



Independent Living Services

ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child Welfare

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Purpose

Section 39.6251, Florida Statutes, and section 409.1451, Florida Statutes, require the Department of Children and Families (Department) to administer an array of independent living services to eligible young adults ranging in ages 18-22 (not yet 23), including supports in making the transition to self-sufficiency. Independent living services are designed to assist young adults in the following outcomes: increasing financial self-sufficiency, improving educational attainment, increasing connections to caring adults, reducing homelessness, reducing high-risk behavior, and improving access to health insurance. Through the delivery of services, young adults should be empowered to seek a quality of life appropriate for their skills and abilities and to assume personal responsibility for becoming self-sufficient adults.

This report provides information required in section 409.1451(6), Florida Statutes, as follows:

1. An analysis of performance on the outcome measures developed under this section reported for each community-based care lead agency (CBC).
2. A description of the Department's oversight of the program, including, by lead agency, any programmatic or fiscal deficiencies found, corrective actions required and current status of compliance.
3. Any rules adopted or proposed under this section since the last report.

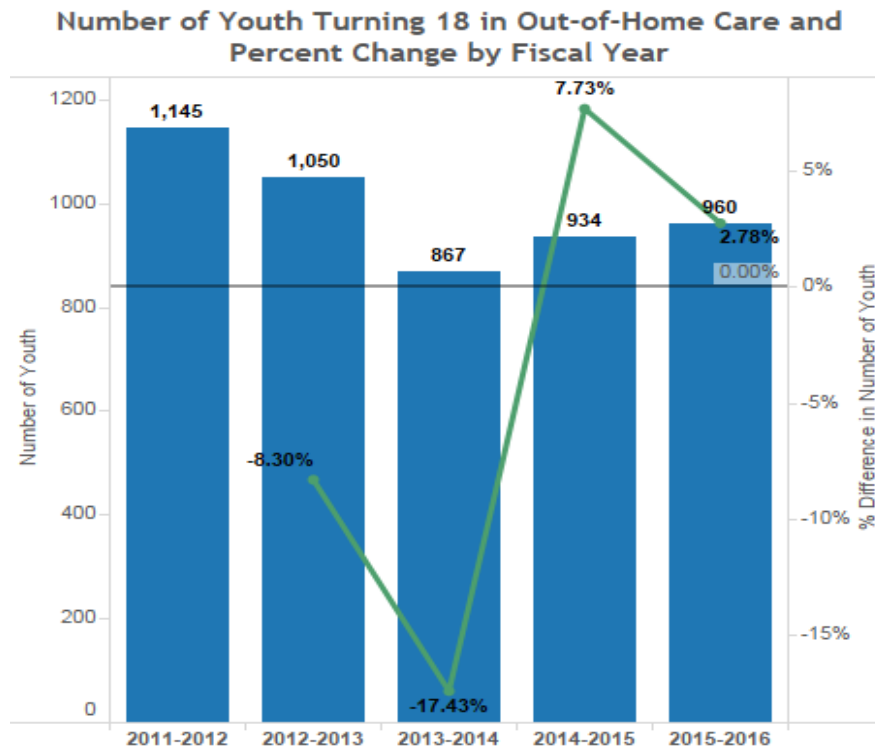
Introduction

The 2015 Independent Living Services annual report reflected data for independent living services from the 2015 calendar year. Beginning with this report, the Department will be reporting on activities that occurred during the State Fiscal Year (SFY) rather than a calendar year. This method aligns with the data reporting process of the Department. However, in order to allow for some comparison of outcomes, most tables reflect two state fiscal years of data or more, if applicable.

(continued on next page)

Youth Exiting Out-of-Home Care at Age 18

The chart below depicts five years of data by SFY. Without taking into account the status of legal custody or their placement type at the time of discharge, the report includes 18-year-olds who have aged out of foster care. As shown, the number of young adults exiting out-of-home care at 18 had been declining since 2011 but began increasing in 2014. In SFY 2015-2016, 26 more youth exited out-of-home care than in SFY 2014-2015. (See Appendix A for CBC level data.)



Source: Child Welfare Services Trend Report

Independent Living Services

The brief descriptions of independent living services available to eligible former foster youth are not intended to detail all eligibility criteria for each program. Rather, the intent of each summary is to give a better understanding of the nuances of each program.

Extended Foster Care (EFC)

In January 2014, EFC policy was implemented, giving eligible young adults the option of remaining in foster care until the age of 21 or until the age of 22 if they have a disability. Florida is one of 41 states that have adopted the federal recommendation to extend foster care eligibility, allowing for a more structured system of transition services for the young person entering adulthood. Young adults may decide to remain in their licensed foster homes or choose

other supportive living environments with approval of their community-based care lead agency (CBC) while finishing secondary school or adult education, or entering the workforce. Eligible young adults may also choose this option while pursuing postsecondary education. In EFC, young adults receive standard case management visits, case planning, transition planning, monitoring of life skills development, and judicial oversight as required. Florida does not use Title IV-E federal funds to implement the program, rather state funds pay room and board and may pay for other allowable expenses, such as child care for young adults who are parenting, clothing for work or school, computer and other school supplies, and other essential services needed to support the young adult's transition.

Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS)

Eligible young adults 18-22 (not yet 23) years of age in PESS receive \$1,256 per month and other supports necessary to become self-sufficient. After the initial application process, eligibility requires that these students are enrolled in 9 credit hours or the vocational equivalent; and if meeting academic progress according to the Florida Bright Futures educational institution, the students may continue to receive the assistance. Some exceptions to credit hours and progress may apply for those students with a diagnosed disability or other recognized challenging circumstance. Of the three independent living services categories, PESS is the only program that affords youth who are adopted or placed with court-approved dependency guardians after the age of 16 with the opportunity to participate. The law requires those youth to have spent at least six months in licensed care within the 12 months immediately preceding such placement or adoption. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) federal funds cover room and board and other expenses necessary to pay the cost of attendance.

Aftercare Services

To be eligible for Aftercare Services, a young adult must have reached the age of 18 while in the legal custody of the Department, but not yet have turned 23. Aftercare Services are intended to be temporary in nature or used as a bridge into or between EFC and PESS. Services may include mentoring, tutoring, mental health, substance abuse, counseling, and financial assistance. Both federal and state funds are available to pay for allowable expenses.

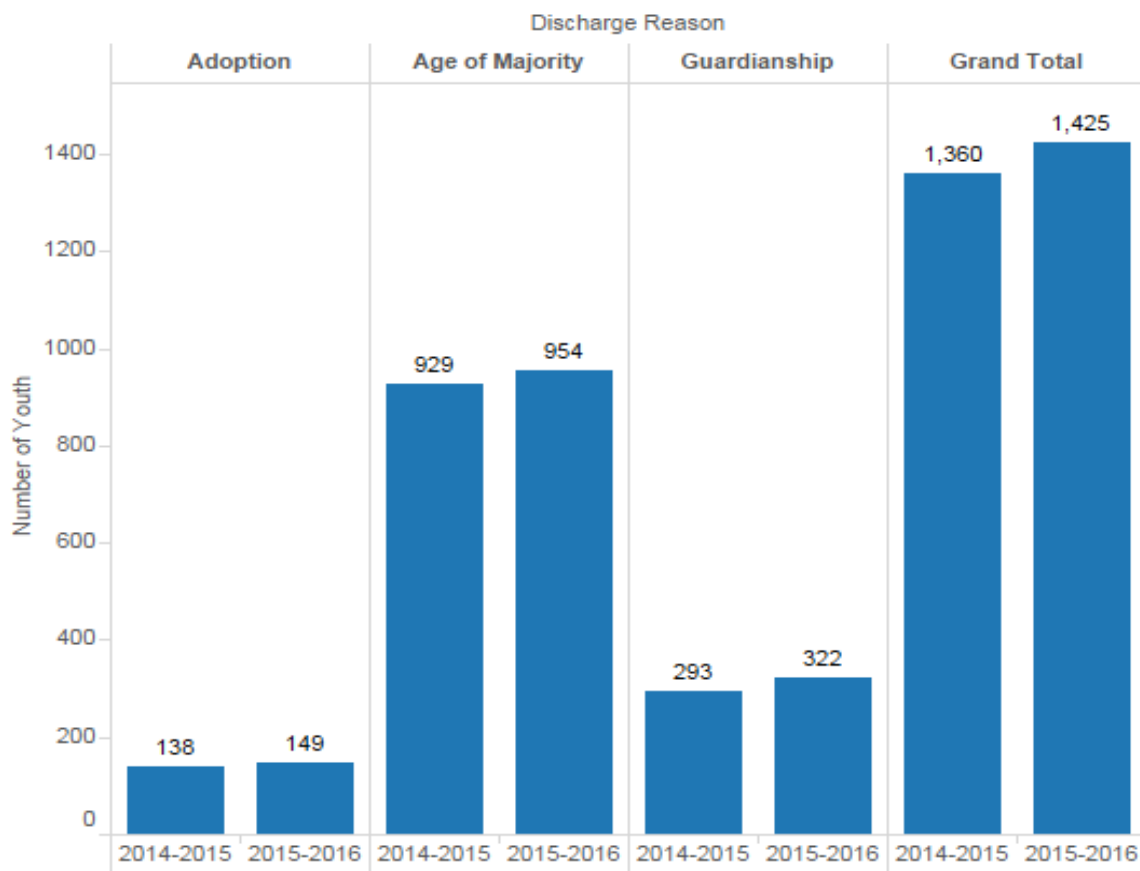
Road to Independence (RTI)

Although this program has not been available to new applicants since changes to legislation in 2014, there still remains a small population of young adults served through RTI who were grandfathered into the program. These youth will continue to be assessed at each renewal period until they are no longer eligible. PESS effectively replaced the former "Road to Independence" program, as authorized in section 409.1451, Florida Statutes, but the statutory reference still retains the heading.

Youth Potentially Eligible For and Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services

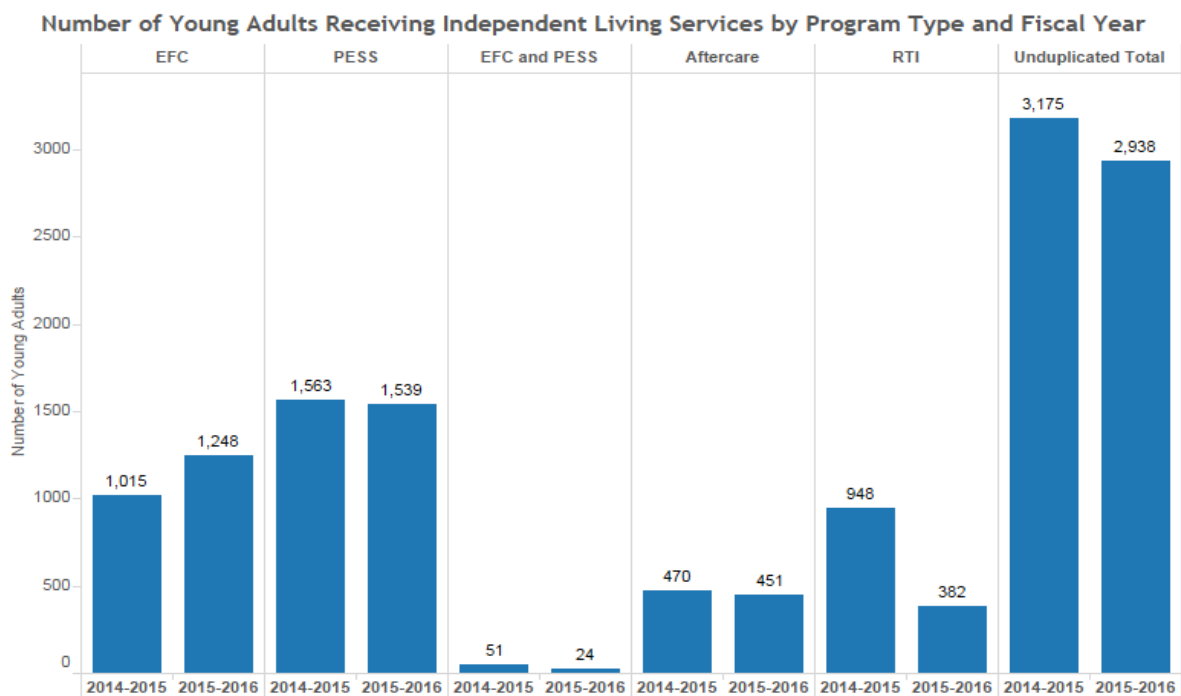
The chart below depicts the number of youth ages 16, 17, and 18 who are or will be potentially eligible for EFC, PESS, or Aftercare Services by discharge reason. Since each program is unique in its eligibility, young adults may be eligible for one program but not the other. In SFY 2015-2016, 65 more youth were potentially eligible for services compared to SFY 2014-2015. Each discharge category showed an increase in youth. (See Appendix B for CBC level data.)

