

2013

Independent Living Services Advisory Council



2013
Report of Independent Living Services
for Florida's Foster Youth

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Background

Legislative Action

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (1999)

In 1999, the federal government enacted the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act. This legislation gave states increased funding to provide foster teens and young adults that have “aged out” of the foster care system with better access to programs that are designed to promote the development of adult self-sufficiency. Available Independent Living training opportunities, programmatic supports, and direct services covered by the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act include: educational training and supports; preparation for post-secondary education; daily life skills training; employment training; substance abuse services; pregnancy prevention and preventive health activities; and programs that are designed to connect foster teens and young adults that have aged out of the foster care system with positive and permanent adult mentors.

Road-to-Independence Act (2002)

In 2002, Florida passed the Road-to-Independence Act. This state based program established 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 Road-to-Independence (RTI) Program is also designed to provide direct stipend payments to young adults that have aged out of the foster care system while they pursue fulltime educational opportunities in the areas of continuing adult education (GED), vocational training/certification, or post-secondary associate/bachelor degrees.

Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act (2013)

In 2013, Florida passed the Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act which allows for young adults in or formerly in foster care to voluntarily extend their time in foster care up to the age of 21. The young adults must be attending school on a full time basis, working a minimum of 80 hours per month, or have a recognized disability that would prevent full-time participation in educational or employment opportunities. The act limits the use of Road-to-Independence payments to post-secondary educational opportunities and shifts life skills training responsibilities to foster parent and group home providers. The act also eliminates the categories of Subsidized Independent Living and Transitional Support Services. The effective date for the act is January 1, 2014.

Number of Teens in Out-of-Home Care, Accessing Services, and Removals of 17 year old Teens

- **4,900** - Approximate number of teens between the ages of 13-17 residing in out-of-home care placement on any given day over the past year.

- **2,355** - Approximate number of young adults accessing Road-to-Independence services on any given day over the past year.
- **357** - Total removals involving teens that are 17 years of age (2-3% of the statewide annual total).

Independent Living Transition Services

The Florida Department of Children and Families contracts with 18 Community-Based Care Lead Agencies in Florida to provide Independent Living services for current and former foster youth and young adults. As set forth in statute, six categories of Independent Living services are currently available in Florida including:

- Preindependent Living Services
- Life Skills Services
- Subsidized Living Services
- Aftercare Support Services
- Transitional Support Services
- Road-to-Independence Program

Preindependent Living Services

Preindependent Living Services are primarily centered on general life skills training and educational services that are designed to support and promote educational attainment and post-secondary educational goal setting. Services are limited to youth in the foster care system, between the ages of 13-14, who are currently placed in out-of-home care. The services available include general life skills training, educational field trips and educational conferences.

Life Skills Services

Life Skills Services are general services that provide youth in the foster care system with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills needed to function as an independent adult should they “age out” of the foster care system. Services are limited to youth in foster care, between the ages of 15-17 years, who are currently placed in out-of-home care. The services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Banking and budgeting skills
- Interviewing skills
- Parenting skills and employment training
- Educational support
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling

Prior to a child “aging out” of the foster care system there is an extensive judicial review process that is required to occur within 3 months of a foster care child turning 17. Required documents and information that must be covered and/or addressed prior to this required court hearing include ensuring that:

- The youth has a current Medicaid card and all information necessary to apply for Medicaid coverage once they reach 18.
- The youth has a certified copy of their birth certificate.
- The youth has a Florida's driver's license or a Florida identification card.
- The youth has all necessary information needed to apply for Social Security Insurance benefits payments, if eligible.
- The youth has information and training related to budgeting skills, interview skills, and parenting skills.
- The youth has received information regarding the Road-to-Independence Program, including eligibility requirements, forms, and assistance in completing the forms.
- The youth receives information confirming that those who qualify for the Road-to-Independence Program may continue to reside with their foster family or group care provider or a different foster family or group care provider.
- The youth has an active checking and savings account and has received essential banking skill training.
- The youth has received information on public assistance and how to apply.
- The youth has a clear understanding of where they will be living when they turn 18 and how they intend to pay for living expenses.
- The youth has been told that they have the right to request extended jurisdiction of the juvenile court for an additional year.
- The youth has been encouraged to attend all juridical review hearings over the course of the next year.

