



Florida Department of Children and Families Independent Living Transition Services Outcome Measures and Oversight Activities January 2013

I. Background

Section 409.1451 requires the Department of Children and Families to 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. Florida's Independent Living Transition Services Program is outsourced to eighteen Community-Based Care lead agencies.

II. Purpose

This report provides information required in section 409.1451(6), 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 and compared with the performance of the Department on the same measures.
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. For the purposes of the first report, any rules adopted or proposed under this section must be included.

The majority of activities described in this report occurred during the period January through December 2012, unless otherwise noted.

Oversight of Florida's Independent Living Transition Services Program is also provided by the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC), which was created by the Florida Legislature with the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services.

III. Outcome Measures for Community-Based Care Lead Agencies

The Department has fully integrated five (5) baseline Independent Living measures into the Community-Based Care lead-agency contract template. Given that these five (5) measures are

currently classified as baseline measures, they do not currently have established targets or penalties associated with them. The five (5) baseline measures are:

1. Percentage of youth who have aged out of care completing high school or GED by 20 years of age.
2. Percentage of youth who have completed high school or GED and are involved in post secondary education.
3. Percentage of youth ages 18 and over receiving Independent Living services who have a job (including joining the military).
4. Percentage of young adults in safe housing.
5. Percentage of 17-year-old youth in licensed out-of-home care who had a transition plan signed by the youth and filed with the court.

Data collection, validation and general review associated with each of these five (5) baseline measures for the purpose of establishing performance targets remain ongoing. As the validity and effectiveness of each of the five (5) measures are reviewed, appropriate metrics will be fully integrated into the standard template for the Community-Based Care lead agency contract.

General Overview of My Services (former Independent Living Transitional Services Critical Checklist), National Youth in Transition Database

In 2012, the Department of Children and Families continued to contract with Connected by 25, a private vendor, for all survey collection and analysis services for youth currently residing in the foster care system as well as young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. The decision to contract these types of services is in large part driven by federal requirements and possible federal financial penalties associated with National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) requirements that a minimum number of young adults who have aged out of the foster care system be interviewed on a biannual basis.

My Services Survey

The My Services survey is an online survey tool that is delivered twice per year to youth between the ages of 13-17 who are currently residing in the foster care system. The My Services survey replaced the former paper-based Independent Living Transitional Services Critical Checklist and is now the primary tool utilized by the Department and Community-Based Care lead agencies for reviewing the overall quality and efficacy of services delivered to teens residing in the Florida Foster Care System. There are (3) three age-specific surveys that make up the My Services survey, and each of the three surveys is conducted and analyzed through a contract with Connected by 25.

Links to the each of the three (3) My Services age-specific questionnaires are provided below.

Ages Thirteen (13) to Fourteen (14)

http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/cbc/docs/2011_12/Independent%20Living%20-%20My%20Services%20Florida%20Questions%20Ages%2013-1.pdf

Ages Fifteen (15) to Sixteen (16)

http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/cbc/docs/2011_12/Independent%20Living%20-%20My%20Services%20Florida%20Questions%20Ages%2015-1.pdf

Age Seventeen (17)

http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/cbc/docs/2011_12/Independent%20Living%20-%20My%20Services%20Florida%20Questions%20Ages%2017%20%20.pdf

The fall 2012 My Services survey recently was completed, and more than 1,400 teens who are currently residing in the foster care system participated in the survey process. Data analysis and review of the fall 2012 survey results are currently ongoing, and a finalized report outlining findings should be posted to the Florida Department of Children and Families' Independent Living web site by spring 2013. Prior survey results, including those associated with the spring 2012 My Services survey, are currently available at the link provided below.

Florida Department of Children and Families Independent Living Web Site

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-livingarchive-data>

The use of the My Services survey tool offers the Department and Community-Based Care lead agencies with an opportunity to continue the process of aggressively analyzing which required Independent Living services are being delivered to teens in foster care. In addition, we will learn whether the teens view these services as being valuable and helpful into their adulthood.

