



Independent Living Services

ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child Welfare

January 31, 2020

Chad Poppell
Secretary

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Table of Contents

Purpose.....	3
Independent Living Services Outcomes	4
Oversight Activities.....	13
1. Contract Oversight	14
2. Financial Accountability.....	15
3. Appeals	15
Rule Promulgation.....	16
Department Plans.....	16

Attachments:

Appendix A.....
Appendix B.....

Purpose

This report provides accountability information on Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Aftercare Services referenced in section 409.1451(6), Florida Statutes (F.S.), 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.

Although Extended Foster Care is not referenced in section 409.1451(6), F.S., this report also provides outcome and oversight information for young adults continuing in foster care.

The table below depicts the number of young adults served in each program by CBC over the last two State Fiscal Years (SFY). This year's annual report numbers were calculated using different data reports. This change accounts for any variation in data previously published.

Number of Young Adults Receiving Independent Living Services by Program Type, CBC, and SFY						
CBC	2017-2018			2018-2019		
	Aftercare	EFC	PESS	Aftercare	EFC	PESS
Big Bend Community Based Care	12	48	56	9	43	50
Brevard Family Partnership	15	52	38	15	42	25
ChildNet (Broward)	37	195	173	46	175	161
ChildNet (Palm Beach)	30	131	114	21	126	94
Children's Network of SW Florida	5	52	67	1	49	78
Citrus Family Care Network*	14	229	236	14	252	230
Communities Connected for Kids	16	35	43	26	41	39
Community Partnership for Children	13	30	61	14	42	53
Eckerd Connects (Pasco/Pinellas)	43	79	77	50	94	86
Eckerd Connects (Hillsborough)	82	82	114	84	81	100
Embrace Families**	40	85	89	43	88	87
Families First Network	15	88	44	16	93	44
Family Integrity Program	2	9	7	2	9	6
Family Support Services of North Florida	36	53	53	36	57	38
Heartland for Children	17	55	41	19	47	43
Kids Central	2	40	45	3	45	32
Kids First of Florida	1	9	15	1	14	18
Partnership for Strong Families	10	10	21	12	10	17
Safe Children Coalition	11	24	25	15	36	20
Statewide	401	1306	1319	427	1344	1221

Source: OCWDRU #1089, FSFN Data Repository

*Citrus Family Care Network was formerly OurKids of Miami-Dade/Monroe

**Embrace Families was formerly Community Based Care of Central Florida

Independent Living Services Outcomes

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

Each program is designed to assist young adults in reaching principal outcome areas as they move toward self-sufficiency. The examination of programs considers the following federal outcome areas: increasing financial self-sufficiency, improving educational attainment, increasing connections to caring adults, reducing homelessness, reducing high-risk behavior, and improving access to health insurance.

Department analysis of CBCs performance in administering young adult transition services also considers Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) available data, National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) surveys, and other oversight activities.

Extended Foster Care (EFC)

Florida's vision of "continuing care" for young adults became law effective January 1, 2014. Effective January 2019, Extended Foster Care (EFC) policies were substantially revised to standardize the service delivery across the state and align with Title IV-E federal funding requirements. Eligible young adults have the option of remaining in foster care until the age of 21 or until the age of 22 if they have a disability. EFC is a voluntary program that requires the young adult to participate in school, work, or a work training program, and reside in a supervised living arrangement in accordance with federal and state guidelines.

Services include standard case management visits, case planning, transition planning, monitoring of life skills development, and judicial oversight as required. The program utilizes Title IV-E federal funds to help pay for room and board and other allowable expenses such as child care for young adults who are parenting, clothing for work or school, school supplies, and essential services needed to support the young adult's transition to independence.

Outcome area: Increasing financial self-sufficiency

Young adults in EFC are encouraged to participate in financial literacy programs as part of the transitioning planning process in order to promote self-sufficiency. Section 39.6035, F.S., specifically requires youth in transition be provided with information for the financial literacy curriculum offered by the Department of Financial Services (DFS). The Records and Resources Exchanged form (CF-FSP 5426), is a form in policy that assists child welfare professionals and youth in tracking information provided such as financial literacy and other resources required to be provided per Florida Statutes. Young adults can continue taking the DFS online courses and any other free banking classes, increasing their knowledge of how to manage money.