Subsidized Independent Living Services

Subsidized Independent Living Services are financial support payments made under the control of an approved and monitored budget to youth residing in foster care who have demonstrated a high degree of maturity that allows the youth to live on their own independent daily adult supervision. Only youth in the foster care system, between the ages of 16-17 years, who have demonstrated a high degree of maturity are considered for eligibility in this program. The minimum standards for demonstrating the necessary level of maturity for placement in this program include attainment of stable employment, attending school fulltime while maintaining high grades, and the youth has no history of behavioral issues.

Aftercare Support Services

Aftercare Support Services are temporary and/or emergency support payments and services that are designed to prevent homelessness and/or meet the immediate needs of young adults formerly in foster care. The amount of funds available is contingent on the availability of funds. Should the need of services appear to be more long-term in nature the young adult is required to apply for Transitional Support Services. Eligibility for these services is limited to young adults formerly in foster care, between the ages of 18-22 years, that have "aged out" of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. The services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Temporary financial assistance such as emergency payments to prevent homelessness, termination of utilities or approved car repairs
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Mental health services and substance abuse counseling
- Life skills classes, including credit management and preventative health activities
- Parenting classes
- Job skills training

Transitional Support Services

Transitional Support Services are short-term services that are available to young adults formerly in foster care who are able to demonstrate a critical need for service supports that are designed to develop a personal support system and allow them to achieve self-sufficiency. Services delivered under this heading are subject to the development of a specific case plan that is subject to a minimum 3 month review. Eligibility is limited to young adults formerly in foster care between the ages of 18-22 years that have “aged out” of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. The types of services available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Financial assistance
- Housing
- Counseling
- Employment
- Education
- Mental health counseling
- Disability assistance
- Other services, if the young adult demonstrates that the services are “critical” to achieve self-sufficiency

Road-to-Independence Program

The Road-to-Independence Program provides educational support payments to former foster care young adults that are enrolled full-time in a certified continuing adult education class or post-secondary institution. Students with a diagnosed disability are eligible under part-time attendance in a certified continuing adult education class or post-secondary institution. The current maximum allowable monthly stipend payment may not exceed \$1,256 per month with payment totals subject to a needs based assessment. All Road-to-Independence educational support payments are subject to an annual review that reviews the students financial need, attendance, and academic progress. Program eligibility is limited to former foster care young adults who are residents of the State of Florida between the ages of 18-22 that have “aged out” of an out-of-home placement or who were adopted or placed with an approved guardian after reaching the age of 16. Young adults over the age of 22 are only eligible to receive support payments if they applied for support payments prior to their 21st birthday.

Youth Engagement and Advocacy

Through direct participation on Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet's Youth Commission current and former youth in foster care are given the opportunity to develop and advocate on a variety of issues that directly impact state agency efforts such as the Child and Family Services Reviews process and the agency improvement planning efforts.

Florida Youth SHINE continues to engage current and former youth in foster care across the state of Florida. In 2013, the twelve chapters held numerous local meetings and have partnered with, or served as representatives on local Youth Advisory/Advocacy Boards.

The Florida Youth Leadership Academy VI met in the spring of 2013. Youth participated in the program which focused on developing leadership and advocacy skills designed to help engage foster youth in business, government and education. The program is jointly sponsored by the Department of Children and Families and Connected by 25.

Current and former youth in foster care continued to provide leadership and advocacy for all children currently residing within the foster care system through legislative testimony, meetings, and various efforts.

Overview of Available Survey Data

Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist (2007-2010)

In 2007, Florida created the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist. This survey was designed to analyze and capture how those youth that had aged out of foster care (ages 18-22) were doing in establishing adult self-sufficiency. Current foster teens (ages 13-17) were also surveyed in an effort to get a better understanding of how well foster teens are being prepared for the possibility of aging out of foster care as well as to get a better understanding of how foster teens viewed the overall quality of services provided by the foster care system. The paper based Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist was last administered in 2010 and has since been replaced by the following three separate online surveys.