Youth Potentially Eligible for EFC, PESS, and Aftercare Services by Discharge Reason and Fiscal Year



Data Source: OCW Data Reporting Unit, Regularly Scheduled Report #1682

The bar chart below illustrates the number of young adults who received an independent living service, by program, and in total, between the reporting periods. To be counted in this report, a young adult must have received an independent living service payment generated through Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), the statewide automated child welfare information system. The number of young adults served by EFC increased by 233 from SFY 2014-2015 to SFY 2015-2016. The number of young adults in PESS and Aftercare Services declined in the same time period. Some young adults may have received more than one service type in a particular year; therefore, a count reflecting an unduplicated total is also shown. Overall, there were 237 fewer young adults participating in independent living services in SFY 2015-2016 than in SFY 2014-2015. (See Appendix C for CBC level data.)



Source: FSFN OCWDRU #1173

Outcome Measures and Oversight Activities

The CBCs' contracts include expectations to administer all services in accordance with federal guidelines, Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code. Florida has highly structured statutory requirements for EFC, PESS, RTI and Aftercare Services around establishing client eligibility, standards of progress, payment disbursement, and payment amounts, as well as due process and appeals. Requirements in Florida Administrative Code further detail the framework for how the array of independent living services is administered, including: application and discharge procedures, transition planning and documentation requirements. The performance or outcome measures on program activity are evaluated through four main areas: system-driven data, self-report surveys, contract oversight unit monitoring, and fiscal oversight.

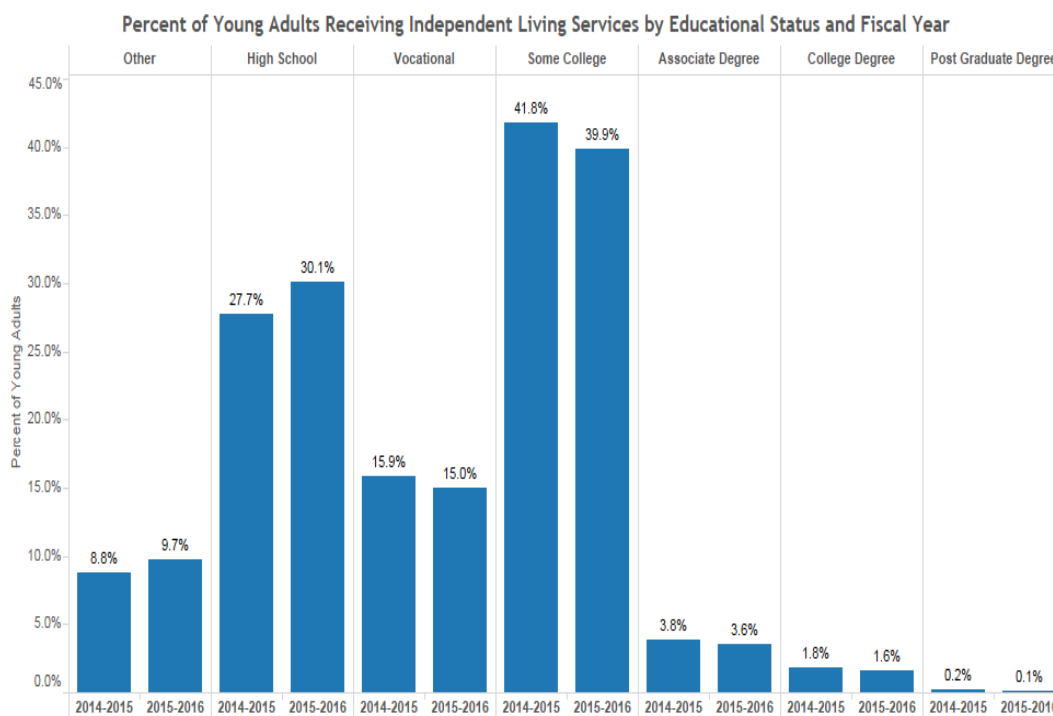
1. System-Driven Data

Gathering facts and statistics around Florida’s young adults participating in services is critical in determining program effectiveness and measuring outcomes. To maintain data accuracy, the Department and CBCs monitor relevant independent living services data elements by accessing On Demand reports in FSFN. The Office of Child Welfare Data Reporting Unit (OCWDRU) creates reports to assist in monitoring such focus areas as: Education, Employment, and Housing. Data integrity checks are completed by the CBC staff responsible for managing independent living services.

Education

Improving educational (academic or vocational) attainment is one of the six outcome areas tracked by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) through the National Youth in Transition Database (NTYD). The Department complies with federal regulations related to assistance to former foster youth and transmits data to NYTD from FSFN. Although educational attainment is a goal for all independent living programs, PESS is the only service category that requires enrollment and academic progress as a condition for continued eligibility. EFC allows young adults to choose a qualifying activity other than attaining an education. Two of the five qualifying activities for eligibility in EFC require young adults to be enrolled in school.

The chart below illustrates the percentage of young adults who received funding for an independent living service and their highest recorded educational achievement during the reporting period. The Other Category represents those young adults whose education entries reflected None, Non-Graded, Not Applicable, Special Education, or Unknown. While there was a 2.4% increase from SFY 2014-2015 to SFY 2015-2016 in young adults attaining high school diplomas, there was a 1.9% decrease in young adults with some college documented as their highest achievement. (See Appendix D for CBC level data.)

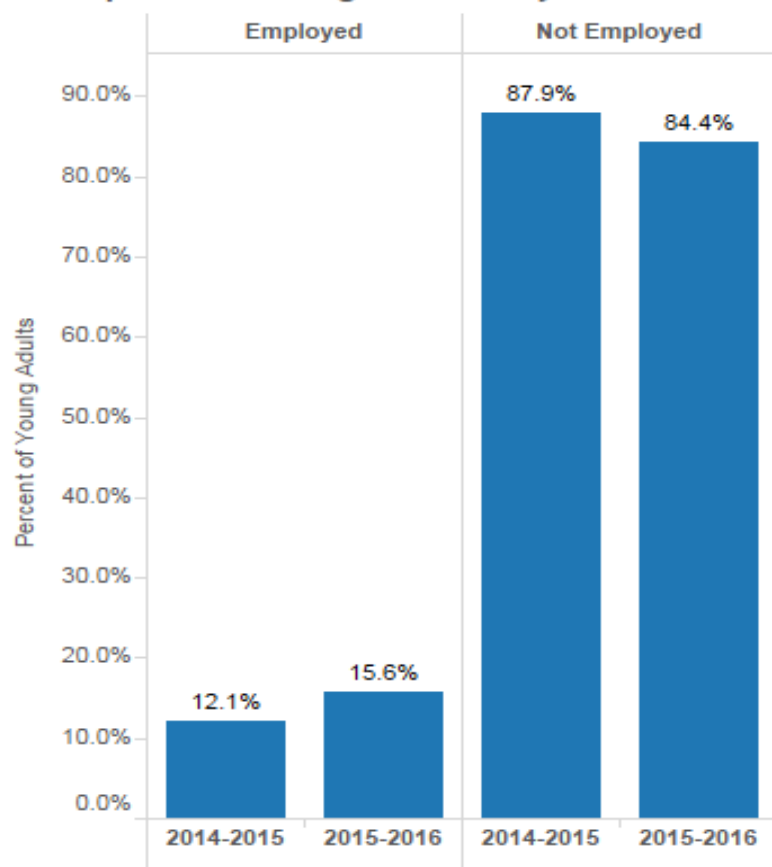


Source: FSFN OCWDRU Report #1173

Employment

Increasing financial self-sufficiency is another outcome area tracked by ACF through NYTD. Financial self-sufficiency can be achieved by taking steps to create a stable income, building a savings account, and staying out of debt. Employment is one step toward increasing self-sufficiency and is a qualifying option for eligibility in EFC. The Department supports employment for all transitioning youth, and encourages employment and career opportunities as appropriate, based on the skills and abilities of each young adult.

Employment Status of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by Fiscal Year



The chart to the left portrays the percentage of young adults who had received an independent living payment and were either employed or not employed sometime during the applicable fiscal year. From SFY 2014-2015 to SFY 2015-2016, there was a 3.5% increase in young adults employed. (See Appendix E for CBC level data.)

Source: FSFN OCWDRU Report #1170

Housing (Living Arrangements)

Reducing homelessness among youth is another outcome area tracked by ACF through NYTD. The Department and the CBCs also track and monitor the data relevant to housing for young adults receiving independent living services. The Department and the CBCs strive to ensure that every young adult served has an appropriate living arrangement and the necessary supports needed for the young adult to become successful. EFC is the only service category that requires an assessment of the young adult's living environment as an eligibility factor. Assessment of each young adult's life skills and abilities helps CBC lead agencies determine what level of supervision is needed. FSFN currently offers 15 different living arrangement

documentation options. Living arrangement categories range from Own Housing to Assisted Living Facility or State Correctional Facility.

FSFN data from June 2015 to June 2016 (OCWDRU #1180 Count of Living Arrangement for Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services) reflected an increase in supported housing type living arrangements. More young adults were reported to be living in dorms, Transitional Living Programs, host family homes, and Group Homes. Although supportive housing types are up, Renting Housing still remains the most frequently reported living arrangement type. There was no reported change in young adults living in licensed foster homes.

2. Self-Report Surveys

Self-report questionnaires provided to young adults receiving independent living services are another way to evaluate program effectiveness. Survey response data is used to further assess areas for gaps or trends. Opportunities for improvement are either addressed through providing technical assistance or statewide training. The Department contracts with Cby25® Initiative to administer the surveys and report the results. Cby25® Initiative provides each CBC lead agency with a spreadsheet of their specific survey responses. In addition, at the close of each survey period, a report is provided to the Department, youth advocacy groups, and the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) for review.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and Florida NYTD Surveys

Through NYTD, ACF requires states to provide a survey for a cohort of youth at ages 17, 19, and 21 as one way to measure outcomes of youth transitioning from all out-of-home care placements since 2011. At that time, Florida also implemented the NYTD Plus+ self-report survey for young adults ages 18-22 who aged out of licensed care and are receiving independent living services. The Florida version of the NYTD Plus+ survey is comprised of questions from the federal NYTD, the previous Florida Independent Living Checklist, Florida Statutes and Department policy, as well as questions by young adults and other stakeholders in the child welfare system. The survey is administered once a year. During SFY 2015-2016, the Florida NYTD survey administration was from April 15-May 31, 2016. The report is now published on the Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/reports>.

3. Contract Oversight

During SFY 2015-2016, the Department's Contract Oversight Unit monitored the CBCs' compliance with independent living requirements, including those found in Chapter 39 and section 409.1451, Florida Statutes. The Contract Oversight Unit selected cases of young adults in foster care and young adults receiving Independent Living Services for file review and determined whether the requirements in Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code were met. This also included a review of eligibility requirements. As outlined in the table below, of the 20 CBC lead agency contracts, 11 required a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) relevant to independent living services and preparing 17-year-olds for transition.