Allowance is the only direct payment that a young adult in EFC receives that provides them the experience of managing money except for those that receive direct social security benefits or

those that receive a paycheck from employment. All other expenses related to maintaining a young adult in foster care are paid directly to providers or vendors.

Although providing young people financial literacy information and allowance do not necessarily yield an outcome of financial self-sufficiency, these activities are examples of skill development opportunities that increase the likelihood young adults in EFC will strengthen their knowledge of finances while continuing in foster care. The table below provides the number of young adults that participated in EFC for SFY 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 and had a recorded period of employment.

Number of Young Adults in EFC with recorded Employment by CBC and SFY		
CBC	2017-2018	2018-2019
Big Bend Community Based Care	16	12
Brevard Family Partnership	13	12
ChildNet (Broward)	19	21
ChildNet (Palm Beach)	4	10
Children's Network of SW Florida	10	7
Citrus Family Care Network*	59	58
Communities Connected for Kids	3	6
Community Partnership for Children	2	2
Eckerd Connects (Pasco/Pinellas)	14	18
Eckerd Connects (Hillsborough)	19	20
Embrace Families**	26	20
Families First Network	32	39
Family Integrity Program	6	5
Family Support Services of North Florida	17	22
Heartland for Children	3	6
Kids Central	14	16
Kids First of Florida	4	7
Partnership for Strong Families	3	1
Safe Children Coalition	2	4
Statewide	266	286

Source: OCWDRU #1169, FSFN Data Repository

*Citrus Family Care Network was formerly OurKids of Miami-Dade/Monroe

**Embrace Families was formerly Community Based Care of Central Florida

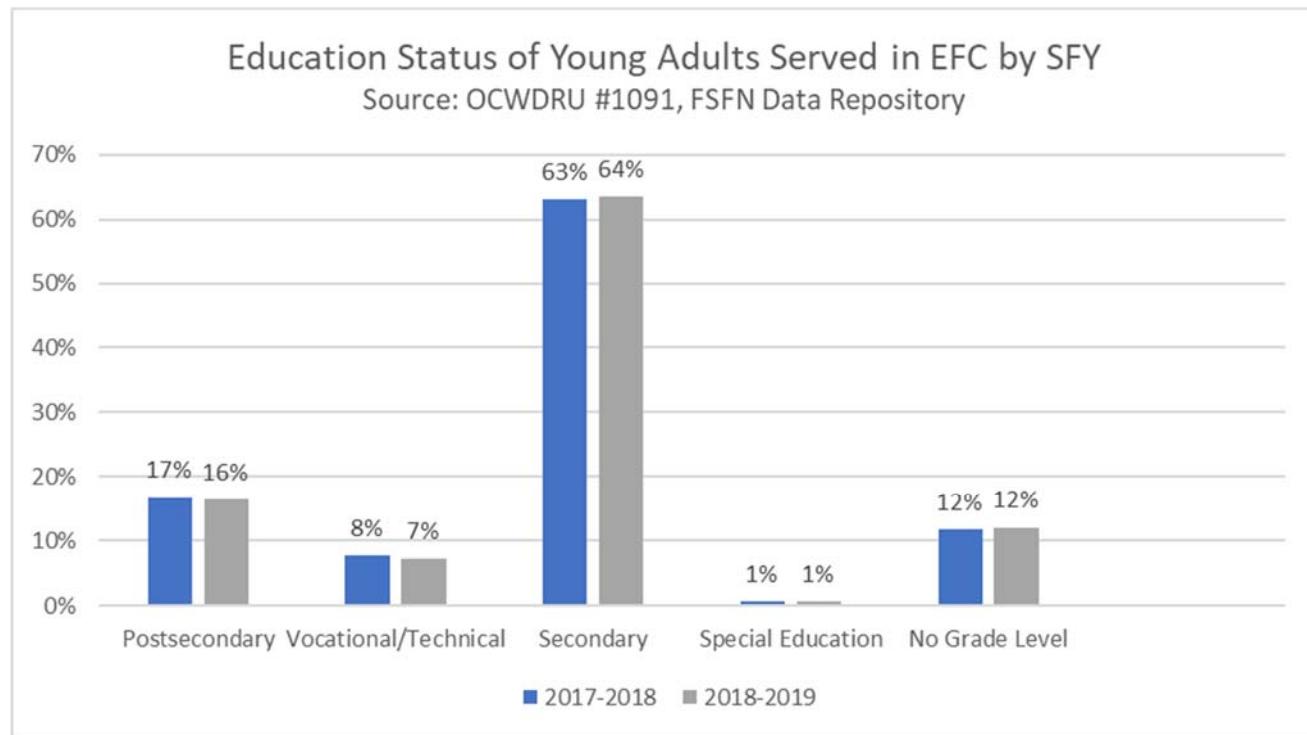
Outcome area: Improving educational attainment