Federal National Youth in Transition Database (2011-current)

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey is an 88 question federally required survey. The federal NYTD survey is administered every other year by Connected by 25 to current and former foster teens in predetermined cohorts of 17, 19, and 21 years in an online format. The objective of the survey is to gain a better understanding of how this population is moving towards achieving the goal of adult self-sufficiency. Categories and questions covered by the survey addresses areas related to health, housing and transportation, education, employment, and involvement with the juvenile/criminal justice system.

Florida National Youth in Transition Database (2011-current)

In an effort to ensure that all of the federally required NYTD survey populations were being properly tracked Florida made the decision to have Connected by 25 administer the federal NYTD survey. The survey is administered on an annual basis to all former foster care youth (ages 18-22) that could be located and were willing/able to complete the 88 question survey. The survey is administered in an online format and mirrors the categories and questions covered by the federal NYTD survey.

My Services (2011-current)

My Services is a 200+ question online survey that is administered by Connected by 25 on a biannual basis (spring and fall) that attempts to survey all foster teens (ages 13-17). The survey provides general information on how well teens are being prepared for adult self-sufficiency as well as how they view the overall quality of services that are being provided by the foster care system. Categories and questions covered by the survey included:

- Case management practices and general documentation requirements
- Educational attainment services and progression planning
- Employment preparation and employment supports
- Financial literacy and life skills training
- General foster care support and quality
- Ability to participate in normal teen activities
- Health/dental care services
- Involvement with the juvenile/criminal justice system
- Preparation for aging out of the foster care system

Survey Results for Teens 13-17

Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and My Services

The following survey findings are derived from a combination of both the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and the My Services surveys. Though not all of the questions contained within both these surveys are identical, there is enough available information contained to allow for a very general review of how foster teens are being prepared for adult self sufficiency as well as how they view the overall quality of services provided by the foster care system.

Unless otherwise noted, all results listed below for 2007-2010 are derived from the annual Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and all 2013 results are derived from the biannual My Services survey.

Education

Survey results indicate that nearly three-fourths of foster teens reported that their grades and report cards were reviewed by their placement or caseworker. The surveys also indicated that teens appear to be unaware or disconnected from the educational planning process given that only about one-third to one-half of the respondents indicated they had an Education and Career Path Plan or Individualized Education Plan. Teens also indicated that school stability appears to be a major problem with nearly one-half of all teens reporting they had changed schools within the past year.

| Education | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Caseworker reviews school grades and report cards | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 73% | 71% | 69% | 72% | 71% |
| | Yes | | | | | 1,139 | 1,204 | 1,189 | 1,035 | 943 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth has an Education & Career Path Plan [This may be your EPEP] | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 52% | 40% | 35% | 34% | 36% |
| | Yes | | | | | 818 | 681 | 599 | 491 | 475 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth has an Individualized Education Plan [IEP] | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 43% | 43% | 41% | 43% | 41% |
| | Yes | | | | | 669 | 723 | 709 | 622 | 543 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth has changed schools at least once during the school year | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 47% | 30% | 47% | 31% | 49% |
| | Yes | | | | | 734 | 506 | 800 | 440 | 650 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |

Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and age 13-17 for all other years.

Employment

Only a very small percentage of foster teens reported that they are currently employed (7%). However, nearly one-half of foster teens indicated they are being given the opportunity to earn money through alternative activities such as baby-sitting or yard work. One troubling finding from the survey is that only about one-half of surveyed foster teens indicated that they have received formalized training on how to apply and interview for a job.

| Employment | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Currently employed | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | 7% | 5% | 4% | 8% | 7% | 6% | 8% | 7% |
| | Yes | | | | 64 | 95 | 83 | 74 | 76 | 66 |
| | Total | | | | 1,726 | 1,198 | 1,221 | 1,199 | 1,013 | 930 |

| <i>Employment Continued</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Earns extra money by babysitting, mowing lawns, cleaning yards and other activities | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | | 74% | 75% | 65% | 48% | 49% |
| | Yes | | | | | 532 | 789 | 794 | 690 | 649 |
| Total | | | | | | 1,361 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| <i>Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17 all Others</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Completed a life skills training program on how to get a job-including job interviewing skills, completing a job application and resume | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | | 47% | 55% | 46% | 56% | 55% |
| | Yes | | | | | 417 | 439 | 330 | 356 | 296 |
| Total | | | | | | 883 | 798 | 711 | 638 | 453 |
| <i>Only asked of youth age 15-16</i> | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth ages 14-17 Spring 2010 and age 13-17 for all other years.

