



**DCF'S RESPONSE TO
INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT**

Department of Children and Families
Office of Family Safety

December 31, 2006

Lucy D. Hadi
Secretary

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Governor

**DCF Response to 2006
Independent Living Services Advisory Council Report**

Statutory Authority: Paragraph 409.1451(7)(b), F. S.

*“This advisory council report shall be submitted by December 31st of each year that the council is in existence and **shall be accompanied by a report from the department which identifies the recommendations of the advisory council and either describes the department's actions to implement these recommendations or provides the department's rationale for not implementing the recommendations.**”*

Recommendations for the Legislature:

The following are the 4 recommendations for the Legislature contained in the 2006 Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) Report, followed by the department's response to each recommendation:

(1) Develop legislation that removes the barriers for youth aging out of foster care to obtain a permanent drivers license, limit liability and provide access to vehicle insurance.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. Enactment of legislation will aid in eliminating barriers for youth in foster care and assist them to obtain employment skills; participate in an array of educational opportunities and extra-curricular activities; and engage in other normal, age-appropriate activities. For the 2007 session, the department intends to propose or support legislation regarding this issue.

(2) Continue to allocate general revenue funds in addition to the minimum match to maximize federal funding and approve and appropriate the request of the department of Children and Families for an additional \$18,653,869 for Independent Living Services.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department has submitted a legislative budget request for these funds to meet the demands of this expanding program. Department staff and ILSAC members have and will continue to work together to analyze and address funding concerns.

(3) Reenact and allocate funding for Section 17 of the 2006 approved HB 7173 that adds children who are placed with a court approved non-relative or guardian after reaching 16 years of age and having spent a minimum of 6 months in foster care as eligible recipients for services under Subparagraph (5) Services for Young Adults Formally in Foster Care of this statute. The legislation passed in 2006, limits this expanded eligibility to take effect only if there is specific funding to accommodate the added workload. Funding was not provided in 2006 and the provisions of Section 17 did not take effect.

Response: The department recognizes that expansion of this program as above will require additional funding. This issue is not part of the department's 2007 legislative budget priorities. Based on workload estimates for 06/07 for the existing eligible population, the department anticipates that community-based care agencies may be required to limit payments to young adults based on the available funding for the 06/07 fiscal year. Implementation of this legislation with accompanying funding and in concert with the emphasis on permanency planning practices in recommendation #6 below is expected to result in improved outcomes for children and young adults formerly in foster care.

(4) Develop legislation for the removal of disabilities of minors executing agreements for banking services, for the purpose of ensuring that a youth in foster care will be able to secure financial services.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. Many community-based care agencies have been able to develop resources that allow youth in foster care to obtain financial services, however enactment of this legislation would provide a mandate for statewide implementation. The department and the ILSAC will continue to work together to provide training about independent living mandates in law and related normalcy practices/policies.

Recommendations for the Department:

The following are the 10 recommendations for the department contained in the 2006 Independent Living Services Advisory Council Report, followed by the department's response to each recommendation:

(1) Develop a program planning and delivery reporting tool for determining appropriate information regarding the independent living services, outcomes, and fiscal implications on projected and actual delivery of independent living services for all community based care lead agencies (CBC). It is recommended that DCF convene a group that includes representatives from at least DCF, ILSAC, CBC's and Florida Coalition for Children.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department has conducted an analysis of the legislatively mandated young adult services plans submitted for the 06/07 fiscal year and shared the results with the ILSAC. The department has committed to work with an ILSAC committee to develop a tool or tools for the 07/08 fiscal year as above.

(2) Develop a centralized clearinghouse for approved technical assistance, training, resources and best practice for all stakeholders on all issues pertinent to independent living. The ILSAC is recommending that the Department coordinate the development and monitoring of this clearinghouse with the ILSAC.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department currently employs one staff member dedicated to independent living programmatic issues and one staff member dedicated to fiscal issues including independent living budget. The department is pursuing new means for offering technical assistance to community-based care lead agencies and subcontractors including virtual consultant resources and practice/policy consultation resources through a state university. The department will work with ILSAC to accomplish the above recommendation as resources permit.

(3) Include ILSAC members as well as youth representatives in the QA process directly relating to independent living services

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department will work with the ILASC and the community-based care providers to determine the most effective process for accomplishing this recommendation. The department has implemented a 3 tier monitoring process involving a first level of review conducted by the community-based care provider and the second and third levels of review validated or conducted by department staff. There are multiple opportunities for ILSAC members and youth representatives to participate in the quality assurance process at the local, zone and/or state level.