Achieving a diploma can be considered a minimal requirement for self-sufficiency and can assist in establishing a solid foundation that will prepare youth for their future. Education attainment is a key CBC Scorecard measure developed to monitor a youth's capacity for independent living. This well-being measure standard is currently 80 percent. In the fourth quarter of SFY 2018-2019, 88.5 percent of young adults that turned 18-years-old in out-of-home care either

completed or were in enrolled in secondary education, vocational training, or adult education. CBCs have exceeded the target by 8.55 percent.

Although a standard has been set for education at the age out juncture, a target percentage for completion has not yet been identified for young adults participating in EFC. One reason a target has not yet been established is young adults are afforded the option of other qualifying activities besides education. Young adults may choose employment or programs designed to promote or eliminate barriers to employment in lieu of completing secondary or postsecondary education. The flexibility may delay degree attainment for some while they are served in EFC.

The chart below reflects the percentage of young adults that received EFC services during SFY 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, and their most recent educational status recorded in FSFN. There are twenty-six grade level options to choose from in FSFN ranging from Preschool to Post-Graduate Degree, including categories None, Non-graded, Not Applicable, and Unknown. Due to the variation in data, the information has been analyzed and grouped accordingly.



Outcome area: Increasing connections to caring adults

The permanency goal for young adults in EFC is transition to independence. In order to achieve this goal, young adults must have a transition plan that includes the names of supportive adults committed to helping young adults on their path to success. At this time, the FSFN universe does not contain specific data fields that capture caring adults and their contact information identified during transition planning.

In order to ensure young adults in EFC establish and maintain connections with caring adults, the department has developed standardized forms, prompting the dialogue and collection of relevant information. The My Pathway to Success Plan (form CF-FSP 5425), and The Shared

Living Plan (form CF-FSP 5430), both provide space for the collection of the individuals helping the young adult in preparation for achieving their goals. This promotion of identifying and collecting information on specific supportive people ensures child welfare professionals are increasing young adults' connections to caring adults while participating in EFC.

Outcome area: Reducing homelessness

Effective January 1, 2019, all young adults in EFC are documented as residing in out-of-home placements called Supervised Living Arrangements (SLA) in FSFN. New guidance requires that prior to placement, child welfare professionals must utilize a standardized form to assess for the appropriateness of the living environment. The Supervised Living Arrangement Assessment for Extended Foster Care (form CF-FSP 5431), ensures that young adults reside in the most suitable living arrangements. The form guides the child welfare professional in their evaluation and decision making. The young adult may have the following SLA options approved: Licensed Foster Home, Licensed Group Home, Transitional Living Program, Assisted Living Facility, Shared Housing, Shared Housing-Host Home, and/or Individual Housing.

While young adults participating in EFC are not considered homeless, young adults that choose to opt out of the program or get terminated are at risk of homelessness. Fortunately, Aftercare Services provide young adults terminated from EFC an opportunity to bridge back into the program as a safety net. Services may include temporary financial assistance to avoid homelessness.