Health and Dental Care

Eighty-five percent of foster teens indicate that they are receiving the medical care that they need and a similar number reported that they have had a dental exam within the last year. Teens who reported that they were currently taking a prescription medication indicate that they have a good understanding of their medication's possible side effects. The percentage of respondents reporting that they are receiving needed mental health was extremely high (88%) but needed substance abuse services was not nearly as strong with only about two-thirds (66%) reporting that they feel they are getting the substance services that they need.

| Health and Dental Care | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Youth receiving needed medical care | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | No, I am receiving the medical care I need | | | | | 86% | 84% | 86% | 89% | 85% |
| | No, I am receiving the medical care I need | | | | | 1,338 | 1,435 | 1,479 | 1,218 | 1,124 |
| Total | | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth receiving needed mental health care | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 87% | 88% | 85% | 88% | 88% |
| | Yes | | | | | 934 | 969 | 897 | 784 | 734 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,072 | 1,098 | 1,057 | 891 | 836 |

| <i>Health and Dental Care continued</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Youth receiving substance abuse treatment services | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | | 61% | 57% | 61% | 63% | 66% |
| | Yes | | | | | 345 | 334 | 353 | 317 | 299 |
| | Total | | | | | 568 | 569 | 579 | 499 | 451 |
| Youth taking prescription medication | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | | 44% | 47% | 44% | 47% | 49% |
| | Yes | | | | | 682 | 793 | 753 | 680 | 646 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth who have seen a Dentist in the Last Year | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | 72% | 85% | 85% | 86% | 88% | 89% |
| | Yes | | | | 893 | 1,330 | 1,448 | 1,472 | 1,269 | 1,171 |
| | Total | | | | 1,237 | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Youth who have had an Eye Exam in the Last Year | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | | 44% | 81% | 82% | 68% | 71% | 66% |
| | Yes | | | | 540 | 1,271 | 1,195 | 1,164 | 1,029 | 873 |
| | Total | | | | 1,237 | 1,560 | 1,460 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |

Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and youth age 13-17 for all other years.

Normalcy

Teens in foster care continue to report that the effort to establish a more normal living environment within the foster care system is still lagging. The percentage of teens that reported that they have a written approved activities plan remains in the 65 percent range. Compliance with statutory requirements that youth in foster receive a weekly allowance also appears to have improved slightly to 57% in 2013. Teens that reported that they have a Florida Identification (41%), Learners Permit (9%), or Drivers' License (3%) were low.

| Normalcy | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Youth has a written plan for participation in activities | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 33% | 44% | 52% | 66% | 64% | 68% | 62% | 63% | 66% |
| | Yes | | | | 803 | 1,003 | 1,153 | 1,056 | 914 | 877 |
| | Total | | | | 1,216 | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| <i>Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17 all others.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |

| Youth can spend time with friends WITHOUT adult supervision. | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
|---|----------------|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 74% | 67% | 65% | 65% | 62% |
| | Yes | | | | | 1,153 | 1,130 | 1,117 | 945 | 822 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| <i>Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17 all others.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Normalcy Continued</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Youth can spend the night with friends from school or social group. | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 51% | 51% | 45% | 46% | 46% |
| | Yes | | | | | 650 | 443 | 542 | 467 | 426 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,269 | 867 | 1,199 | 1,013 | 930 |
| <i>Only asked of youth age 15-17 except for Fall 2011 age 16-17.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Receives a personal allowance each week. | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 54% | 55% | 53% | 56% | 57% |
| | Yes | | | | | 845 | 938 | 901 | 810 | 758 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| <i>Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |

| Have a Florida Identification | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
|---|----------------|------|------|------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | 38% | 40% | 39% | 40% | 41% |
| | Yes | | | | | 593 | 687 | 675 | 572 | 540 |
| | Total | | | | | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| <i>Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17 all others.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Have a Learners Permit | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | | 11% | 10% | 9% | 9% |
| | Yes | | | | | | 130 | 117 | 93 | 88 |
| | Total | | | | | | 1,221 | 1,199 | 1,013 | 930 |
| <i>Responses by youth age 15-17.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed a driver's education course | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 6% | 7% | 11% | 8% | 5% | 13% | 12% | 14% | 17% |
| | Yes | | | | 81 | 40 | 162 | 139 | 103 | 110 |
| | Total | | | | 955 | 853 | 1,221 | 1,199 | 742 | 687 |
| <i>Only asked of youth age 16-17.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Have a Driver's License | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | | | | | | 7% | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| | Yes | | | | | | 57 | 22 | 15 | 20 |
| | Total | | | | | | 867 | 862 | 742 | 687 |
| <i>Source: My Services Survey - Only asked of youth age 16-17.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |

Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

More than one-quarter (28%) of foster teens report that they have been arrested within the last year or are currently under some type of Department of Juvenile Justice supervision.

| Juvenile Justice System Involvement | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Been arrested in the past 12 months | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 10% | 28% | 30% | 30% | 29% | 27% | 28% | 29% | 28% |
| | Yes | 405 | 841 | 663 | 514 | 454 | 467 | 482 | 419 | 366 |
| | Total | 3,897 | 3,004 | 2,176 | 1,726 | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |
| Currently on probation or under DJJ supervision | Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | Not Asked | 42% | 23% | 24% | 21% | 21% | 22% | 23% | 23% |
| | Yes | Not Asked | 1,252 | 505 | 407 | 333 | 364 | 379 | 330 | 308 |
| | Total | Not Asked | 2,982 | 2,163 | 1,710 | 1,560 | 1,699 | 1,712 | 1,441 | 1,319 |

Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 14-17 Spring 2010 and 13-17.

Of those teens who report being arrested within the last year, more than one-third (38%) are age 13. Thirty-five percent of the teens are age 15, 33% are age 16, 32% are age 17 and about one-fifth (21%) of the teens are age 14.

| Juvenile Justice System Involvement by Age | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Been arrested in the past 12 months | Age | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | Total |
| | Percentage Yes | 38% | 21% | 35% | 33% | 32% | 28% |
| | Yes | 37 | 43 | 86 | 92 | 108 | 366 |
| | Total | 183 | 206 | 243 | 300 | 387 | 1,319 |
| Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 13-17. | | | | | | | |
| Currently on probation or under DJJ supervision | Age | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | Total |
| | Percentage Yes | 12% | 15% | 30% | 25% | 27% | 23% |
| | Yes | 22 | 31 | 74 | 75 | 106 | 308 |
| | Total | 183 | 206 | 243 | 300 | 387 | 1,319 |
| Source: My Services Survey - Responses by youth age 13-17. | | | | | | | |

Survey Results for Young Adults 18-22

Florida National Youth in Transition Database Survey

The following survey findings are derived from a combination of both the Independent Living and Transition Critical Services Checklist and the Florida National Youth in Transition Database surveys. Though not all of the questions contained within both of these surveys are identical, there is enough available information contained to allow for a very general review of how young adults that have aged out of the foster care system are progressing towards self-sufficiency.

Education

More than one-half (56%) of young adults formerly in foster care reported that they graduated or received a GED. Additionally, a very small percentage (5%) of the young adults reported that they had completed post-secondary education. Increasing both percentages for these areas remain priorities.

| Education | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Completed Grade 12 or Graduation Equivalency Diploma | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 52% | 48% | 48% | 54% | 57% | 56% |
| | Yes | 979 | 744 | 568 | 1,093 | 1,041 | 1,011 |
| | Total | 1,887 | 1,547 | 1,180 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Completed Post Secondary Education | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 5% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 7% | 5% |
| | Yes | 86 | 48 | 33 | 54 | 65 | 96 |
| | Total | 1,887 | 1,547 | 1,180 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22..