(4) Establish a deadline for the execution of the Department of Education (DOE), Agency for Workforce Innovation(AWI) and Department of Children and Families agreements in compliance with Florida Statutes §39.0016 and require an implementation plan.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department is in the process of obtaining reports from the district administrators regarding the status of each 67 counties in the state about these local agreements. A statewide report will be compiled in January 2007 and the department will work with ILSAC to establish a deadline for execution.

(5) Support the continuation of the Strengthening Youth Partnerships (SYP) venue to increase cross agency collaboration among state and local organizations to enhance the knowledge of professionals working with foster youth and expand efforts to ensure that foster youth providers and foster youth are aware of and accessing available educational and employment services through Regional Workforce Boards, their local websites and the One-Stop Career Centers.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. Currently, the department has two representatives on the SYP group and has been involved in local meetings as well as a national meeting in Atlanta. The SYP group is currently planning to participate in the Workforce Florida conference at the end of January by facilitating a youth employment track entitled 'Strengthening Youth Partnerships in Business.' The

department's representatives will assist with facilitation and providing information to the community-based care providers to develop awareness about workforce resources.

(6) Establish permanency planning as a priority for youth aging out of foster care that results in permanent "family" and supports. Components of this recommendation should include:

(a) Implementation of the rules and guidelines for normal age appropriate behaviors so that connections in the community can be preserved and enhanced.

(b) Address the barriers relating to foster youth obtaining a permanent drivers license and the liability and insurance premiums.

(c) Investigate the youth directed team decision making model for development of a family support network that addresses permanency. This model may involve birth families, siblings, community members in all placement decisions. Permanency decisions should continue to include reunification, adoption, guardianship, kinship care and other non traditional permanency options.

Response: The department concurs with the recommendation. The department is in the process of rule promulgation for the licensing of foster families and child placing agencies. The target date for implementation of the licensing rule is spring 2007. Guidance on normalcy for children in foster care is included in the revised rules. The department commits to work with ILSAC to investigate the decision making model above and to provide and/or arrange training regarding the above recommendations.

(7) Develop and implement electronic benefits transfer options for allowances, aftercare or RTI payments as required by statute 409. 451(5)(d) Section 2.

Response: The department commits to explore this recommendation with community-based care providers. Section 409.1451(5)(d)2., F. S., provides, "After the completion of aftercare support services that satisfy the requirements of sub-subparagraph (a)1.h., payment of awards under the Road-to-Independence Program shall be made by **direct deposit** to the recipient..." While the department supports the provision of direct deposit services to young adults receiving benefits, the community-based care (CBC) agencies operate and maintain the payment systems for these benefits. A collaboration with CBCs and ILSAC is needed to implement this recommendation.

(8) Support the proposed pilot of a Guardian Scholars Program and encourage expansion in other post secondary educational institutions.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department supports the implementation of the proposed pilot of a Guardian Scholars Program and supports the expansion into other post-secondary institutions. The department will work

with the ILSAC and the National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy Group on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care to determine the best way in which to support this program pilot.

(9) Support the development and implementation of a transitional living or subsidized independent living housing experience for those youth aging out of foster care at age 17 who will not have the option of remaining in a foster care family home or in a group home to insure a smoother transition from foster home or group home living to independent living.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department's homelessness prevention program will be tapped to assist ILSAC and other stakeholders accomplish this recommendation. In addition, the NGA group has identified development of housing resources as a primary objective. Collaboration with a variety of public and private resources and stakeholders is necessary to achieve the desired result.

(10) Develop a data collection, analysis and reporting mechanism for the outcome measures required by federal law and funding source(Chafee) that have been issued by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)as well as the expanded outcomes recommended by the ILSAC in 2005.

Response: The department concurs with this recommendation. The department is obligated to comply with the ACF direction regarding data collection and outcome measure reporting. At this time, the ACF has issued a "proposed" rule regarding outcome measures and data collection. An implementation date has not been formally published. However, there is speculation that the rule will be effective in late 2007 or early 2008. As resources permit, the department will work to implement the outcome measures and the expanded outcome measures recommended by the ILSAC in 2005. Significant change to the state's SACWIS system, Florida Safe Families Network, is anticipated. This recommendation will also require considerable collaboration with the community-based care providers to implement data collection systems.