National Youth in Transition Database

In February 2008, the final federal rule for the Chafee National Youth in Transition Database was promulgated. The National Youth in Transition Database, commonly referred to as NYTD, requires states to provide for youth to report their own perceptions of the services provided to them. Additionally, each state must report on all services provided to youth in foster care and young adults formerly in foster care every six months in the following areas: academic support; post-secondary educational support; career preparation; employment programs or vocational trainings; 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. Failure to comply with federal minimum National Youth in Transition Database survey requirements could result in the imposition of federal penalties. In 2012, the Department was found to be compliant with the National Youth in Transition data requirements and met all currently established federal requirements in this area.

Results for the 2012 National Youth in Transition Database survey are available at the link provided below.

Florida Department of Children and Families Independent Living Web Site

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-livingarchive-data>

IV. Departmental Oversight

For calendar year 2012, the Department provided oversight of independent living services through a two-part system. The Department's Contract Oversight Unit was responsible for monitoring the Community-Based Care lead agencies' compliance with s. 409.1451, F.S., and Florida Administrative Code, 65C-31, Services to Young Adults Formerly in the Custody of the Department. The Department's Quality Assurance System includes requirements for case file reviews to assess the delivery of services for children in the child welfare system.

- a. Contract Oversight:** The Contract Oversight Unit randomly selected cases of youth eligible to receive independent living services and young adults formerly in foster care and

conducted a file review to determine whether the requirements in Florida Statute and Florida Administrative Code were met. This included a review of eligibility requirements for these services. Deficiencies in cases or areas of concern with the delivery of independent living services were noted in reports prepared and submitted to the Department's contract managers and Department leadership. The contract managers determined whether the area of deficiency warranted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). If a CAP was necessary to address concerns, the community-based care lead agency was required to develop steps and processes to bring services into compliance with federal regulations, Florida Statute, Florida Administrative Code, and the contract.

Table 1 summarizes the monitoring of the Community-Based Care lead agencies for the 2012 calendar year, and the action taken by the Department to address deficiencies.

Table1: Contract Oversight Results of the Independent Living (IL) Program by Community-Based Care Lead Agency				
Circuit	CBC	Contract	Finding	Corrective Action Plan Status
1	Lakeview Center	AJ481	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
4	Kids First of Florida (Clay Baker Kids Net)	DJ035	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	No Corrective Action Plan required.
5	Kids Central, Inc.	PJL04	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
6	Eckerd Youth Alternatives	QJ20R	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
7	Community Partnership for Children	NJ205	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan completed.
7	St Johns County BOCC	NJ204	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
9	CBC of Central Florida	GJL57	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
10	Heartland for Children	TJ201	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
11, 16	Our Kids	KJ114	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
12	Sarasota Family YMCA	QJ2B0	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan in development.
15	Child and Family Connections	IJ701	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Contract terminated.
17	ChildNet	JJ212	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan completed.
18	CBC of Brevard	GJK46	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
18	CBC of Central Florida	GJK45	Monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
19	United for Families	ZJK84	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	Corrective Action Plan underway.
20	Children's Network of Southwest Florida	HJ90R	Some monitored IL requirements not met.	No Corrective Action Plan required.

- b. **Quality Assurance:** The Department's quality assurance system provides uniform Quality of Practice Standards for ongoing service provision by case management organizations. Data collected in reviewing these standards reflects or measures performance; it provides local administrations a "window into practice" in real-time, and helps focus quality improvement efforts at the local and state level.

Table 2 provides the statewide summary of performance for independent living standards. Individual reports by Community-Based Care lead agency can be found at: http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/qa/QA_Reports/Forms/AllItems.aspx

Table 2: Quality Assurance Findings Related to Independent Living Standards				
Item Number	Quality Assurance Standard	FY 2009-2010	FY 2010-2011	FY 2011-2012
44.0	If the case involves a youth who has reached 13 but not yet 15 years of age and he/she is living in a licensed, out-of-home care placement, a pre-independent living assessment was completed that identified service needs and services were provided. (applicable to licensed out-of-home care cases)	78%	87%	76%
45.0	If the child is 13 years of age or older and in licensed foster care, the case management agency provided guidance and assistance in developing an educational and career path that is based on the child's individual abilities and interests. (applicable to licensed out-of-home care cases)	78%	79%	86%
46.0	The teen-aged focus child is afforded opportunities to participate in normal life skills activities in the foster home and community that are reasonable and appropriate for his/her respective age or special needs. (applicable to licensed out-of-home care cases)	76%	72%	77%
47.0	For youth 15 years of age but not yet 18, the agency appropriately monitored the youth's progress toward successfully transitioning from foster care to independence through regular informative staffings.	78%	79%	75%