Employment

There was a significant increase in 2013 in the percentage of young adults formerly in foster care who have a job of any kind, from 19% in 2012 to 49% in 2013. Only five percent of young adults report having full-time employment. Of those that have a job, more than one-quarter (28%) report earning minimum wage.

| Employment | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Any job: part-time, full-time, temporary, or seasonal | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 30% | 22% | 17% | 14% | 19% | 49% |
| | Yes | 572 | 342 | 203 | 195 | 346 | 907 |
| | Total | 1,920 | 1,559 | 1,199 | 1,398 | 1,821 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

| <i>Employment continued</i> | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Full-time job | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 6% | 3% | 3% | 4% | 4% | 4% |
| | Yes | 124 | 54 | 40 | 61 | 72 | 83 |
| | Total | 1,920 | 1,559 | 1,199 | 1398 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Of those having a full-time job, percent who have benefits | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 52% | 60% | 52% | No Longer Asked | No Longer Asked | No Longer Asked |
| | Yes | 57 | 27 | 16 | | | |
| | Total | 109 | 45 | 31 | | | |
| Minimum wage | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 31% | 36% | 36% | 40% | 35% | 28% |
| | Yes | 163 | 118 | 72 | 97 | 109 | 86 |
| | Total | 525 | 331 | 198 | 244 | 310 | 312 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

Health and Dental Care

The percentage of young adults that have aged out of the foster care system who have health insurance coverage decreased to 71% in 2013. While there has been steady improvement to the number of former foster care young adults who are receiving dental care, from 31% in 2008 to 40% in 2013, there is still room for significant improvement in this area. The percentage of young adults that are connected to an adult mentor remains high at 82%.

| Health and Dental Care | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Youth has health insurance coverage | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 79% | 82% | 86% | 85% | 86% | 71% |
| | Yes | 1,498 | 1,247 | 1,021 | 1,719 | 1,559 | 1,483 |
| | Total | 1,886 | 1,530 | 1,189 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Received dental services in the last year? | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 31% | 30% | 36% | 40% | 39% | 40% |
| | Yes | 572 | 523 | 426 | 800 | 702 | 741 |
| | Total | 1,863 | 1,753 | 1,175 | 2,004 | 1,821 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

| <i>Health and Dental Care continued</i> | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Connected to an adult mentor Question changed to do you currently have a relationship that is trusting, supportive, and unconditional with at least one adult who will always be there for you | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 42% | 46% | 50% | 76% | 83% | 82% |
| | Yes | 738 | 682 | 556 | 1,596 | 1,392 | 1,419 |
| | Total | 1,755 | 1,487 | 1,118 | 2,013 | 1,812 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

Housing & Transportation

The percentage of former foster young adults that reported they are residing in safe housing increased in 2013 and the percentage of young adults who spent at least one night homeless in the past 12 months decreased significantly. Additionally, access to reliable school and work transportation continues to be a significant issue for this population.

| Housing & Transportation | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Safe Housing | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 95% | 96% | 97% | 90% | 92% | 97% |
| | Yes | 1,777 | 1,465 | 1,140 | 1,806 | 1,683 | 1,699 |
| | Total | 1,877 | 1,528 | 1,178 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Spent at least one night homeless in past 12 months Question Changed in 2011 to have you ever been homeless | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 14% | 14% | 10% | 28% | 28% | 15% |
| | Yes | 267 | 218 | 121 | 561 | 492 | 261 |
| | Total | 1,899 | 1,530 | 1,177 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

| <i>Housing & Transportation continued</i> | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Have reliable means of transportation to school <i>Question Changed in 2011 to Reliable means of Transportation to school and/or Work</i> | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 80% | 84% | 87% | 73% | 80% | 79% |
| | Yes | 1,519 | 1,309 | 1,033 | 1,473 | 1,379 | 1,371 |
| | Total | 1,901 | 1,556 | 1,192 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Have a reliable means of transportation to work <i>Question Changed in 2011 to Reliable means of Transportation to school and/or Work</i> | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 45% | 36% | 31% | 73% | 80% | 79% |
| | Yes | 645 | 558 | 366 | 1,473 | 1,379 | 1,371 |
| | Total | 1,437 | 1,533 | 1,193 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Do You Have in Your Possession a driver's license | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 75% | 69% | 70% | 44% | 47% | 28% |
| | Yes | 731 | 556 | 402 | 891 | 872 | 513 |
| | Total | 980 | 808 | 571 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |

Responses by young adults age 18-22

Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

In 2013, the percentage of young adults formerly in foster care reported that they had been arrested within the last 12 months decreased significantly, from 40% in 2012 to 11% in 2013.