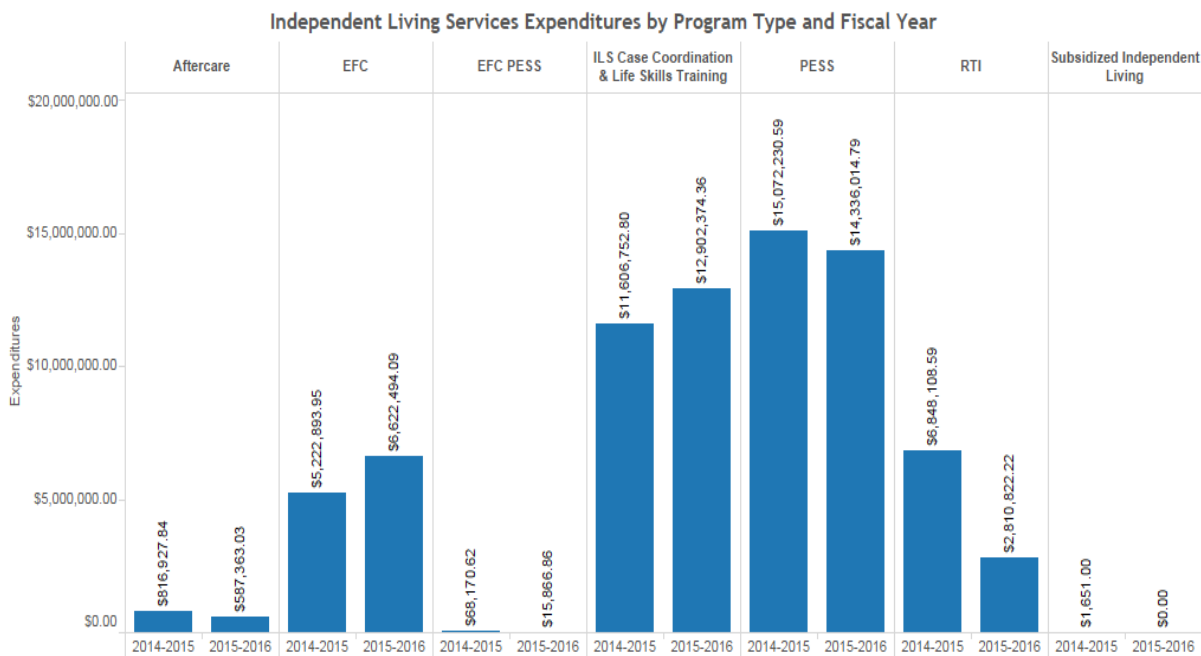
Circuit	CBC Lead Agency	Contract	Corrective Action Plan Status
1	Families First Network	AJ481	CAP Underway for 17-year old population
2, 14	Big Bend CBC	BJ101	CAP Underway
3, 8	Partnership for Strong Families	CJ149	No CAP required
4	Family Support Services of North FL	DJ038	No CAP required
4	Kids First of Florida	DJ039	No CAP required
5	Kids Central, Inc.	PJL04	CAP Underway
6	Eckerd Community Alternatives Pinellas/Pasco	QJ3EO	CAP Underway for 17-year old population
7	Community Partnership for Children	NJ205	No CAP required
7	St Johns County BOCC	NJ206	CAP underway
9	CBC of Central FL	GJL57	No CAP required
10	Heartland for Children	TJ501	CAP Underway
11, 16	Our Kids, Inc.	KJ114	No CAP required
12	Sarasota Family	QJ2BO	CAP Underway for 17-year old population
13	Eckerd Community Alternatives Hillsborough	QJ511	CAP Underway for 17-year old population
15	ChildNet Palm Beach	IJ706	CAP Underway
17	ChildNet Broward	JJ212	CAP Underway
18	Brevard Family Partnership	GJ401	No CAP required
18	CBC of Central FL	GJ501	No CAP required
19	Devereux CBC	ZJK85	CAP Completed
20	Children's Network of Southwest Florida	HJ300	No CAP required

4. Financial Accountability

During the SFY 2015-2016, the Department's Office of CBC/ME Financial Accountability provided technical assistance and oversight to DCF contract managers and CBC financial staff throughout the state to ensure payments were recorded accurately in FSFN. Independent living services payments were reviewed monthly for the following: payment amounts adhere to the amounts pursuant to Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code; young adult's eligibility within each program is appropriately documented in FSFN; and federal and state funds are paid only to eligible young adults based on age for the program in which the young adults have been approved. In addition to technical assistance, quarterly reviews were performed for selected

payment records by each CBC to ensure correct application of financial requirements and payments were allowable. At the beginning of the SFY, each CBC was evaluated for its agency's financial accountability of the funds provided by the Department, including actual expenditures recorded for the prior SFY, any carry forward funds available, as well as the agency's submitted Cost Allocation Plan. The Cost Allocation Plan identifies how the funds for each program will be spent during the year. As needed, any identified fiscal issues were discussed with the CBC.

The Florida Legislature appropriated \$29,451,721 each SFY for independent living services. The total appropriation is to include the cost of the case management associated with the delivery of services to young adults as well as the supplemental room and board payment to foster care parents for providing independent life skills and normalcy supports to youth ages 13 through 17. The chart below displays the actual amount spent in each program by SFY. As detailed in the graph for SFY 2015-2016, total expenditures have exceeded the \$29 million appropriated by over \$7.8 million. Note, Subsidized Independent Living Program ended January 2014. (See Appendices G&H for CBC lead agency level data and total expenditures.)



Source: DCF Chief Financial Officer Group, CBC YTD Actual Expenditures including Carry Forward for IL, EFC, RTI programs

Rule Promulgation

Provisions relating to the delivery of independent living services are included in multiple chapters of Florida Administrative Code, including:

- Chapter 65C-28, Out-of-Home Care, which provides direction for delivery of services to youth in foster care. Specifically, 65C-28.009, Adolescent Services, implements section 409.1451(3), Florida Statutes. This rule was amended May 8, 2016.

- Chapter 65C-30, General Child Welfare Provisions, which provides direction on delivery of services to youth under supervision of the Department. The rule was amended February 25, 2016.
- Chapter 65C-31, Services to Young Adults Formerly in the Custody of the Department, which provides direction on the delivery of services to young adults, specifically those services provided by section 409.1451(5), Florida Statutes. This chapter has been in effect since 2006. The rules on Aftercare and Transitional Support Services were repealed October 19, 2015 due to statutory changes.
- 65C-41, Extension of Foster Care, which provides direction on the program enacted by section 39.6251, Florida Statutes. This chapter became effective November 2, 2015.
- 65C-42, Road to Independence Program, which provides direction for the delivery of Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Aftercare, specifically as provided in section 409.1451, Florida Statutes. This chapter became effective October 4, 2015.

Other Activities

Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC)

The ILSAC was created in 2002 by the Florida Legislature and is codified in section 409.1451(7), Florida Statutes. The ILSAC has the responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of independent living services, including barriers and successes. The 2016 report to the Florida Legislature and the Department includes several legislative recommendations for the Department. The full annual report and the Department's response are located on the Department's Independent Living Services internet site, <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living>.

ILSAC membership consists of representatives from the Department of Children and Families' headquarters and region offices, CBCs, Department of Education, Agency for Health Care Administration, State Young Adults Advisory Board, Career Source Florida, Inc., Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, foster parents, recipients of the Road-to-Independence Program, and other advocates for youth in foster care. Other appointed members include representatives from faith-based and community-based organizations, mentoring programs, higher education and the judicial system.

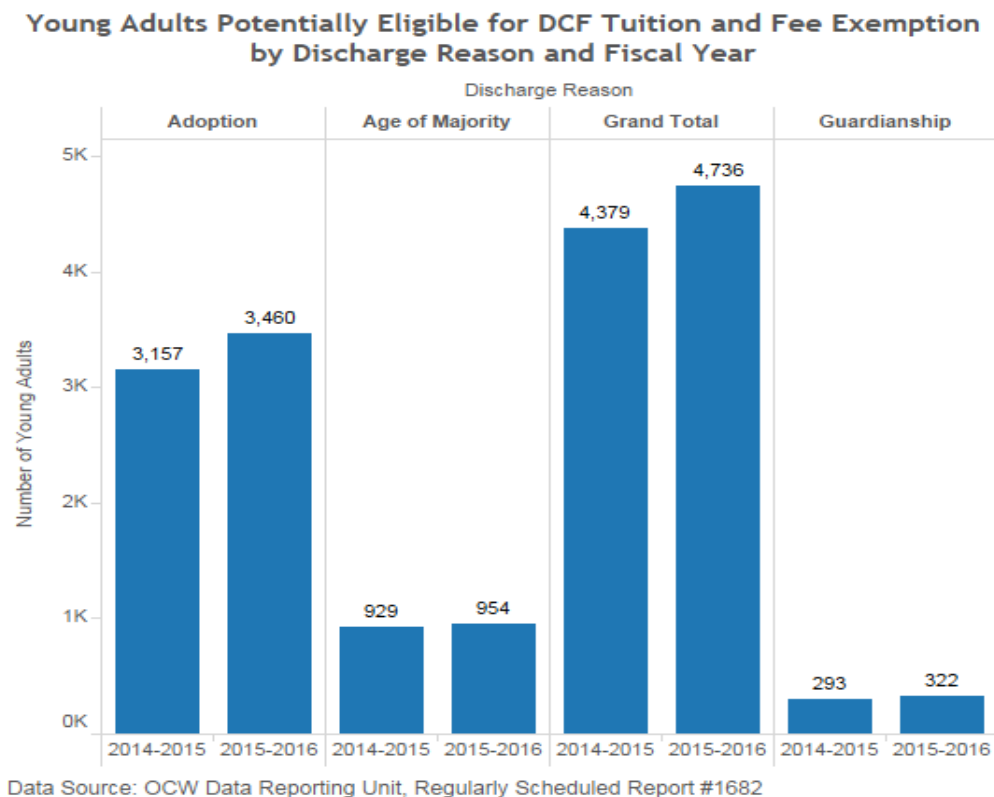
Appeals

A young adult applying for or receiving independent living services has the right to receive notice of adverse action and to resolve issues of eligibility through the fair hearing process. Title 45, section 205.10 of the Code of Federal Regulations provides for fair hearings, which are used to challenge or appeal actions relating to federally funded services. Sections 39.6251(9) and 409.1451(4), Florida Statutes, provide for an appeal, which can be provided by a fair hearing. The Office of Appeal Hearings is part of the Office of Inspector General within the Department. The office manages all requests and data pertinent to Independent Living Fair Hearings. The office provided data from SFY 2015-2016 specific to the number of requests for appeals and the disposition. Of the 119 total independent living cases received, 63% were withdrawn, and in four cases, the appeal was granted.

Collaboration with Board of Governors, Florida College System and Department of Education

Without the attainment of a post-secondary degree or credentials, youth who age out of foster care face the realities of unemployment, homelessness and incarceration in their young adult years. In accordance with section 409.1452, Florida Statutes, the Department continually works in cooperation with the Board of Governors, Florida College System and Department of Education to establish and maintain dedicated foster care liaisons and campus coaching programs at all public colleges and universities. With the assistance of Florida Reach, a network of professionals dedicated to improving postsecondary outcomes for youth formerly in foster care, the campus coaching initiative remains a priority. In June 2016, the Department sponsored the 3rd Annual Florida Reach Symposium in Miami. Miami Dade College and Florida International University hosted the event, which drew more than 140 people to workshops designed to expand the vision of campus-based support programs.

The chart below displays the number of youth potentially eligible for the DCF Tuition and Fee Exemption by discharge reason and fiscal year. Young adults are eligible to continue to receive the exemption until the age of 28. Of the potentially eligible population for SFY 2015-2016, those youth discharged to Adoption are the largest population with 3,460 youth potentially eligible. (See Appendix F for CBC level data.)



Conclusion

The Department expects outcomes for young adults participating in independent living services to improve with continued strengthening of oversight, collaboration, and clearly communicated expectations. The Department's goal is to enhance independent living services delivery through a thorough and continuous examination of the cases, performance and fiscal data, as well as other reports received by the Department from stakeholders.

Appendix A

Number of Youth Turning 18 in Out-of-Home Care by CBC and Fiscal Year

CBC	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	64	45	39	35	44
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	50	36	36	35	27
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	32	28	22	11	20
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	9	8	8	9	8
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	58	58	39	39	34
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	37	44	31	44	41
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	90	80	64	64	71
C 7 Community Partnership Children	43	29	36	30	35
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	4	4	1	2	14
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	105	68	69	63	65
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	148	158	121	148	147
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	27	20	23	31	26
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	88	87	80	73	87
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	80	74	55	79	67
C 17 ChildNet Broward	107	121	85	100	109
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	38	42	20	31	31
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	20	17	17	17	14
C 19 Devereux CBC	32	39	29	27	25
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	39	37	39	41	51
C10 Heartland for Children	74	55	53	55	44
Statewide	1,145	1,050	867	934	960

Source: Child Welfare Services Trend Report

Appendix B

Youth Potentially Eligible for EFC, PESS, and Aftercare Services by Discharge Reason, CBC, and Fiscal Year

CBC	Adoption		Age of Majority		Guardianship		Total	
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	5	15	37	45	8	16	50	76
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	10	18	34	24	3	12	47	54
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	6	5	11	20	8	19	25	44
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	2	2	9	8	4	4	15	14
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	10	12	38	33	12	12	60	57
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	5	3	40	38	28	20	73	61
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	22	7	63	68	35	37	120	112
C 7 Community Partnership Children	10	5	30	34	11	16	51	55
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	0	1	2	14	4	4	6	19
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	8	3	63	64	10	22	81	89
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	6	10	138	142	38	41	182	193
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	6	5	31	26	11	13	48	44
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	9	25	72	85	21	19	102	129
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	4	9	79	68	15	18	98	95
C 17 ChildNet Broward	7	11	100	109	23	22	130	142
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	3	1	30	30	9	3	42	34
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	3	3	17	14	2	5	22	22
C 19 Devereux CBC	11	4	26	25	7	5	44	34
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	9	8	40	49	12	17	61	74
C10 Heartland for Children	2	2	54	44	32	16	88	62
Other	0	0	15	14	0	1	15	15
Statewide	138	149	929	954	293	322	1,360	1,425

