Teri Saunders, Heartland for Children, Inc.,</li><li>• Diane Schofield, Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc.</li><li>• Pastor Ken Scrubbs, First Baptist Church of Leesburg</li><li>• Vicki Sokolik, Starting Right, Now</li><li>• Jane V. Soltis, Eckerd Family Foundation</li><li>• Janice Thomas, Florida Department of Children and Families</li><li>• Arto Woodley, President, Frontline Outreach, Inc.</li></ul>

During 2012, the Advisory Council held three meetings in Tallahassee. Video teleconferencing was also used by members to reduce travel expenses and travel time. In order to ensure the public has complete access and up-to-date information, Department staff has created a Web page at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/advisory-council> that contains information about the Advisory Council, its members, activities, subcommittees, as well as meeting dates and locations.

## **2012 Meetings of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council**

Three meetings were held during 2012 as described below.

**September 10 – Tallahassee.** During the first 2012 meeting of the Advisory Council, new members heard presentations explaining the history and background of the Independent Living Program including the independent living services, survey data, budget, funding and expenditures. Discussions included the Guardian ad Litem’s proposed legislation on normalcy and the Department’s commitment to improving the Independent Living Program. There were also presentations on the Florida “Sunshine” laws and Southern Scholarship Foundation. The Department announced the formation of the Post-Secondary Education Workgroup as a subgroup for the Department’s Education Initiative and the Advisory Council.

**October 25 – Tallahassee.** Under Chairman Garner’s leadership, the Department’s General Counsel briefed the Advisory Council members on the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees. There were presentations from the Advisory Council members on Preindependent Living and Life Skills Services, Subsidized Independent Living and Aftercare Services, Transitional Support Services and the Road-to-Independence Program. Staff from the Department’s Office of Family and Community Services provided an overview of the Community-Based Care contracting services. An update was given by the Postsecondary Education Subgroup on the status of their work to the Cabinet. There was also brief discussion about proposed changes for the Independent Living Program.

**November 15 – Tallahassee.** Chairman Garner provided the Advisory Council members with an update on meeting with the Fostering Achievement Fellowship Program and conducting a focus group with the students in the program. There was also an update from the Post-Secondary Subgroup on the status of their work. Discussion by the Advisory Council members focused on proposed changes for the Independent Living Program to improve outcomes.

### ***Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Subgroup***

In September 2012, the Department’s Education Initiative Committee and the Independent Living Services Advisory Council created the Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Subgroup. The charge for the Subgroup is to identify the data and domains that need to be collected for youth and young adults who have aged out of foster care who are enrolled in postsecondary

institutions. The data will help define the barriers and challenges that interfere with their successful completion of higher education and assist in determining interventions and services to support successful postsecondary experiences. The data fields may also provide answers for factors that contribute to postsecondary success.

The PSE Subgroup is composed of representatives from the Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Community-Based Care Lead Agencies, County School Boards, Eckerd Family Foundation, Casey Family Programs, postsecondary education institutions, child advocates and other stakeholders.

To fulfill its charge, the subgroup held five meetings via conference call between September and November 2012. The subgroup members conducted research and reviewed various governmental and higher education data sources to identify potential data sources. The subgroup members have defined postsecondary education, data metrics and strategies for data collection and determined methods for data integration with Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and have presented this information to the Advisory Council and Education Initiative Committee for consideration.

### ***Recommendation***

Under the leadership of Chairman Garner, the Independent Living Services Advisory Council has made significant progress this past year. These professionals and individuals appointed by Secretary Wilkins in September 2012 have made great strides in reviewing the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services, identifying areas of success and acknowledging barriers. It is with the utmost consideration that the Advisory Council will continue to examine the Independent Living services and related programs making recommendations for future change.

At this time, the Advisory Council supports the Department's efforts for rendering a redesign of Independent Living services and associated programs.