| Criminal Justice | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Been arrested in the past 12 months <i>Question changed in 2011 to have you ever been arrested</i> | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 25% | 23% | 17% | 43% | 40% | 11% |
| | Yes | 1,226 | 551 | 210 | 860 | 688 | 197 |
| | Total | 4,905 | 2,397 | 1,203 | 2,015 | 1,821 | 1,852 |
| Currently on probation or under juvenile court supervision | Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Florida NYTD 2011 | Florida NYTD 2012 | Florida NYTD 2013 |
| | Percentage Yes | 10% | 12% | 10% | No Longer Asked | No Longer Asked | No Longer Asked |
| | Yes | 155 | 227 | 117 | | | |
| | Total | 1,548 | 1,888 | 1,200 | | | |

Responses by young adults age 18-22.

Independent Living Budget

Allocated funds and Expenditures

The Legislature has appropriated \$30,170,469 annually in budget for the Independent Living Program since State Fiscal Year 2009-2010. Due to changes in federal grant funding levels year-to-year a small portion of these appropriations have been unfunded and therefore not allocated in Community-Based Care Lead Agency contracts. The actual allocation has ranged from \$30,170,469 to \$29,476,721. However, the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies have the flexibility to spend other state funds from their DCF foster care and related services contracts including state carry forward funds for the independent living services. In State Fiscal Year 2012-2013, the allocated budget included \$8,161,241 of federal funding.

| Total Independent Living Funding of Expenditures and Funding | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| State Fiscal Year | From IL Budget | From Other CBC State Funds | From State Carry Forward Funds | Total | Funding | |
| | | | | | Federal | State |
| 2009-10 | \$30,170,469 | \$17,528,372 | \$4,181,259 | \$51,880,100 | \$9,042,586 | \$42,837,514 |
| 2010-11 | \$29,451,721 | \$17,164,587 | \$4,945,531 | \$52,280,587 | \$8,161,242 | \$44,119,345 |
| 2011-12 | \$29,476,721 | \$13,057,985 | \$6,504,452 | \$49,039,158 | \$8,181,242 | \$40,857,916 |
| 2012-13 | \$29,451,721 | \$12,859,280 | \$3,959,228 | \$46,270,229 | \$8,161,241 | \$38,108,988 |

Distribution of Expenditures

For State Fiscal Year 2012-2013, approximately fifty-eight (58%) percent of all Independent Living dollars were spent on Road-to-Independence stipends. Case coordination and life skills training costs accounted for twenty-eight (28%) percent of total Independent Living expenditures with Transitional Support services accounting for approximately twelve (12%) percent of the total amount spent. Aftercare and Subsidized Independent Living accounted for two (2%) percent of total dollars spent.

| Expenditures (\$) by IL Program Area | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| State Fiscal Year | Road-to-Independence (RTI) | Case Coordination and Life Skill Training | Transitional | Aftercare | Subsidized IL (SIL) | Total |
| 2009-10 | 35,260,682 | 10,738,650 | 4,265,864 | 877,447 | 737,457 | 51,880,100 |
| 2010-11 | 35,204,424 | 11,626,648 | 4,591,816 | 448,780 | 408,919 | 52,280,587 |
| 2011-12 | 29,858,300 | 13,066,982 | 5,208,321 | 628,794 | 276,761 | 49,039,158 |
| 2012-13 | 26,854,501 | 12,929,556 | 5,474,269 | 847,282 | 164,621 | 46,270,229 |

Planning Activities for Implementation of the Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act

Legislation adopted in June 2013 provided Florida with an opportunity to restructure the services and programs for older youth aging out of foster care to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood and improve outcomes for young adults. Under the former Independent Living Program, youth aging out of foster care were often unprepared to effectively transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

Recognizing a need for change, The Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Rick Scott in June 2013. The Department began planning for implementation of the Act on January 1, 2014 by holding a “Kick-Off” meeting in mid-June. Nearly 200 people from around the state attended. Teams of practitioners, advocates, youth formerly in foster care and community partners were assembled to brainstorm on how best to meet the most pressing needs to ensure that the state is prepared for the Act’s effective date, including:

- Drafting new Administrative Code for Extended Foster Care (EFC) Implementation, Post-secondary Education Supports and Services, and Licensing issues connected to extended foster care.
- Redesigning Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) to capture information for this new population.
- Developing & Disseminating Communication materials to educate and market the new program.
- Networking with National Resources to provide free training to Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBCs) on delivering case management services designed specifically for older youth and young adults, to include recruiting foster homes, adolescent brain development, parenting skills, and how to communicate effectively with this population.
- Networking with other states that already have EFC to gather resources and utilize tried and true best practices.
- Providing resources to CBCs on transitional housing models used in other states with EFC.