Outcome area: Reducing high-risk behavior

Young adults in EFC receive the same level of case management supervision as youth in foster care. Child welfare professionals make monthly home visits to check on the young adult's safety and well-being. Well-being may be monitored through ongoing assessment of life skill development. The Life Skills Progress Documentation Log (form CF-FSP 5444), is a form in policy that tracks the following skills: Academic Support, Post-Secondary Educational Support, Career Preparation, Employment Programs or Vocational Training, Budget and Financial Management, Housing Education and Home Management Training, Health Education and Risk Prevention, Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education, Mentoring, and Supervised Independent Living. This form was introduced in April 2019 to standardize the process of informally assessing and documenting skill competency.

While completing the form itself does not demonstrate the reduction in high-risk behavior, young adults will likely avoid risky behavior and be more successful in achieving their goals if independent living skills are regularly being assessed and addressed through plans for competency. If effectively engaged, young adults should take the lead in planning for their future, helping to identify strengths and needs to be successful.

Outcome area: Improving access to health insurance

Young adults in EFC continue to receive Child in Care (CIC) Medicaid until age 21. The CBC continues to manage the account through FSFN; therefore, all young adults participating have assurance of health coverage. Prior to turning 21-years-old, a young adult is responsible for

completing a Medicaid application to continue coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Although Medicaid eligibility continues until 26-years-old under ACA, the young adult must still choose the type of Statewide Medicaid Managed Care plan. Fortunately, there are a variety of plans to choose from, even a plan designed especially for children involved in the child welfare system. The Child Welfare Specialty Plan is an integrated, holistic healthcare program, available in all regions across Florida and may serve young adults in EFC.

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. Federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee program) funding helps pay for participants housing and other expenses necessary to cover the cost of attendance while enrolled. After the initial application process, eligibility requires that these students are enrolled in nine credit hours or the vocational equivalent; and, if meeting academic progress according to the Florida Bright Futures educational program, 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.

Outcome area: Increasing financial self-sufficiency

Financial self-sufficiency can be achieved by taking steps to create a stable income, building a savings account, and staying out of debt. Young adults participating in PESS are given the chance to demonstrate budgeting skills in several ways. A young adult may directly receive their stipend of \$1,256 if they can effectively pay their bills. Young adults also receive Federal Student Aid in the form of grants, loans and scholarships. The Pell Grant may provide an additional financial benefit up to \$3,000 per semester for the young person to manage. Last, young adults may apply and receive loans to cover the cost of other living expenses. The income that the young adult receives through various state and federal funding sources, along with the continued access to financial education through DFS, improves young adults' capacity for financial self-sufficiency.

