



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

DATE: March 25, 2011
TO: Regional Directors
THROUGH: Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Operations
FROM: Jamie Self, Ed.D., Director of Family Safety
SUBJECT: Phase III, Independent Living Special Quality Assurance (QA) Review
ACTION REQUESTED: Review and Take Action as Needed
DUE DATE: None

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the findings of the Phase III, Independent Living Special QA Review regarding youth 13 through 16 years of age.

BACKGROUND: This is the third and final phase of a three part Quality Assurance (QA) Review of Independent Living Services provided to youth currently and formally in foster care. Phase I, completed in July 2009, focused on young adults formerly in foster care who were 18 through 22 years of age. Phase II was specific to youth who had reached their 17th birthday, but were not yet 18. Phase III, which is the subject of this report, is specific to youth living in a licensed foster care home who were 13 through 16 years of age at the time of the review. The objective of the review was to assess practice and quality of service delivery in the following six areas:

- 1) Ongoing Needs Assessments for Case Planning;
- 2) Pre-Independent Living Assessments;
- 3) Development of Educational and Career Path;
- 4) Participation in Normal Life Skills Activities;
- 5) Agency Monitoring of Youth Progress; and
- 6) Transition Planning.

ACTION REQUIRED: In brief, there are three actionable items identified as a result of this qualitative review. Although community-based care lead agencies should continue to look at all practice data specific to their case management agencies, the following three recommendations should be closely addressed at the local level:

- 1) Educational and career path plans should be based on a thorough pre-independent living assessment and modified as necessary throughout the length of stay in licensed foster care. The Florida Department of Education requires that all public middle school students create an Electronic Personal Education Planner (ePEP) as part of a Career and Education Planning course in order to be promoted to 9th grade. When possible, case workers should use the ePEP when assessing a youth's educational and career path plan.
- 2) Recent initiatives to promote and support normalcy for youth in licensed foster care should be continued at the state and local level.

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- 3) Regular staffings and multi-disciplinary staffings should be conducted to address education, life skills training, work goals, obstacles, and case progress, as well as identifying additional service needs.

In addition, child welfare staff should review the annual report prepared by the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) and remain abreast of recommendations to improve practice. These recommendations should be incorporated as appropriate into annual Quality Improvement Plans.

We recognize that since these reviews began, community-based care lead agencies have worked diligently to improve the service continuum for these youth. Appendix 1 provides a summary of many of these initiatives. We hope this information will be helpful with local quality improvement initiatives.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For additional information please contact Eleese Davis at (850.717.4650 or email: eleese_davis@dcf.state.fl.us) or Gail Perry 850.717.4676 or email: gail_perry@dcf.state.fl.us.