Data Source: OCW Data Reporting Unit, Regularly Scheduled Report #1682

Appendix C

Number of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by Program Type, CBC, and Fiscal Year

CBC	2014-2015						2015-2016					
	Aftercare Total	EFC PESS Total	EFC Total	PESS Total	RTI Total	Unduplicated Total	Aftercare Total	EFC PESS Total	EFC Total	PESS Total	RTI Total	Unduplicated Total
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	8	2	53	78	37	155	14	2	74	81	20	152
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	17	0	45	81	47	144	22	0	48	75	12	125
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	8	8	8	21	37	64	6	0	15	27	16	54
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	3	0	7	22	11	33	10	0	11	17	5	36
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	65	0	58	114	47	208	41	0	56	80	22	157
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	4	14	26	51	29	99	7	3	36	52	8	90
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	29	20	46	100	49	177	51	12	71	95	31	185
C 7 Community Partnership Children	17	0	33	69	54	132	27	1	38	69	16	122
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	1	0	2	4	13	17	0	0	7	10	9	19
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	61	0	76	111	75	235	47	0	69	118	30	205
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	63	0	149	217	153	463	27	1	191	215	68	429
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	3	0	21	44	16	70	15	1	33	37	4	68
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	57	0	58	104	48	213	74	0	76	117	18	213
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	40	0	114	115	66	262	39	0	140	126	22	259
C 17 ChildNet Broward	43	2	120	190	119	366	27	2	159	196	41	356
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	29	0	34	58	16	108	16	1	50	36	6	83
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	3	0	21	35	12	62	3	0	18	29	2	48
C 19 Devereux CBC	5	0	33	38	14	80	12	0	31	34	7	72
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	4	2	45	58	59	140	1	0	57	69	22	131
C10 Heartland for Children	10	3	68	53	46	151	12	1	70	56	23	136
Statewide	470	51	1,015	1,563	948	3,175	451	24	1,248	1,539	382	2,938

Source: FSN OCWDRU #1173

Appendix D

Number of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by Educational Status, CBC, and Fiscal Year

CBC	2014-2015								2015-2016							
	Other	Associate Degree	College Degree	High School	Post Graduate Degree	Some College	Vocational	Total	Other	Associate Degree	College Degree	High School	Post Graduate Degree	Some College	Vocational	Total
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	4	2	1	43	0	74	24	148	7	2	0	51	0	67	22	149
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	15	1	4	21	0	67	32	140	14	0	4	19	0	57	25	119
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	5	2	1	39	1	10	5	63	4	3	1	35	1	6	3	53
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	5	2	0	4	0	20	3	34	7	2	0	4	0	18	3	34
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	38	6	4	43	0	93	24	208	21	5	3	38	0	68	21	156
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	11	0	1	17	0	49	20	98	9	2	1	14	0	38	25	89
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	4	0	0	52	0	102	19	177	4	0	0	58	0	90	26	178
C 7 Community Partnership Children	2	47	2	38	0	18	13	120	4	42	2	40	0	14	13	115
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	2	0	2	1	0	7	5	17	3	0	2	2	0	8	4	19
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	37	2	1	75	1	74	45	235	45	1	0	60	0	62	41	209
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	29	19	10	111	2	163	119	453	39	16	9	105	2	149	97	417
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	4	11	5	20	0	23	7	70	6	6	3	31	0	17	2	65
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	3	0	0	68	0	121	18	210	8	0	0	68	0	110	24	210
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	24	2	5	69	1	115	36	252	16	2	3	86	0	113	27	247
C 17 ChildNet Broward	22	11	11	99	0	135	77	355	40	9	10	93	0	128	65	345
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	10	5	1	19	0	56	2	93	8	3	0	21	0	42	2	76
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	5	4	1	19	0	23	11	63	4	5	1	11	0	20	7	48
C 19 Devereux CBC	7	2	1	33	0	33	3	79	6	2	0	30	0	28	3	69
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	15	0	2	43	0	64	15	139	15	0	2	43	0	60	9	129
C10 Heartland for Children	29	3	4	47	0	50	15	148	17	2	4	53	0	45	10	131
Statewide	271	118	56	857	5	1,293	491	3,091	277	102	45	859	3	1,136	428	2,850

Source: FSN OCWDRU Report #1173

Appendix E

Employment Status of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by CBC and Fiscal Year

CBC	2014-2015			2015-2016		
	Employed	Not Employed	Total	Employed	Not Employed	Total
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	45	139	184	44	130	174
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	13	142	155	12	115	127
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	0	64	64	1	52	53
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	8	31	39	12	27	39
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	45	202	247	56	130	186
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	13	93	106	19	79	98
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	55	150	205	73	152	225
C 7 Community Partnership Children	2	131	133	11	116	127
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	1	17	18	2	18	20
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	16	225	241	17	199	216
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	62	426	488	60	378	438
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	18	62	80	18	55	73
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	59	181	240	66	181	247
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	10	249	259	11	250	261
C 17 ChildNet Broward	16	357	373	23	339	362
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	13	104	117	15	71	86
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	11	58	69	8	41	49
C 19 Devereux CBC	7	77	84	12	63	75
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	16	138	154	23	119	142
C10 Heartland for Children	3	149	152	6	130	136
Data Not Available	0	0	0	0	1	1
Statewide	412	2,983	3,395	489	2,637	3,126

Source: FSFN OCWDRU Report #1170

Appendix F

Youth Potentially Eligible for DCF Tuition and Fee Exemption by Discharge Reason, CBC, and Fiscal Year

CBC	Adoption		Age of Majority		Guardianship		Total	
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016
C 1 FamiliesFirst Network	193	213	37	45	8	16	238	274
C 2 & 14 Big Bend CBC	190	239	34	24	3	12	227	275
C 3 & 8 Partnership Strong Families	164	159	11	20	8	19	183	198
C 4 Clay - Kids First Florida	48	51	9	8	4	4	61	63
C 4 Family Support Svcs North Fla	293	212	38	33	12	12	343	257
C 5 Kids Central, Inc.	142	151	40	38	28	20	210	209
C 6 Eckerd Community Pinellas/Pasco	335	286	63	68	35	37	433	391
C 7 Community Partnership Children	123	146	30	34	11	16	164	196
C 7 St. Johns Family Integrity	28	19	2	14	4	4	34	37
C 9 CBC Central Fla Orange-Osceola	173	153	63	64	10	22	246	239
C 11 & 16 Our Kids	207	388	138	142	38	41	383	571
C 12 Sarasota Safe Children Coalition	133	126	31	26	11	13	175	165
C 13 Eckerd Community Hillsborough	281	290	72	85	21	19	374	394
C 15 ChildNet Palm Beach	151	185	79	68	15	18	245	271
C 17 ChildNet Broward	186	260	100	109	23	22	309	391
C 18 Brevard Family Partnership	76	68	30	30	9	3	115	101
C 18 CBC Central Fla Seminole	44	42	17	14	2	5	63	61
C 19 Devereux CBC	140	172	26	25	7	5	173	202
C 20 Children's Network of SW Fla	102	176	40	49	12	17	154	242
C10 Heartland for Children	146	121	54	44	32	16	232	181
Other	2	3	15	14	0	1	17	18
Statewide	3,157	3,460	929	954	293	322	4,379	4,736

Data Source: OCW Data Reporting Unit, Regularly Scheduled Report #1682

Appendix G

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM TYPE, CBC, AND FISCAL YEAR								
Independent Living Services (ILS)	State Fiscal Year 2014-1015						ILS Case Coordination & Life Skills Training Total	SFY14-15 ILS Subtotal
	Subsidized Independent Living* Total	Aftercare Total	EFC PESS Total	EFC Total	PESS Total	RTI Total		
Lakeview (dba Families First Network)	0.00	8,554.02	2,512.00	251,485.30	825,491.37	417,838.29	444,439.91	1,950,320.89
Big Bend CBC	0.00	11,513.07	0.00	223,068.56	868,257.94	267,237.68	588,072.90	1,958,150.15
Community Partnership for Children	0.00	13,638.78	0.00	187,578.51	653,120.00	305,818.08	391,399.26	1,551,554.63
Partnership for Strong Families	0.00	11,282.40	1,000.00	51,871.92	160,768.00	324,424.00	509,023.90	1,058,370.22
Family Support Services of North Florida	0.00	42,957.15	0.00	290,386.71	1,041,115.22	477,699.48	897,522.81	2,749,681.37
Kids First of Florida	0.00	2,395.00	0.00	39,178.10	224,321.09	105,504.00	83,958.06	455,356.25
St Johns County (Family Integrity Program)	0.00	2,100.00	0.00	12,553.44	32,915.79	141,662.82	57,763.57	246,995.62
Children's Network of SW Florida	0.00	2,955.48	7,028.21	251,663.61	560,760.09	465,043.84	514,320.96	1,801,772.19
Sarasota Family YMCA	0.00	7,130.98	0.00	134,093.09	420,091.47	116,977.10	175,768.17	854,060.81
Eckerd (Pasco-Pinellas)	1,256.00	44,922.75	28,893.00	154,134.00	771,555.00	410,018.00	604,088.76	2,014,867.51
Eckerd (Hillsborough)	0.00	54,857.94	0.00	265,972.75	976,901.00	385,797.00	1,109,602.62	2,793,131.31
CBC of Central Florida (Orange-Osceola)	1,600.00	287,099.96	0.00	304,870.29	1,015,545.93	626,815.60	143,964.74	2,379,896.52
CBC of Brevard (dba Brevard Family Partnerships)	0.00	43,134.50	0.00	306,308.16	457,184.00	70,768.00	252,151.06	1,129,545.72
CBC of Central Florida (Seminole)	0.00	5,438.73	0.00	146,957.48	303,185.69	60,491.61	32,672.44	548,745.95
Kids Central	120.00	6,373.99	27,799.11	64,452.99	523,689.45	196,941.10	586,908.23	1,406,284.87
Heartland for Children	(1,325.00)	7,298.66	561.63	345,281.31	558,511.43	363,909.12	115,605.28	1,389,842.43
Devereux	0.00	2,561.00	0.00	138,399.81	352,198.32	109,041.00	389,686.45	991,886.58
Childnet (Palm Beach)	0.00	81,780.26	0.00	750,491.09	1,092,631.65	347,621.40	462,576.00	2,735,100.40
Childnet (Broward)	0.00	75,855.70	376.67	588,902.76	1,932,149.20	733,921.25	565,580.39	3,896,785.97
Our Kids of Miami-Dade & Monroe	0.00	105,077.47	0.00	715,244.07	2,301,837.95	920,579.22	3,681,647.29	7,724,386.00
	1,651.00	816,927.84	68,170.62	5,222,893.95	15,072,230.59	6,848,108.59	11,606,752.80	39,636,735.39

Appendix H

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM TYPE, CBC, AND FISCAL YEAR							
Independent Living Services (ILS)	State Fiscal Year 2015-1016						SFY15-16 ILS Subtotal
	Aftercare Total	EFC PESS Total	EFC Total	PESS Total	RTI Total	ILS Case Coordination & Life Skills Training Total	
Lakeview (dba Families First Network)	11,957.80	5,024.00	367,346.26	831,387.99	207,240.00	551,978.03	1,974,934.08
Big Bend CBC	21,079.47	0.00	234,169.09	730,335.62	78,335.68	510,587.31	1,574,507.17
Community Partnership for Children	18,039.32	3,768.00	266,400.38	631,768.00	148,773.62	427,825.12	1,496,574.44
Partnership for Strong Families	8,097.00	0.00	95,183.59	230,746.00	162,962.00	514,432.66	1,011,421.25
Family Support Services of North Florida	23,106.38	0.00	193,724.90	703,249.31	106,379.64	852,386.95	1,878,847.18
Kids First of Florida	7,308.00	0.00	40,157.74	189,656.00	63,219.87	114,240.86	414,582.47
St Johns County (Family Integrity Program)	0.00	0.00	20,868.39	81,072.29	48,013.44	66,115.71	216,069.83
Children's Network of SW Florida	650.00	0.00	346,519.19	668,072.77	177,889.00	507,172.95	1,700,303.91
Sarasota Family YMCA	12,180.53	0.00	172,383.17	352,389.49	19,825.00	219,252.84	776,031.03
Eckerd (Pasco-Pinellas)	54,908.00	2,238.00	309,044.36	656,639.00	331,429.40	803,833.70	2,158,092.46
Eckerd (Hillsborough)	110,418.18	0.00	342,987.07	927,537.00	123,958.00	850,605.72	2,355,505.97
CBC of Central Florida (Orange-Osceola)	149,122.48	0.00	549,949.08	1,185,146.47	211,008.00	529,588.69	2,624,814.72
CBC of Brevard (dba Brevard Family Partnerships)	22,214.10	0.00	199,014.37	331,584.00	41,448.00	294,346.40	888,606.87
CBC of Central Florida (Seminole)	12,847.00	0.00	117,495.55	253,764.70	15,464.00	126,923.64	526,494.89
Kids Central	5,553.00	616.00	152,433.97	548,044.43	67,793.00	583,684.14	1,358,124.54
Heartland for Children	13,076.88	262.76	360,420.69	474,183.09	162,514.50	116,583.34	1,127,041.26
Devereux	17,200.05	0.00	215,183.46	371,978.47	30,057.00	365,981.18	1,000,400.16
Childnet (Palm Beach)	57,320.49	0.00	979,669.75	1,239,773.05	149,785.67	631,234.53	3,057,783.49
Childnet (Broward)	17,004.24	3,378.00	710,858.28	1,755,302.58	285,277.30	638,593.24	3,410,413.64
Our Kids of Miami-Dade & Monroe	25,280.11	580.10	948,684.80	2,173,384.53	379,449.10	4,197,007.35	7,724,385.99
	587,363.03	15,866.86	6,622,494.09	14,336,014.79	2,810,822.22	12,902,374.36	37,274,935.35