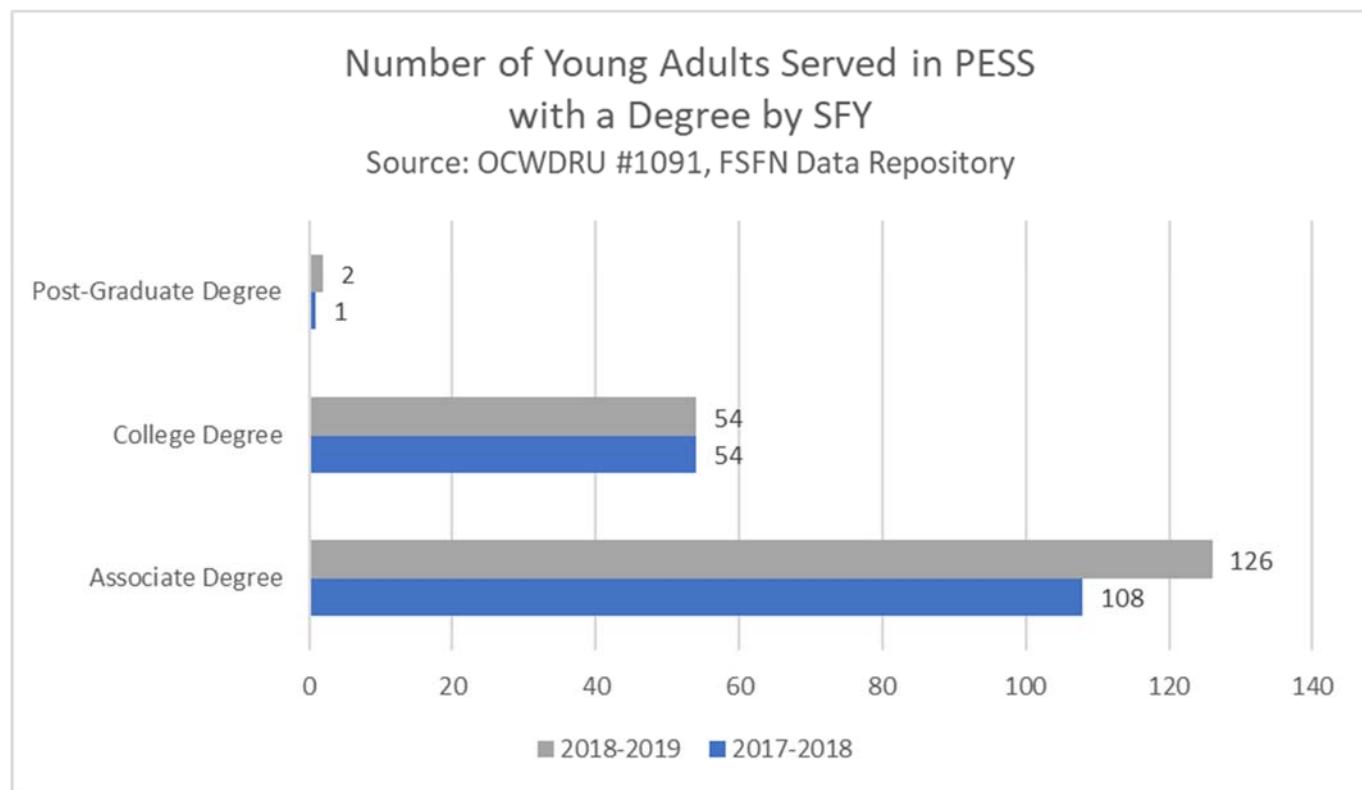
Outcome area: Improving educational attainment

During SFY 2018-2019, the department renewed a contract with Educate Tomorrow Corporation (ET), a 501(c)(3) organization, to administer the Positive Pathways Program (Positive Pathways). Positive Pathways was established to coordinate, develop, and maintain a network of postsecondary supports in an effort to improve outcomes and career transitions for former foster youth eligible for the Department's Tuition and Fee Exemption (tuition exemption). This work is a continuation of support, networking, and collective impact that began in 2013 with the establishment of Florida Reach and in response to section 409.1452, F.S., relevant to the

collaboration with the State University System (SUS), Florida College System (FCS), and Department of Education.

SUS and FCS reported an improvement in degree attainment for students utilizing the tuition exemption for SFY 2018-2019. While the department did not receive student identifiable data that could be compared to FSFN PESS data, efforts to share and analyze academic progress are still underway.

The chart below portrays the number of young adults served in PESS during SFY 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 that have an educational record in FSFN reflecting degree achievement.



Outcome area: Increasing connections to caring adults

Child welfare professionals are responsible for providing oversight on PESS cases. Even though young adults in the program don't get the ongoing transition planning and supervision as those in EFC, they are still provided opportunities to engage in activities that connect them to caring adults. Ideally, young adults in PESS will have previously established the supportive adults either through transition planning, EFC, Guardianship, or Adoption to help them succeed. Still, supportive structures such as Positive Pathways continue to offer young adults in PESS the chance to meet new individuals with resource connections.

Outcome area: Reducing homelessness

Young adults participating in PESS receive financial assistance to help secure housing and utilities. Depending where the young adult resides, the statutory stipend amount of \$1256 may not adequately cover living expenses. Fortunately, CBCs can leverage community resources and partnerships to assist young adults in locating affordable housing in the cities where they are attending school.

Outcome area: Reducing high-risk behavior

While the PESS program doesn't offer the same level of supervision and oversight as EFC, young adults receiving services remain in contact with a child welfare professional. Additionally, through Positive Pathways, young adults may have access to more student services through campus-based programs designed to support former foster youth. Although more complex analysis would be needed to determine if the PESS program design reduces unhealthy, high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, unprotected sex, and criminal activity, SFY 2018-2019 FSFN data does indicate that 86.85 percent of the young adults that aged out between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 did not perpetrate abuse or neglect by their 25th birthday.