c. **Fiscal Oversight:** As required by s. 409.1451(5), F.S., each Community-Based Care lead agency submitted a plan to the Department in September 2012 addressing the following major components for the population of young adults formerly in foster care. These plans contain the following elements:

- The number of young adults to be served each month of the fiscal year;
- The number of young adults who will reach 18 years of age who will be eligible for the plan;
- The number of young adults who will reach 23 years of age and will be ineligible for the plan or who are otherwise ineligible during each month of the fiscal year;
- Staffing requirements and all related costs to administer the services and program;
- Payment to, or expenditures on behalf of, the eligible recipients;

- Costs of services provided to young adults through an approved plan for housing, transportation, and employment; reconciliation of these expenses and any additional related costs with the funds allocated for these services; and
- An explanation of and a plan to resolve any shortages or surpluses in order to end the fiscal year with a balanced budget.

These plans are being reviewed at the state office to address any areas of concern regarding fiscal management of independent living services. The plans serve as a continual tool to help project budget issues and to identify trends and/or concerns specific to budget management for service delivery to young adults formerly in foster care.

The Department has a Community-Based Care (CBC) Fiscal Oversight Unit that reports to the Assistant Secretary for Administration. This unit focuses on oversight of the fiscal components of the outsourced child welfare system. Department Administrative Services staff have conducted site visits to community-based care lead agencies to develop tools for monitoring and to provide technical assistance to community-based care lead agencies and the Department’s contract managers. This fiscal monitoring model leverages financial information required by contract and coordination of monitoring activities among the Department’s contract managers, the Office of Financial Management and the Contract Oversight Unit. This model has been successful in identifying areas of concern before any major findings occur. It has also been well-received by the Community-Based Care lead agencies as being less intrusive but still very helpful.

For calendar year 2012, the Department’s Community-Based Care Fiscal Oversight Unit provided fiscal monitoring, technical assistance and financial risk assessments for the following Community-Based Care lead agencies:

Table 3: 2012 Department of Children and Families Fiscal Monitoring, Technical Assistance and Financial Risk Assessments Provided to Community-Based Care Lead Agencies		
Circuit	CBC	Dates
7	Community Partnership for Children	Jan 25-27
1	Lakeview Center	Feb 16-17
4	Family Services of North Florida	Mar 6-7
9	CBC of Central Florida	Mar 28-29
20	Children's Network of Southwest Florida	Oct 2-3
12	Sarasota Family YMCA	Oct 3-4
11, 16	Our Kids	Oct 29-Nov 1
17	ChildNet	Dec 18-19

All Community-Based Care lead agencies that received fiscal monitoring, technical assistance and financial risk assessments over the course of the 2012 calendar year were found to be in compliance with their approved Independent Living cost allocation plan for reporting Chafee Administration costs.

V. Rules Promulgation

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

- Chapter 65C-28, Out-of-Home Care, providing direction for delivery of services to youth in foster care. Specifically, 65C-28.009, Adolescent Services, implements s. 409.1451(3), F.S.
- Chapter 65C-30, General Child Welfare Provisions, providing direction on delivery of services to youth under supervision of the Department.
- Chapter 65C-31, Services to Young Adults Formerly in the Custody of the Department, providing direction on the delivery of services to young adults, specifically those provided by s. 409.1451(5), F.S.