**Department of Children and Families
Response to the Independent Living Services
Advisory Council
2017 Annual Report**

December 31, 2017

Mike Carroll
Secretary



Rick Scott
Governor

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC or THE COUNCIL) in 2002 by the Legislature, ILSAC has provided recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of independent living services as part of a comprehensive report. As required in s. 409.1451(7), F.S., the Department of Children and Families' (Department or DCF) is submitting the ILSAC 2017 Annual Report, along with the Department's responses to each of the recommendations.

ILSAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTENDED FOSTER CARE

1. ENHANCED DATA: "THE COUNCIL has determined the following recommendations for Extended Foster Care (EFC). The data being collected does not provide all the detail needed to answer many of the questions. For example, THE COUNCIL was not able to determine why eligible youth would opt out of EFC given the rich provisions afforded by the program. THE COUNCIL was unable to drill down on reasons why youth were being terminated from services earlier than 21 given the limited information in FSFN about terminations. Since the community based care agencies all use the same data base system to input data about this population, it would seem natural that a data set is created by DCF to collect these specific answers as to why youth are denied services and why they leave the program prematurely. Additional recommendations related to extended foster care and data collected by the Department of Children and Families' efforts with Results Oriented Accountability (ROA). This is a fairly new effort by DCF to create specific outcomes and drivers specific to different areas of the foster care system. These areas can be better tracked and monitored over time to hold groups accountable for performance and outcomes for youth. THE COUNCIL would like to continue to have input on measures tracked and would like to receive reports about ROA their accomplishments and the roll out plan relative to how community based care agencies will be expected to report on the outcomes developed."

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Department recognizes the importance of Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) data enhancements and the need for statewide guidance on data entry to assist in continuous quality improvement efforts. Currently, independent living program eligibility data is being collected and reviewed to include terminations. FSFN provides nine termination reason options in a drop-down menu for EFC. Two options reflect a youth's choice to not participate in the program. Those options don't require additional explanation or data entry detailing why the youth elected not to receive the benefit. Some of the questions simply cannot be answered by FSFN data alone. Qualitative research would be needed to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations for youth opting out or not participating. The Department would support ILSAC's efforts to seek former foster youth and child welfare professional participants who are willing to provide insights into the lack of engagement and to develop ideas or hypotheses for improved program promotion and effectiveness.

As indicated in ILSAC's response, the Department is working toward developing measures that are driven by FSFN data input through ROA. These measures will be developed with the assistance of the ROA Technical Advisory Panel (Panel). The Panel is authorized in s. 409.997 (4), F.S., to provide advice to the Department on the implementation of its child welfare ROA program. The 2017-2018 ROA Focus Objectives

are in the process of being updated, and it is the Department's recommendation that ILSAC appoint one or more of the members to join the Panel to assist the Department in the establishment and assessment of ROA implementation cycle benchmarks and milestones specific to independent living services.

2. STATEWIDE STANDARDIZATION: "There appears to be a sizeable variation on how EFC is implemented throughout the State. DCF should clarify and create more specific guidelines for such things as: acceptable living arrangements, denials, terminations, and monthly housing costs. Here are examples of situations discussed by membership that exemplify the need for clarification in order to achieve statewide standards and fair treatment of our young adults: #1. Young adult wants to remain in current placement at group home, can CBC deny because the rate is too high? #2. Based on applicant's history, CBC will only pay for housing at a supportive living group home, youth refuses to live there. Can the CBC deny EFC? Additionally, everyone would benefit from a standard explanation and delivery of information pertaining to EFC. THE COUNCIL also recommends that DCF produce a video message that explains all of the nuances of EFC along with other IL services. A video message would equip providers to better engage aging-out youth and would allow for a standardized comprehensive statewide explanation. This would improve our young adults' understanding of EFC benefits, and likely decrease the number of youth opting out."

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Department acknowledges that a level of standardization is needed with regards to the assessment and approval of EFC supervised living arrangements and believes standardization has been expressed for denials and terminations as detailed in the eligibility requirements of the law. The Department is working toward the development of operating procedures that will not only standardize transition planning for youth, but incorporate a process to ensure that independent living services are implemented as intended by Florida Statutes. Once developed and operationalized, the Department will explore methods for best promoting EFC. A video message or web-based training may be the best method for communicating to youth and child welfare professionals about the program requirements, improving the comprehension around eligibility, and specific options for services.

3. ELIGIBILITY EXPANSION: "EFC is an underutilized benefit-rich program. It has the potential to prevent homelessness, allow more time for a young adult to get his diploma, or land a job that offers security, and yet we have barriers in place that are preventing former foster youth from eligibility. One suggestion is to remove or amend the requirement that a youth must age out of a licensed placement. This is stricter than the eligibility requirements for any of the other IL (Independent Living) services. The rationale is this: Many of our youth who have been in care for a long time, have cycled through many placements and many types of placements. If a youth under DCF supervision happens to be in an unlicensed placement on his 18th birthday, non-relative or relative, he or she is shut out from the safety net of EFC."

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

Any expansion to the eligibility population or inclusion of those aging out of relative and non-relative placements would require legislative action and approval. Currently, youth in the legal custody of the Department at age 18 are potentially eligible for EFC. The Department acknowledges that this requirement limits eligibility for youth who turn 18

while in relative and non-relative care and had not achieved permanency under the Department's supervision.

ILSAC RECOMMENDATION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SERVICES & SUPPORT (PESS)

"Given the confusing language in statute and administrative code related to Postsecondary Education Support Services all older teens (ages 16 and above) should have access to an attorney, through pro bono programs, legal aid organizations or otherwise."

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Department acknowledges that the eligibility language for PESS in Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code may require, in some instances, the technical assistance of the Department for further interpretation. Currently, the Department requires or encourages child welfare professionals, specialized in independent living services, to participate in statewide monthly calls and bi-annual trainings to discuss best practices and obtain clarification around eligibility for programs. Legal counsel, while not discouraged, is not necessary for explaining and/or advising youth on independent living program requirements and benefits. There are multiple junctures by which youth may be offered information about independent living services to include PESS, such as permanency staffings, home visits, and transition planning meetings. As referenced in section 39.701(3), F.S., providing relevant information on PESS and other independent living programs must be verified in a social study report prepared for the judicial review hearing that occurs within 90 days of the youth's 17th birthday.

ILSAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT

"Initiate efforts to educate the CBCs (Community Based Care Lead Agencies) and other stakeholders about the importance of completing the fields related to employment in FSFN when working with youth who are seeking employment or are gainfully employed.

Continue to collaborate with the local workforce development boards across the state to ensure foster youth receive every opportunity to explore critical workforce services such as career exploration, employability skills training (i.e., soft skills such as resume writing, job interview preparation, etc.), summer youth employment opportunities, and employment.

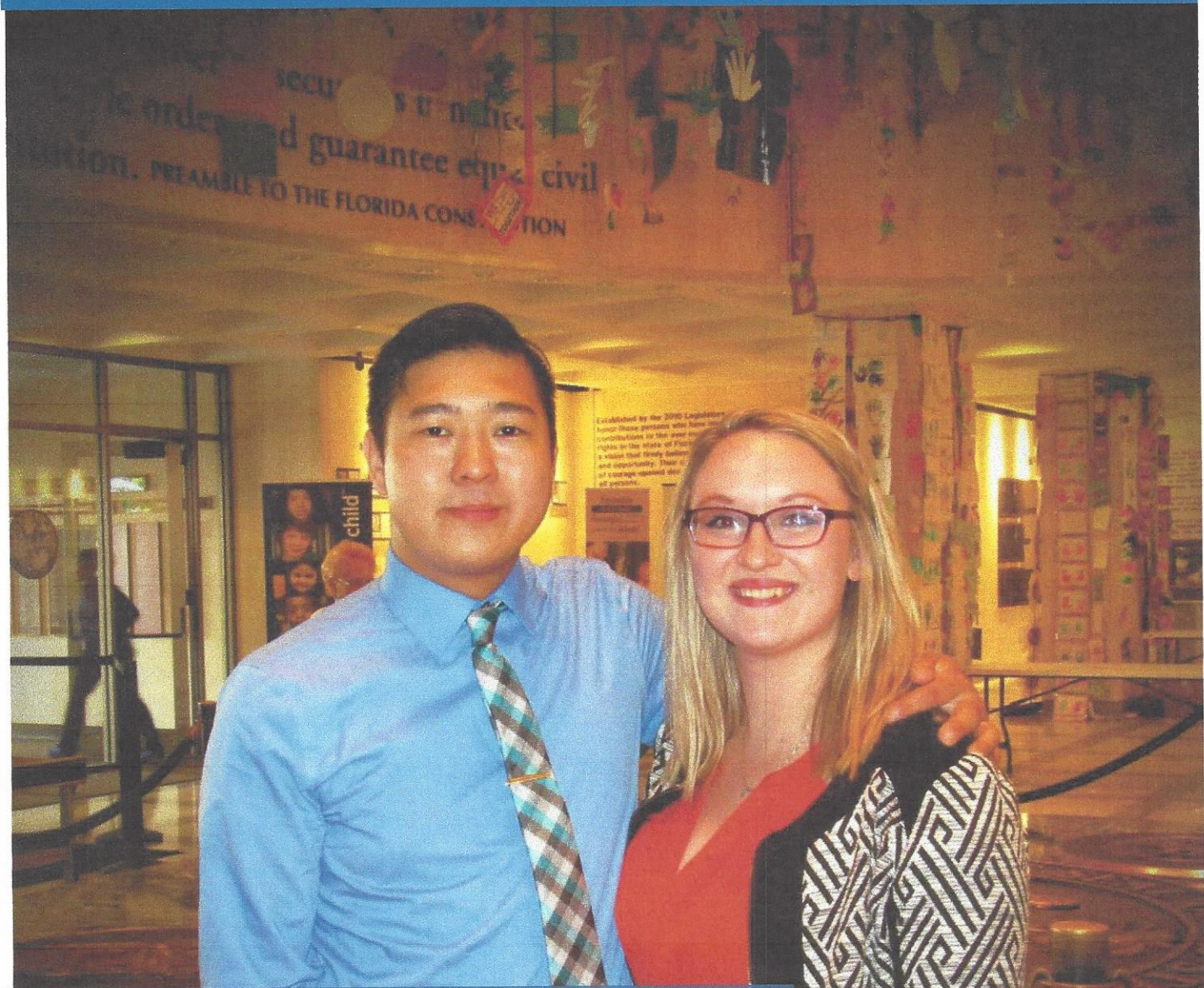
DCF in partnership with the Department of Economic Opportunity should work together to connect the CBCs and the local workforce boards to encourage collaboration and cooperation to meet the workforce needs of youth in and transitioning from the foster care system."

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Department will continue efforts to educate child welfare professionals on the importance of completing the fields in FSFN that are relevant to capturing a youth's employment activities. Additionally, the Department will continue to encourage CBCs to work collaboratively with local workforce development boards across the state in order to improve employability skills and the assessment of career inventory opportunities for transitioning youth.