Outcome area: Improving access to health insurance

Like EFC, young adults participating in PESS also have access to Medicaid. Depending on whether the young adult turned 18 while in the legal custody of the department, was adopted at 16 or 17, or was placed in guardianship at 16 or 17, will determine if the young adult's Medicaid is managed by the CBC.

Aftercare Services (Aftercare)

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

Due to the temporary nature of Aftercare Services and no definitive requirements for eligibility, other than aging out, analyzing outcomes is challenging. Still, the program is intended to provide support and resources; therefore, for the duration of services, the planned activities that occur will influence some or all outcome areas.

Outcome area: Increasing financial self-sufficiency

As previously noted, financial self-sufficiency can be achieved by taking steps to create a stable income. Young adults are offered financial literacy skills training through DFS and may request financial assistance through an Aftercare application. The amount of assistance must be for

specific purposes and are provided to the vendor for items like rent or utilities, until a young adult can successfully manage the full amount of assistance.

Although young adults are not required to work to go to school as an ongoing condition to eligibility, young adults must make efforts to complete activities to become self-sufficient. These types of activities as part of a comprehensive plan will help move the young adult toward financial self-sufficiency. The table on the next page provides the number of young adults that received Aftercare Services for SFY 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 and had a recorded period of employment.

Number of Young Adults Receiving Aftercare Services with recorded Employment, CBC, and SFY		
CBC	2017-2018	2018-2019
Big Bend Community Based Care	0	1
Brevard Family Partnership	3	0
ChildNet (Broward)	3	5
ChildNet (Palm Beach)	1	2
Children's Network of SW Florida	0	0
Citrus Family Care Network*	3	1
Communities Connected for Kids	1	3
Community Partnership for Children	3	3
Eckerd Connects (Pasco/Pinellas)	10	6
Eckerd Connects (Hillsborough)	13	8
Embrace Families**	6	4
Families First Network	3	3
Family Integrity Program	0	0
Family Support Services of North Florida	14	10
Heartland for Children	0	0
Kids Central	1	0
Kids First of Florida	0	0
Partnership for Strong Families	1	0
Safe Children Coalition	0	1
Statewide	62	47

Source: OCWDRU #1169, FSNF Data Repository

*Citrus Family Care Network was formerly OurKids of Miami-Dade/Monroe

**Embrace Families was formerly Community Based Care of Central Florida

Outcome area: Improving educational attainment

A young adult applying for Aftercare shall also complete CF-FSP 5400, Aftercare Services Plan. Filling out the form prompts the young adult and child welfare professional to specifically address education. The form guides in the determination of education needs, as well as postsecondary goals to include technical training. Ideally, the young adult will feel encouraged to set long term education attainment goals, recognizing the types of financial aid and the tuition exemption available to assist on their journey to self-sufficiency. The table on the next page portrays the number of young adults that received Aftercare during SFY 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 and had a recorded achievement of H.S. Diploma or GED.

Number of Young Adults that received Aftercare Services with H.S. Diploma or GED by CBC and SFY				
CBC	2017-2018		2018-2019	
	H.S. Diploma	GED	H.S. Diploma	GED
Big Bend Community Based Care	6	1	4	0
Brevard Family Partnership	2	7	5	4
ChildNet (Broward)	5	10	13	4
ChildNet (Palm Beach)	6	3	6	3
Children's Network of SW Florida	0	0	0	1
Citrus Family Care Network*	5	1	6	0
Communities Connected for Kids	7	3	10	10
Community Partnership for Children	0	0	0	0
Eckerd Connects (Pasco/Pinellas)	16	16	10	17
Eckerd Connects (Hillsborough)	18	40	22	35
Embrace Families**	16	9	12	9
Families First Network	0	2	3	2
Family Integrity Program	0	1	0	1
Family Support Services of North Florida	10	4	11	6
Heartland for Children	1	1	4	0
Kids Central	0	0	1	1
Kids First of Florida	0	0	0	0
Partnership for Strong Families	1	1	3	1
Safe Children Coalition	6	0	8	0
Statewide	99	99	118	94

Source: OCWDRU #1091, FSFN Data Repository
 *Citrus Family Care Network was formerly OurKids of Miami-Dade/Monroe
 **Embrace Families was formerly Community Based Care of Central Florida

Outcome area: Increasing connections to caring adults

The Aftercare Services Plan allows the young adult and child welfare professional to list the person(s) responsible for providing services. Through the entire planning process, supportive adults such as extended family, friends, clinical and child welfare professionals may be identified to help with accomplishing the documented goals. If possible, these connections to caring adults will continue to be cultivated throughout the young adult case, regardless of the program the young adult is linked to.