During the 2010 legislative session, the Department of Children and Families was given rule making authority to govern the payments for services to youth or young adults provided under section 409.1451, Florida Statutes. No rules related to Independent Living were promulgated by the Department in 2012. However, areas that may require potential revision were reviewed and analyzed throughout the course of the year in preparation for initiating the rule-making process in 2013. The following areas were reviewed and analyzed:

- 65C-31-001- Definitions
 - Technical changes.
- 65C-31.002 - Case Management for Young Adults
 - Specifies not an entitlement program;
 - Case manager and services worker must coordinate; and
 - Addresses technical issues raised by the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee (JAPC).
- 65C-31.004 – Road to Independence Program
 - Technical changes to replace “scholarship” with Program to conform to statutes;
 - Deletes the language authorizing the Secretary to waive requirements as the Secretary does not have authority to waive requirements established by Department of Education;
 - Includes Agency for Workforce Innovations’ (AWI) Eligible Training Providers list;
 - Technical changes and clarifies language of the Road To Independence Program; and
 - Clarifies eligibility for Food Stamp Program as requested by ACCESS.
- 65C-31.005 - Transitional Support Services
 - Technical changes.
- 65C-31.006 - Documentation Requirements
 - Requires case manager to contact education institution to verify full-time enrollment and attendance for General Educational Development Program; and
 - Removes language requiring the General Education Development exam to be taken twice a year as JAPC maintains the Department does not have authority to require the student to take the exam twice a year.
- 65C-31.007 – High School Needs Assessment
 - Requires Social Security be included in determining needs; and
 - Removes language describing the needs assessment.

- 65C-31.008 – Post Secondary Needs Assessment
 - Young adults in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or correctional facilities are not eligible for RTI but may be eligible for Aftercare or Transitional Support Services;
 - Requires Social Security be included in determining needs;
 - Adds a Work Search Record Form, developed by the Department, as requested by JAPC because the current language delegates authority to AWI to establish criteria for the RTI program;
 - Requires the Department to informally review changes in stipend amounts and denials prior to taking action;
 - Technical changes in listing required forms; and
 - Changes requested by Attorney General's Office to: change administrative process in handling fair hearings to reflect current practice and provide a copy of case record upon request rather than automatically.
- 65C-31.010 – Jurisdictional and Service Requirements
 - Deletes reference to an obsolete form;
 - Technical changes to replace “scholarship” to Program to conform to statutes; and
 - Deletes attachments included in the rule to incorporate by reference and provides forms section on-line.
- 65C-31.011 – Budget Management
 - Requires Department to review and approve community-based care lead agencies' spending plans;
 - Defines availability of funds as unexpended state funds from prior years;
 - Establishes Review Team; and
 - Requires Departmental review twice a year and validation of payments; any disallowance must be repaid by the CBC to the Department.

VI. Summary of Other Activities

Since 2010, the Department has implemented more fiscal accountability and oversight activities for the Community-Based Care lead agencies and Independent Living Program. However, there is more work to be done with this population of youth to ensure a successful transition from foster care to adulthood. The Department will continue to work with stakeholders throughout the state to promote evidence-based practices for youth in the foster care system. Specific initiatives and practices target youth striving towards independence including “Everybody’s A Teacher”, Florida Youth Leadership Academy, Crossover Youth Practice Model, Casey Program Permanency Round Tables and Permanency Values Training, trauma-informed care, and family-centered practice.

In addition:

- The Independent Living Program Office conducts monthly conference calls with Independent Living staff and case managers statewide to provide training and technical assistance.
- The Independent Living Program Office provides oversight on monthly conference calls with the Department and Community-Based Care contract monitoring units and provides technical assistance to put effective Corrective Action Plans (CAP) in place.
- The Department’s Fostering Florida’s Future and Quality Parenting initiatives are designed to recruit and support foster parents and help ensure the success of children in foster care.

- The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was recently amended to provide an exception for child welfare agencies to access educational records for children in the foster care system. The Departments of Education and Children and Families have developed a strong working relationship that will be made even more mutually beneficial through the passage of this amendment. Both agencies are working collaboratively with local school districts to develop measures that can be electronically imported into the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) system and available to inform case work, as well as outcome reporting. The Department anticipates beginning the design and development of these interfaces in 2013.
- Secretary David Wilkins appointed 18 new members to the legislatively created Independent Living Services Advisory Council. The Advisory Council provides oversight of the program by reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services. Information about the Advisory Council, its members, activities, subcommittees, as well as meeting dates and locations are provided on the link below.

Independent Living Services Advisory Council Web Site

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