ANNUAL REPORT

Independent Living Services Advisory Council



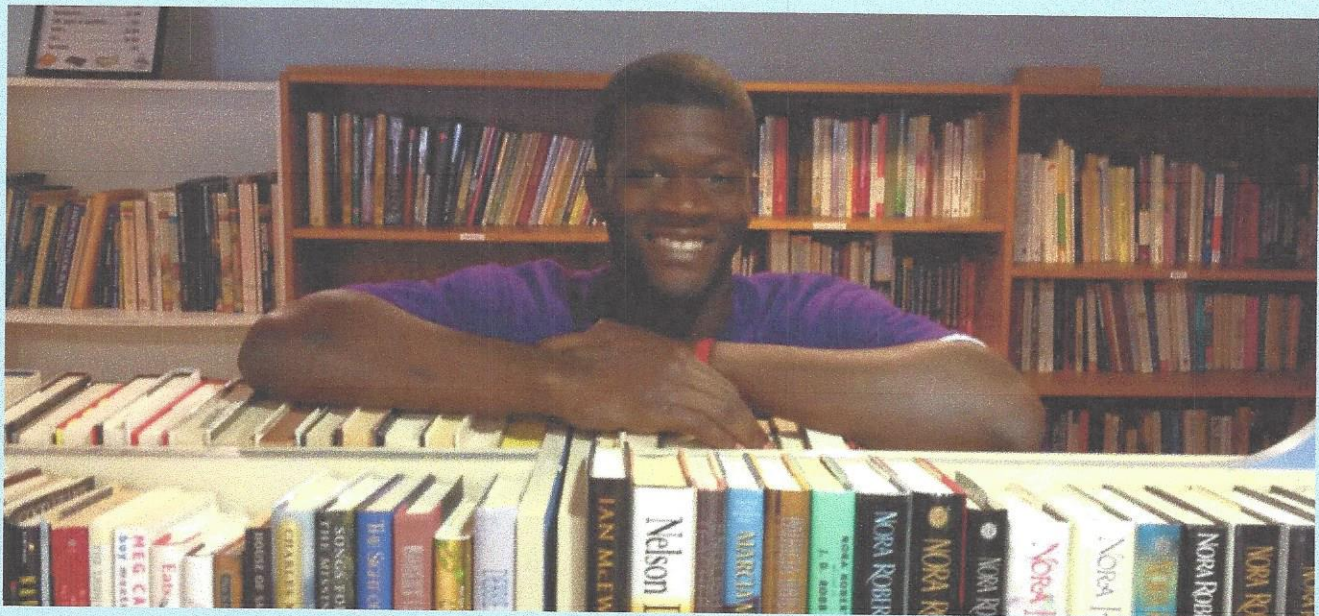
Shang and Chelsea are powerful advocates on the National, State and Local level. Helping to create change for children in the foster care system as a whole.

For more information about Shang see page 11

2017

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Meet PJ working at a local thrift store for employee skill training.

BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (1999)

- Federal Law
- Increased state funding to promote the development of self-sufficiency.
- Education, Preparation for Post Secondary, Daily Life Skills, Employment, Substance Abuse Services, Pregnancy Prevention, and Preventative Health Activities.
- Connection to permanent supportive adults.

Road to Independence Act (2002)

- State Law
- A system of independent living transitional services.
- Provide direct stipend payments to young adults while they pursue full-time education opportunities in areas of continuing education, or vocational training for post-secondary degrees.

Sen. Nancy Detert Common Sense & Compassion Independent Living Act (2013)

- Extends care for foster teens until the age of 21, youth must be working a minimum of 80 hours/month, or
- Eliminate barriers to employment.

*If a youth has a documented disability that limits their ability to work or attend education full time, then the case worker and the youth will create an individualized plan to meet the needs of the youth.

Laws exist on the state and local levels to help older foster youth. Over the years these laws have changed. Youth, and youth advocates helped educate policy makers about the increasing needs of this special population. These changes have been promulgated by the overarching question, "How well is the foster care system preparing foster youth for the age of majority?" Since 2014, the laws have changed and now, we ask a different question - "How well are we preparing youth for independence through new laws related to extended foster care, Post-Secondary Educational Supports Services (PESS), and After Care services?" It is the charge of THE COUNCIL to discover answers to this question.

Florida law also requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or its community based providers to prepare all adolescent foster children for independent living. Florida Statute Section 409.1451, known as the Road to Independence Act, mandates that DCF "shall administer 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 goals of independent living transition services are to assist older children in foster care and young adults who were formerly in foster care to obtain life skills and education for independent living and employment, to have a quality of life appropriate for their age, and to assume personal responsibility for becoming self-sufficient adults." FS Sec. 409.1451 (1) (a) & (b).

Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act, allows young adults to remain in foster care to age 21 to finish high school, earn a GED, pursue postsecondary education, or begin a career. Also th bill provides critically needed housing security.

Young persons living in licensed care on their 18th birthdays with no secured permanent living arrangement are eligible to remain in licensed care if he or she meets specified criteria.

- Requires a young adult choosing to remain in foster care beyond 18 years old reside in a supervised living environment, approved by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or a community-based care lead agency (CBC);
- Allows a young adult to leave and re-enter foster care an unlimited number of times before reaching 21 years old;
- Requires a CBC lead agency to provide regular case management reviews that ensure at least monthly contact with a case manager while a young adult participates in extended foster care and requires the court to review his / her status at least every six months and hold a permanency hearing at least annually;
- Requires creating a transition plan after a child in foster care turns 17 that will be reviewed and updated as necessary until he or she leaves care.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Living Services Council (hereafter THE COUNCIL is) was formed in 2005 to improve interagency policy and service coordination to better support older eligible foster youth in the successful transition to adulthood. Florida has designed an array of services, as required by FS Sec. 409.1451 (7), to support older foster youth and former foster youth to help them become independent self-supporting young adults. These services are funded through a web of federal grants, general revenue dollars, and national, state and community private funds. These services are broadly defined in statute but are implemented differently throughout the state through many different Community Based Care (CBC) providers.

Florida Statute allows THE COUNCIL the "purpose of reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living services." THE COUNCIL brings together political, senior executive, and career staff from local, state and federal agencies across multiple systems to collaborate on recommendations related to services for older foster youth. The culmination of this annual process are the recommendations in this report to the Florida Legislature and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) on the status of the services being provided, including successes and barriers to these services.

THE COUNCIL chaired by Jeff DeMario, CEO of Vita Nova, Inc. a non-profit in Circuit 15 (Palm Beach County) and co-chaired by Penelope Deutsch, Crossroads Hope Academy Mentor, Children's Network of Southwest Florida, Circuit 20 (Lee County).

In Florida, as of January 31, 2017, there were approximately 3,000 children between the ages of 18 and 22 receiving some form of Independent Living Services. Approximately 1000 of those youth turned 18 while in foster care. The grand total for these services, including case coordination, was over \$37 million dollars during this time frame.

Services for older foster youth were re-designed in 2014 to include expansion of foster care services until 21 years old (extended foster care), broader inclusion for college completion (post-secondary education support services, or PESS), and emergency services for youth not in either program to avoid homelessness (after care services). At some point the question will be raised about whether there is significant return on the investment for these services as they relate to college enrollment & completion, employment and homelessness for older foster youth. Stated more succinctly - "Is \$37 million dollars producing the results expected to help older foster youth become successful?"

The state child welfare system (including community based care providers) are responsible for ensuring every youth who leaves the child welfare system is educated, housed, employed and connected to a permanent supportive adult by the time they reach age 25. We are the parents of these young people while they are in foster care and we need to do no less for them than we do for our own children.

As you read this years' report we call your attention to a couple of things. All of us can point to people who have facilitated our forward success in life. Whether that success came in education, career, or opportunities we all have someone who has helped us reach a point for progress in life.

1. Imagine your life without those people who made your life today possible.
Where would you be?
2. How can we make sure that services designed for older foster youth provide these same connections to caring adults?

Recommendation for extended foster care

In 2012 many older foster youth and former youth ages 13-23 manned the halls of the Capitol during Children's Week to begin advocating for changes related to extending foster care to the age 21. Armed with a convincing argument that very few youth are able to successfully live independently by the age of 18, these youth were able to convince policy makers to adopt the extension of foster care and allow youth (under certain conditions) to remain in the foster placement and/or other supervised living arrangement to prevent homelessness and to allow the young adult time to achieve educational and employment goals through age 21 or 22 (if disabled). National evidence suggests that young adults in extended foster care (i.e., after age 18) are more likely to stay in school and pursue higher education, have a decreased risk of economic hardship, and are more likely to access health services, delay pregnancy, and utilize independent living services.

THE COUNCIL reviewed data related to Extended Foster Care for State fiscal years 2014-15 and 2015-16, specifically: Independent Living Services Annual Reports, Florida NYTD, and data provided by DCF at the Council's request from FSFN. A review of this data, lead to the following conclusions and questions:

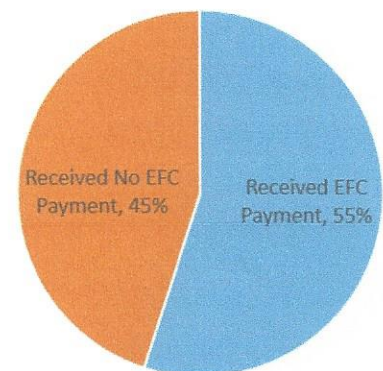
Conclusions:

1. NYTD surveys reveal a small positive trend, episodes of homelessness decreasing and more youth reporting achieving stable housing since the implementation of EFC.
2. Still the rate of homelessness for youth who age out of foster care remains alarmingly high with over 24% of 21 year olds reporting having been homeless at least once in the past 2 years. (NYTD2016-17)
3. Less than 45% of youth eligible for EFC ever received a single payment.
4. Implementation and spending varies widely throughout the State, with the average monthly payment by CBC ranging from \$606 to \$2247. (see spreadsheet page 5)
5. The number of youth remaining with their foster care family at age 18, which was a large intent of the legislation, is low: only 3 of 81 (18-year-olds) surveyed (NYTD2016-17). Additionally, there does not appear to be a tracking measure in place for youth who remain in their former group home after 18.

Questions:

1. Why are eligible youth opting out of EFC?
2. What are the reasons youth are being denied entry into EFC?
What are the reasons youth are being terminated?
3. With a large number of youth aging out of group homes, are youth remaining in those placements after 18? Why or why not? If a youth ages out of an expensive placement and wants to remain there? Can the CBC deny eligibility based on cost? Are group homes allowing youth to remain after 18? Are the group homes accommodating young adults based on this legislation?
4. What housing options exist statewide to embrace the needs of former foster youth that are not willing or able to remain in their placement at age 18?

Florida Department of Children and Families
Extended Foster Care
FFY 2014-15 & 2015-16
N = 1,898



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ENHANCED DATA: THE COUNCIL has determined the following recommendations for Extended Foster Care. The data being collect does not provide all the detail needed to answer many of the questions. For example, THE COUNCIL was not able to determine why eligible youth would opt out of EFC, given the rich provisions afforded by the program. THE COUNCIL was unable to drill down on reasons why youth were being terminated from services earlier than 21, given the limited information in FSN about terminations. Since the community based care agencies all use the same data base system to input data about this population it would seem natural that a data set is created by DCF to collect these specific answers as to why youth are denied services and why they leave the program prematurely. Additional recommendations related to extended foster care and data collected by the Department of Children and Families' efforts with Results Oriented Accountability (ROA). This is a fairly new effort by DCF to create specific outcomes and drivers specific to different areas of the foster care system. These areas can be better tracked and monitored over time to hold groups accountable for performance and outcomes for youth. THE COUNCIL would like to continue to have input on measures tracked and would like to receive reports about ROA their accomplishments and the roll out plan relative to how community based care agencies will be expected to report on the outcomes developed.

2. STATEWIDE STANDARDIZATION: There appears to be a sizeable variation on how EFC is implemented throughout the State. DCF should clarify and create more specific guidelines for such things as: acceptable living arrangements, denials, terminations, monthly housing costs. Here are examples of situations discussed by membership that exemplify the need for clarification in order to achieve statewide standards and fair treatment of our young adults: #1. Young adult wants to remain in current placement at group home, can CBC deny because the rate is too high? #2. Based on applicant's history, CBC will only pay for housing at a supportive living group home, youth refuses to live there. Can the CBC deny EFC? Additionally, everyone would benefit from a standard explanation and delivery of information pertaining to EFC.

THE COUNCIL also recommends that DCF produce a video message that explains all of the nuances of EFC along with other IL services. A video message would equip providers to better engage aging-out youth and would allow for a standardized comprehensive statewide explanation. This would improve our young adults' understanding of EFC benefits, and likely decrease the number of youth opting out.