Outcome area: Reducing homelessness

Young adults participating in Aftercare Services may receive financial assistance to help secure housing and utilities. Depending where the young adult resides, the assistance may not adequately cover living expenses. Fortunately, CBCs can leverage community resources and partnerships to assist young adults in locating affordable housing in the cities where they are attending school.

Outcome area: Reducing high-risk behavior

Like the PESS program, Aftercare doesn't require the same structured oversight as EFC. The amount of contact with the child welfare professional assigned to the case will be limited to what has been established in the Aftercare Services Plan. Since the services are administered through the referral process, it is likely that the young adult will have contact with multiple providers. Follow-up on the outcome of the services referrals would be reviewed every three months, when needs are reassessed.

Outcome area: Improving access to health insurance

Young adults receiving Aftercare Services continue to receive Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Although Medicaid coverage continues until 26-years-old under ACA, the young adult is responsible for completing a Medicaid application and choosing a managed care plan.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

Since 2011, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services, requires states to survey a cohort of transitioning youth and young adults at ages 17, 19, and 21 for a longitudinal study. ACF utilizes a cohort for research that not only includes youth placed in licensed foster care but also those placed with relative and non-relative caregivers; essentially those placed in out-of-home care. Therefore, based on current and historical state policies regarding independent living program eligibility, a percentage of each cohort population were not or are not eligible for independent living services, making it difficult to determine program effectiveness from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey results. More complex analysis would be needed to decipher outcome information.

On October 1, 2019, the department began a new baseline year in which all youth turning 17 years of age in out-of-home care during the 2019-2020 federal fiscal year are invited to take a voluntary survey comprised of 20-22 federally mandated questions pertaining to areas such as: employment, education, homelessness, high risk activities, adult connections, and health insurance. Those 17-year old youth surveyed will become Cohort 4 and will be surveyed again at 19 and 21 years of age.

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, 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.

1. Contract Oversight

On-site contract monitoring is conducted by a team led by two representatives from the department's Contract Oversight Unit (COU) and supported by two other representatives from the department to include region and headquarters staff, and two representatives from peer CBCs. The CBC COU monitoring process requires an in-depth assessment of the system of care in seven critical areas of operation. The seven critical areas of operation are:

- Leadership and Governance
- Workforce Management
- Quality Management and Performance Improvement
- Placement Resources and Processes
- Practice
- Partner Relationships
- Community Relationships

Each critical area has subcategories that build the framework for the system analysis process used to evaluate whether a CBC is meeting the terms of the contract and meeting safety, permanency, and well-being goals for the children and young adults they serve. Relevant independent living elements are also incorporated into the conversation to elicit information as to the effectiveness of the services and program administration. These elements include, but are not limited to:

- Housing
- Mentoring and lifelong connections
- Education
- Employment
- Financial management
- Behavioral health
- Transition

A key piece of the system evaluation is the information gathered surrounding a CBC's internal performance improvement strategy, which evaluates how they use performance and quality data internally to develop improvement strategies. This includes how they evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their family support services programs; their safety management programs; and their safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. After an on-site monitoring, the information provided in the monitoring report drives the development of corrective action plans to address areas where the CBC needs improvement.

In SFY 2018-2019, the CBC monitoring team conducted on-site monitoring at nine CBCs:

- CBC of Central Florida (Embrace Families)
- Children's Network of Southwest Florida
- Sarasota YMCA
- Heartland for Children
- Big Bend Community Based Care
- Kids First of Florida
- Family Support Services of North Florida
- Communities Connected for Kids
- Brevard Family Partnership

During these on-site reviews, interviews were conducted with staff providing services to youth and young adults in transition. None of the CBCs that received an on-site monitoring had any corrective action related to this population. While there were no formal corrective action plans specific to this population, there were CBCs who had this identified as an area needing improvement. Additionally, some CBCs had this identified as an area of strength within their system of care. To access the Contract Monitoring Reports, visit:

http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/CBC_ContractMonitoringReports.shtml.

2. Financial Accountability

During SFY 2018-2019, 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 prescribed in 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 qualifications for the program in which the young adults have been approved.

In addition to the technical assistance provided and monthly payment reviews, quarterly reviews were performed. Payment records were selected for each CBC where the CBC provides all supporting documentation used to populate eligibility information in FSFN and the amount of financial assistance determined by the CBC to ensure the correct application of eligibility and financial requirements were completed; thereby, ensuring the payments made 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, and the agency's submitted Cost Allocation Plan. The Cost Allocation Plan identifies how the funds for each program will be spent during the year by the CBC and is reviewed and approved by the department. As needed, any identified fiscal issues are discussed with the CBC.

The legislature appropriates approximately \$29 million each SFY for independent living services. The total appropriation includes the cost of the case management associated with the delivery of services to young adults and the supplemental room and board payment to foster care parents for providing independent life skills and normalcy supports to youth ages 13 through 17. Total expenditures exceeded the \$29 million annually.

3. Appeals

Young adults applying for or receiving independent living services through EFC, PESS, or Aftercare Services have the right to receive notice of adverse action and to resolve issues of program eligibility through the fair hearing process pursuant to sections 39.6251(9) and 409.1451(4), F.S. The Office of Appeal Hearings reported that there were no appeals granted in SFY 2018-2019, upholding the program eligibility determinations made by CBCs.

Total Number of Independent Living Program Appeals

SFY 2017-18: 130
SFY 2018-19: 89

Number of EFC (Only) Appeals

SFY 2017-18: 7
SFY 2018-19: 9

Rule Promulgation

The following rules were adopted during SFY 2018-2019, in Florida Administrative Code:

65C-41.001, .002, .003, 41.002, .0031, .004, .005, and .006

The department amended Chapter 65C-41, F.A.C., to accomplish the following: (1) add definitions; (2) update forms and incorporate new forms; (3) clarify the rights of young adults with disabilities or mental health needs; and (4) add a new rule regarding supervised independent living. Definitions were added for extended foster care agreement, extended foster care voluntary placement agreement, shared living agreement, supervised living arrangement, and supervised independent living assessment. The following forms were updated or created: Extended Foster Care Agreement, Extended Foster Care Voluntary Placement Agreement, Supervised Independent Living Assessment, Shared Living Agreement, Notice of Discharge from Extended Foster Care, and Notice of Denial for Readmission into Extended Foster Care. Requirements for approving supervised living arrangements and assisting young adults with disabilities or mental health needs were added.

65C-42.001

The department clarified, and updated definitions related to Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Aftercare Services. The definition of “court-approved dependency guardian” was amended to include a permanent guardian and a permanent placement with a fit and willing relative. The definition of “designated staff” was amended to include child welfare professionals, as well as case managers, who handle all matters concerning Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Aftercare Services; the term “child welfare professionals” replaced the word “staff.”

65C-42.002

The department updated the Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Initial, Renewal and Reinstatement Application (form CF-FSP 5382) and added clarifying language regarding documentation requirements. The form clarified the PESS requirements to include information regarding ETV funding.

Department Plans

The department will continue partnering with CBCs on developing quality performance standards for the administration of EFC, PESS, and Aftercare Services. The standards developed will be finalized after acquiring feedback from stakeholders, most importantly former foster youth.

A workgroup emerged at the end of SFY 2018-2019, to begin discussing and developing clear statewide outcome goals and setting target benchmarks around the completion of key activities that are linked to the larger federal outcome areas. While most of the activities require specific action by the young adult program participants, accomplishment of tasks relies heavily on the young adults' supportive structure and access to services.

The quality standards for independent living programs will complement the department's vision in moving from a crisis response to a prevention orientation when working with the young adults transitioning to self-sufficiency.