3. ELIGIBILITY EXPANSION: EFC is an underutilized benefit-rich program. It has the potential to prevent homelessness, allow more time for a young adult to get his diploma, or land a job that offers security, and yet we have barriers in place that are preventing former foster youth from eligibility. One suggestion is to remove or amend the requirement that a youth must age out of a licensed placement. This is stricter than the eligibility requirements for any of the other IL services. The rationale is this: Many of our youth who have been in care for a long time, have cycled through many placements and many types of placements. If a youth under DCF supervision happens to be in an unlicensed placement on his 18th birthday, non-relative or relative, he or she is shut out from the safety net of EFC.

Community Based Care Lead Agency	April 16		May 16		June 16		Total Average Payment Amount
	Average Payment Amount	Number of Children Served	Average Payment Amount	Number of Children Served	Average Payment Amount	Number of Children Served	
BIG BEND CBC FA	758.61	25	986.34	29	988.71	25	915.02
CBC of Brevard	879.37	26	1,025.12	27	991.99	24	965.58
CBC of Central Florida	1,234.57	38	1,318.07	41	1,212.89	41	1,255.69
CBC of Seminole	870.91	11	1,044.06	12	1,125.00	12	1,017.99
ChildNet Inc	754.82	75	733.51	71	710.66	68	733.72
ChildNet Palm Beach	983.20	79	961.71	84	1,116.96	85	1,021.76
Childrens Network of SW Flori	1,021.09	31	981.84	28	993.68	27	999.70
COMIM PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN	801.46	17	849.91	16	837.65	17	829.27
Devereux CBC	1,073.57	18	1,285.42	16	1,317.98	16	1,219.57
Eckerd Community Alternatives	836.61	36	855.08	39	863.67	36	851.87
Eckerd Community-Hillborough	780.36	38	832.50	39	809.52	38	807.68
Families First Network	839.96	39	837.89	40	834.87	42	837.51
Family Support Services	524.43	27	611.69	24	712.31	20	606.85
HEARTLAND FOR CHILDREN INC	838.83	33	837.84	36	833.48	38	836.59
Kids Central Inc	662.16	15	990.32	18	903.40	15	860.61
Kids First of Florida Inc	866.00	5	791.96	6	872.14	7	843.71
Our Kids Inc	780.00	105	839.17	103	911.33	105	843.53
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIE	2,116.05	7	2,538.73	6	2,128.49	7	2,247.21
Sarasota YMCA	777.85	19	807.87	20	862.55	18	815.13
St Johns County Commission	827.92	4	875.00	3	875.00	3	856.17
Grand Total	865.19	648	918.80	658	944.73	644	909.55

Source:

Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Child Welfare Extended Foster Care Monthly Average Monthly Payment paid for April, May, and June 2016

{Data Source: FSN OCA Summary & Detail Report; Date Parameters March 1, 2016 - September 30, 2016; Run Date 5/23/2017}

Recommendation for postsecondary education services & support (PESS)

The goal of providing services under Postsecondary Education Services and Supports (PESS) is to help older foster youth reach graduation. One possible lens through which to view these services is the rate of return on investment. According to the Independent Living Services Annual Report by the Department of Children and Families Office of Child Welfare (January 31, 2017) the amount of money spent on PESS was more than \$14 million (SFY 2016). This amount is approximately 50% of the total budget for all of independent living services for the state. The same report indicates that nearly 4,800 youth were eligible for free tuition courtesy of the tuition waiver provided by DCF. Finally, of those eligible for free tuition a little more than 35% engage in postsecondary education, and of those less than 2% graduated.

RECOMMENDATION:

Given the confusing language in statute and administrative code related to Postsecondary Education Support Services all older teens (ages 16 and above) should have access to an attorney, through pro bono programs, legal aid organizations or otherwise.

Florida is a national leader in offering services and supports to young adults who are or were in our child welfare system. College tuition, financial assistance for students in college, health insurance, extended foster care, and assistance with drivers' licenses are examples of significant benefits that may be available to any given young adult. The interplay of the statutes and rules that govern eligibility for each of those benefits is very complicated. But to make an informed decision, the youth, Caseworkers, and Independent Living Workers must understand the complexities of the statutes and governing rules. Every day teens and their caregivers make decisions about placements and case closure that determine whether the youth is eligible or ineligible for specific services, without realizing the ramifications of the decision or the other options that may be available under the law. One of the best ways to ensure that a decision is made that will provide for all the rights afforded to the child under the law at the time they turn 18, is to provide advice of counsel to youth who are 16-years-old or older.

Here are some real-life examples of decisions that have been made where the youth did not have advice of counsel, and did not understand the consequences of choices made:

- A teen who has been living with a relative caregiver is given the opportunity to close her case to permanent guardianship a few months before her 18th birthday. She and her relative would be happy to skip court and visitations, but closing the case to guardianship will cut off five years of Medicaid eligibility.



Meet Chiquita ready to take on the world with her new diploma.

- A teen who is college bound and has set high academic goals for himself has the chance to move out-of-state to live with relatives. He needs to know that an out of state move will mean that his Medicaid will end at age 18, he cannot access PESS, and he cannot access free tuition. (Though he may be able to access Education Training Voucher money depending on a variety of facts.)

- A teen who has had multiple licensed and non-licensed placements over the last two years thinks that he wants to spend his last three months in care with a school friend's family. If he is living with the family on his 18th birthday, he will not be eligible for Extended Foster Care. Eligibility for Post-Secondary Education Services and Supports (PESS) will depend in part whether he had 6 months in licensed care in the 12 months preceding the placement and whether the placement is considered guardianship. If it's not considered a guardianship, the eligibility for free tuition will depend on whether family was given custody under the Relative Caregiver statute 39.5085.

- A teen who has been in licensed care for several years is placed with a relative caregiver. Adoption and permanent guardianship are both possible options. If they select adoption, the child's Medicaid will end at age 18 and she will get free college tuition but no PESS. If the case is closed to permanent guardianship, her Medicaid will end at 18. Whether or not she gets free tuition depends on whether she's under the Relative Caregiver program or whether the guardianship closed after age 16. Likewise, whether she will be eligible for PESS depends on whether the guardianship is closed before or after age 16.

As youth reach their upper teens, "routine" child welfare decisions, like placement, can have serious legal ramifications that are unknown or misunderstood by the Caseworkers or Independent Living workers. Caseworkers and Independent Living Workers, as well as caregivers, try their best to understand the law and the effects of decisions, but the law is extremely complex, and they often get it wrong. Children need the advice of their own counsel in making those decisions. It is improper, and frankly unfair, to put Caseworkers and Independent Living workers in the position of giving legal advice and opinions. Wrong decisions by those staff can deprive children in care with the benefits and services the Florida Legislature has carefully decided were in their best interests, and benefit the state as we help mold productive future citizens.

Post-secondary Education Services and Support (PESS)

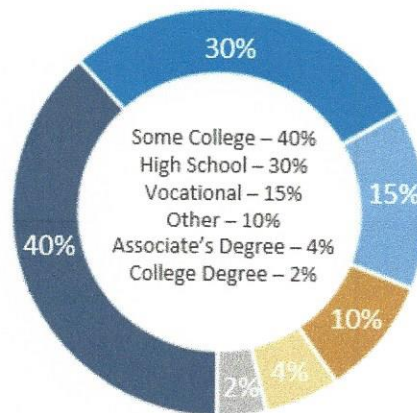
During the September ILSAC meeting, the Council received a presentation from the State's independent living specialist about DCF's Post-secondary Education Services and Support (PESS) Program. PESS is the \$14 million-a-year program that provides up to \$1,256 a month to former foster care youth (up to age 23) as long as they continue to progress in school (secondary or post-secondary).

Members were told that 1,002 (34%) of the 2,969 students eligible for PESS in 2017 have "some type of postsecondary" enrollment denoted in their record. They also were told that of 411 PESS terminations between July 2016 and June 2017, 290 (40%) were "involuntary departures." ILSAC members asked for more information about the involuntary departures and expressed concerns that the low numbers of young adults enrolled in post-secondary education program, especially because PESS payments are tied to continued enrollment in an educational institution.

Several members commented on the great need that still exists to increase the number of students in extended foster care, and former foster youth, using the tuition exemption to pursue post-secondary credentials in Florida.

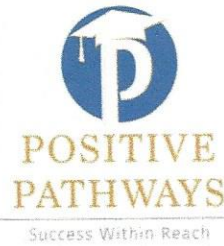
Educational Attainment of Florida's

18-23 Year-old Former Foster Youth
 FY 2015-2016
 N = 2,938



Source: Florida Dept. of Children and Families
 Independent Living Service Annual Report,
 2017

Highlight: Positive Pathways



DCF Creates Positive Pathways

In May 2017, DCF signed a two-year contract with Educate Tomorrow, a 501(c)(3) organization, to run Positive Pathways for Transitioning Postsecondary Youth (Positive Pathways), a new program created by the Department and designed to increase the number of former foster youth that earn post-secondary educational credentials by recruiting, training and equipping campus-based foster care liaisons, who by law must be appointed by leaders at Florida's 28 colleges and 12 universities (see Chapter 409, Section 1452 of Florida Statutes).

The establishment of Positive Pathways demonstrates the Department's commitment to focus consistent attention on the tremendous potential of the young adults aging out of foster care, and the great need that exists for these young adults to pursue their education.

DCF's funding of Positive Pathways is a welcomed development given the Council's recommendation, in last year's report, that "DCF should pursue its plan to provide funding to a qualified organization that will coordinate, develop, and maintain a network of post-secondary campus-based support initiatives across the Florida public college and university systems."

ILSAC member Dr. Steve J. Rios runs Positive Pathways, which is headquartered in the offices of Educate Tomorrow, in Miami. Positive Pathways operates in partnership with Florida Reach, a network of volunteer professionals, foster care alumni and community advocates from throughout Florida. For two years, Florida Reach was led by a full-time DCF employee in the office of Independent Living Services, which also provides administrative support to the ILSAC Committee. During the summer of 2017, the Florida College System (FCS) and the State University System Board of Governors (SUS BOG) released data in response to Florida law requiring annual reports to DCF on the status of students receiving tuition and fee waivers. The data revealed that as of the academic year 2015-2016, there were 3,024 students enrolled in public colleges and universities using the tuition and fee exemption. Of this number, 2,229 students are enrolled in Florida College System's (FCS) 28 institutions and 785 student enrolled in Florida public universities. (see figure A)

Since the Department began supporting Florida Reach (and now Positive Pathways), the number of students pursuing degrees at Florida's universities has increased from 543 to 785, a 31% increase. Also since 2013-2014, the number of bachelor degrees earned by former foster youth receiving the DCF waiver has increased by more than 100%, from 45 to 94 (See figure B, pg 9). Following the DCF presentation, the Council heard a presentation on Positive Pathways, the program that DCF has created to increase the number of students receiving tuition and fee waivers. Since it was created by the Department last May, Positive Pathways has reached out to the foster care liaisons appointed by leaders of the state's 28 public colleges and 12 public universities.

FIGURE A

Students receiving the Tuition and Fee Voucher Enrolled in Florida's Public Colleges and Universities



2,229



STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of FLORIDA Board of Governors

785

Total = 3,014

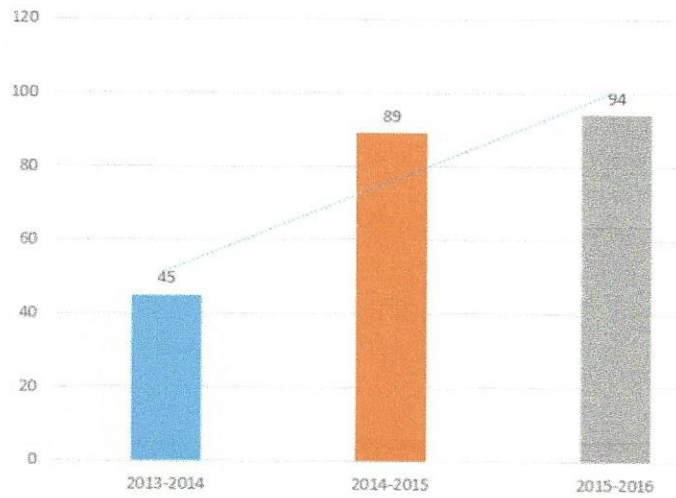
DCF also recently released information on the educational status of 2,938 young adults from foster care between the ages of 18 and 23. These students were receiving DCF support of some type in 2014-2015. The statistics indicated that 1,180 (40%) had earned some college credits, 900 (30%) of these students were still in high school, 455 (15%) had earned a vocational certificate, 4% had earned an associate's degree and 2% had earned a bachelor's degree.

Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done to dramatically increase the number and percent of college students from foster care who are succeed in post-secondary educational institutions. ILSAC commends the Department, however, for the innovative step represented by Positive Pathways.

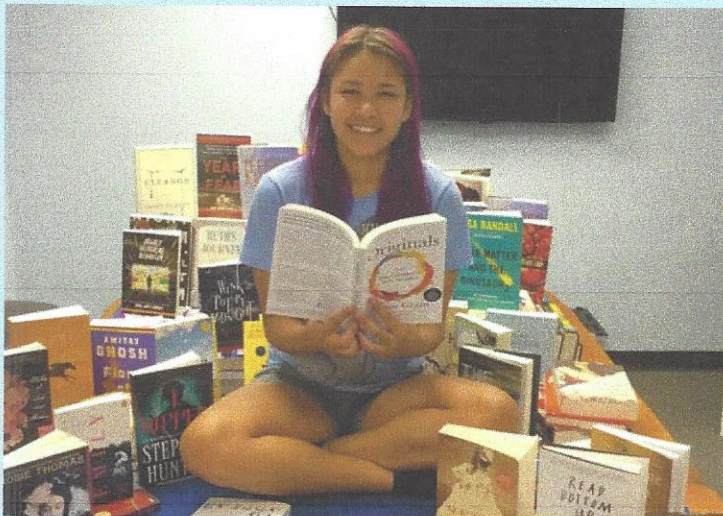
FIGURE B

Bachelors Degrees Earned by SUS Students Using DCF Tuition and Fee Exemptions

2013-14 to 2015-16



Source: Florida Board of Governors-Office of Data Analysis, 2017-07-27



Meet Jazz an avid reader, college graduate and future artist.

Follow up: Employment

In the ILSAC 2016-17 Annual Report, THE COUNCIL recognized that there are several different groups/entities that collect employment data about youth in foster care and the data is collected in different ways. The report contained recommendations aimed at strengthening THE COUNCIL'S efforts to gain more insight in to the employment rates of foster youth. The purpose of these recommendations was to allow THE COUNCIL an opportunity to:

- Learn more about Florida's various employment-related data sources used to track employment rates for foster youth across State agencies and numerous data collections systems, including DCF's data base Florida Safe Family Network (FSFN), and
- To encourage the DCF to align State-level and local resources by increasing partnerships across agencies to enhance employment data in FSFN.

Employment continues to be a viable options for youth who are transitioning from the foster care system who may or may not elect to attend college. Employment, when used as a component of a comprehensive transition plan, can offer transitioning youth an opportunity to maintain pro-social connections to systems and activities aimed at assisting them to achieve self-sufficiency. Through THE COUNCIL'S work during this past year, THE COUNCIL has learned more about the resources available through FSFN and the various employment-related reports produced through that system.

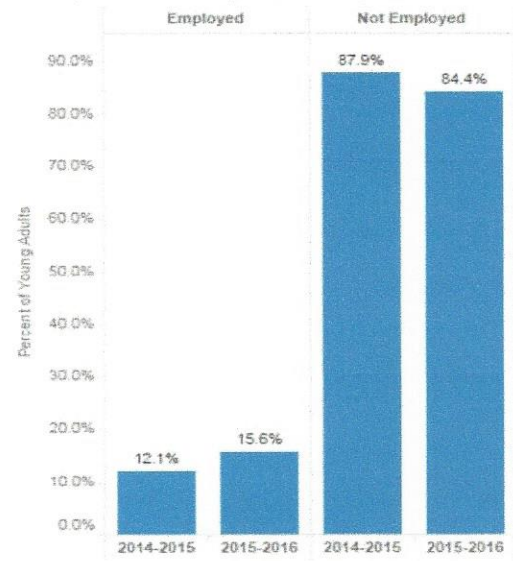
FSFN currently contains critical employment data elements that can be used to support a greater understanding of the employment rates of foster youth. The FSFN employment data can assist all stakeholders in gaining a better understanding on how often foster and transitioning youth elect to work in lieu or in combination with post-secondary education. However, these FSFN data elements are not required fields in the system and often not used as a transition planning tool by case managers serving foster youth.

RECOMMENDATION:

THE COUNCIL continues to support DCF's efforts to improve data collections methods around employment in FSFN. Therefore, THE COUNCIL recommends that DCF:

- Initiate efforts to educate the CBCs and other stakeholders about the importance of completing the fields related to employment in FSFN when working with youth who are seeking employment or are gainfully employed.
- Continue to collaborate with the Local Workforce Development Boards across the state to ensure foster youth receive every opportunity to explore critical workforce services such as career exploration, employability skills training (i.e., soft skills such as resume writing, job interview preparation, etc.), summer youth employment opportunities, and employment. DCF in partnership with the Department of Economic Opportunity should work together to connect the CBCs and the local workforce boards to encourage collaboration and cooperation to meet the workforce needs of youth in and transitioning from the foster care system.

Employment Status of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by Fiscal Year



Source: FSFN OCWDRU Report #1170

Success at Work

written by Shang G.



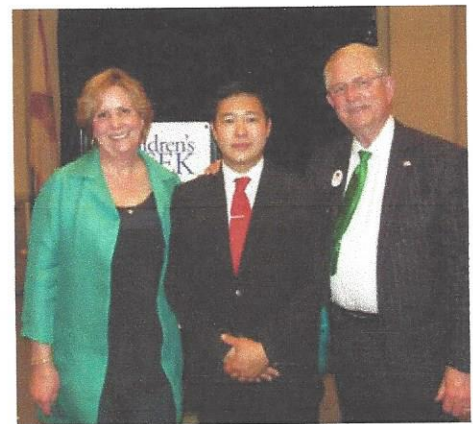
Meet Shang with Orange County Property Appraiser, Rick Singh his new boss.

When I aged out of care at 18, there was no Extended Foster Care. I was given the opportunity to be a part of the Road to Independence program. I was still finishing high school, the idea of working, while it crossed my mind, never held importance because I had become dependent on the IL program to support me. It wasn't until almost a year later when I was removed from the IL program that I realized that without work, I would not survive. The system of care never emphasized the importance of a job. As a result I struggled to balance school and work and eventually dropped out of college. Over the next several years, I bounced around from apartment to apartment, job to job, and lived paycheck to paycheck. I had to learn from scratch without the support network of the system of care.

At some point I had enough. I reached out to Career Source and was accepted into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It was there I learned all the essential skills and tools that Independent Living failed to teach me. It was there where I created a professional network to begin climbing the steps (in my mid 20s) to be self-sufficient. WIOA is a federally funded program and young people who have been in foster care are already eligible because they were in the system of care. Giving the youth who are transitioning out of care a large check from Independent Living programs each month just for attending school is a recipe for disaster. It is teaching them to be dependent rather than independent. But if we were to assimilate the culture of work into our IL program, the youth would learn the true value of the dollar and would then be prepared to finally live independently when the time comes.

When talking about Independent Living in Florida, the never ending topic has always been about education and how much money goes into the various programs like PESS, EFC or Aftercare Services.

While we as a society have always placed education as a pilgrimage to the mecca of success and self sufficiency, we cannot overlook the importance of earning a livable wage through hard work and perseverance. My personal journey through Independent Living is a perfect example of just how important work is. I believe most of our young people transitioning out of the system of care do not realize, and many of our adult allies tend to forget, that we all eventually need to work in order to become successful.



Shang with the Carol Jenkins Barnett, the daughter Publix founder, and her husband Barney Barnett.

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Florida Dept. of Juvenile Justice
Tallahassee, Florida

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Family Services Specialist C9/C18
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Penelope A. Deutsch - Co-Chair

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Transition Administrator
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Outreach & Training
Statewide Guardian ad Litem
Office
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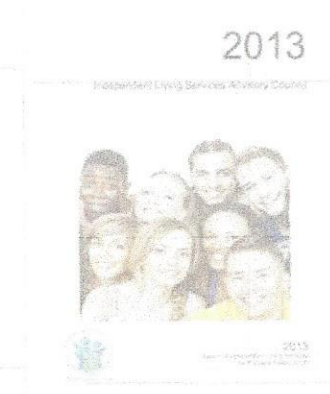
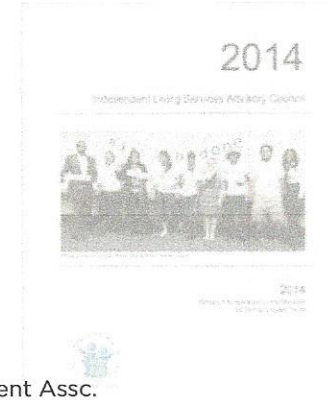
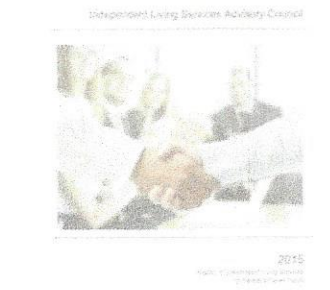
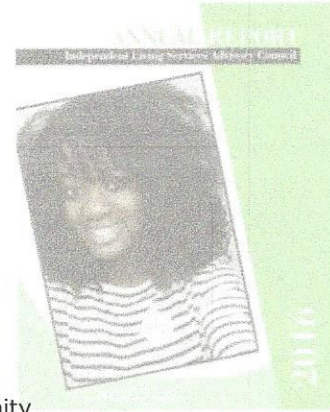
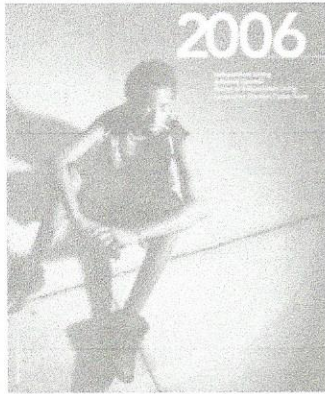
Gloria West-Lawson

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Harriet Wynn

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Jacksonville, Florida

**Special thanks to Ms. Brandie McCabe, Independent Living Specialist
Florida DCF, Office of Child Welfare for her ongoing and unwavering
support during all 2017 meetings for ILSAC.**



Response to the
Independent Living Services Advisory Council
2016 Annual Report
Department of Children and Families
Division of Family Safety
December 21, 2016
George H. Shelton
Secretary
Shelia Cook
Secretary

2017
Independent Living Services Advisory Council

2017
Independent Living Services Advisory Council

2017
Independent Living Services Advisory Council

NOTICE OF FILING

Reporting Agency:	Department of Children and Families
Recipient Agency:	Governor Speaker of the House of Representatives President of the Senate
Subject:	DCF Response to Independent Living Services Advisory Council Annual Report
Report Due Date:	December 31, 2017
Statutory Requirement:	s. 409.1451(7), F.S.

Abstract:

This report provides the Department response to the Independent Living Services Advisory Council annual report for the calendar year 2017.

Copies of this report may be obtained by contacting Ms. Traci Leavine, Director of Child Welfare Practice, at (850) 717-4760. Lawful recipients will not be charged for copies. Charges for copies requested by others will conform to requirements of Department of Children and Families CFOP 15-9, Requests for Public Records.

LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED REPORT – STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

REPORT TITLE	STATUTORY REFERENCE	SPECIFICATIONS
<p>DCF response to the Independent Living Services Advisory Council Annual Report.</p>	<p>s. 409.1451(7), F.S.,</p>	<p>409.1451(7), INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The secretary shall establish the Independent Living Services Advisory Council for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the provisions of ³s. <u>39.6015</u> and the Road-to-Independence Program. The advisory council shall function as specified in this subsection until the Legislature determines that the advisory council can no longer provide a valuable contribution to the department's efforts to achieve the goals of the services designed to enable a young adult to live independently.</p> <p>(a) The advisory council shall assess the implementation and operation of the Road-to-Independence Program and advise the department on actions that would improve the ability of these Road-to-Independence Program services to meet the established goals. The advisory council shall keep the department informed of problems being experienced with the services, barriers to the effective and efficient integration of services and support across systems, and successes that the system of services has achieved. The department shall consider, but is not required to implement, the recommendations of the advisory council.</p> <p>(b) The advisory council shall report to the secretary on the status of the implementation of the Road-to-Independence Program, efforts to publicize the availability of the Road-to-Independence Program, the success of the services, problems identified, recommendations for department or legislative action, and the department's implementation of the recommendations contained in the Independent Living Services Integration Workgroup Report submitted to the appropriate substantive committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2013. The department shall submit a report by December 31 of each year to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and</p>

		the Speaker of the House of Representatives which includes a summary of the factors reported on by the council and identifies the recommendations of the advisory council and either describes the department's actions to implement the recommendations or provides the department's rationale for not implementing the recommendations.
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