Administrative Code for Extended Foster Care Implementation, Post-secondary Education Supports and Services, and Licensing

The need for administrative rules to flesh out this “good bill” was identified early on as a “must have” for implementation. On August 15, 2013 the Notice of Rule Development for 65C-41, Florida Administrative Code was published to begin the lengthy and tedious rulemaking process. Rule Development workshops were held on September 3, 2013 and October 17, 2013 to allow for public input. Webinar technology was used to allow for broader statewide participation. Thanks in part to this technology, an unprecedented number of people participated in the rule development process, ensuring that the rules for extended foster care are comprehensive to serve the needs of all stakeholders. The Notice of Proposed Rule will be published in early December, with an expected effective date in mid-January, barring any significant rule challenges. Additionally, new rules on the changes to the Road-to-Independence Program will be in place well before the 90-day deadline for adoption.

Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) Enhancements

Changes to the functionality of the Department's computer system, or Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), were also necessary to establish eligibility for extended foster care and post-secondary education services and support for young adults and to capture data on services provided this population. Design teams met throughout the summer to create the new templates needed to establish eligibility and maintain case management functions. User acceptance testing will be completed in early December 2013 and the capabilities will be in place for use in the field by December 15, 2013.

Communication

Department staff took on the challenge of communicating the changes to the various stakeholders. Information was posted on the Department's website to inform and educate on the new benefits available to youth turning 18. The Department leveraged available technology to connect with the regions and to stay abreast of implementation activities going on around the state. The use of the SmartSheets software application allowed regions and CBCs to develop their own individual implementation plans and share best practices, while allowing the Department to maintain continual oversight. This helped to ensure that the Department's regions were carrying out implementation activities in alignment with the legislature's and the Department's objectives.

Regular conference calls were held to inform the regions and CBCs on how the Department wished to implement the Act. During these calls, Department staff shared activities going on at a statewide level and provided policy guidance. Region leads provided updates on implementation activities going on within each region and provided headquarters with insight into the concerns and challenges faced at the local level. Throughout the process of preparing to implement this Act, there was a great deal of collaboration amongst a diverse array of stakeholders. The Department worked closely with youth and their advocates to ensure that these new programs will meet the needs of the young adults they were designed to serve.

Working with former foster youth, the Department has also produced a PowerPoint presentation, a Prezi and a video aimed at marketing the program to youth and young adults from a fresh, young perspective. In addition, an *Independent Living Resource Guide* is available electronically for policy and practice guidance from the Department. The Department has also sought guidance from sister agencies such as the Agency for Persons with Developmental Disabilities and the Agency for Health Care Administration on how they intend to deliver services to young adults in extended care. Once received, this will also be included in the Resource Guide.

Local, State and National Networking for Resources and Training

The Department's overarching goal throughout the implementation planning process was to include as many stakeholders and interested parties as possible. To that end, the Department

has participated in and provided monthly updates at the joint meetings of the Office of Court Improvement, Department of Education, and the Guardian Ad Litem Program. Trainings have been provided to stakeholders as requested. Additionally, the Department has partnered with the Florida Coalition for Children to ensure that Community-Based Care lead agencies and providers had a voice in all decision-making. Although they may not agree on all things, the spirit of collaboration and professionalism has been a constant throughout the implementation process. Florida Youth SHINE and Florida Children's First have also been instrumental in providing the Department with guidance on how best to ensure that the young adults' needs are met in implementing these new programs. In particular, these young adults have been vocal in stressing the need for real-life financial management practice through an allowance and budget coaching process as they mature to adulthood.

The Department also partnered with several national organizations including the National Resource Center for Youth Development, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Casey Family Programs to provide resources and support for Florida's implementation activities. A national trainer, Pat O'Brien, conducted three training workshops in the southern, central and northern parts of the state to teach techniques for recruiting foster and adoptive parents for teenagers and young adults. His training addressed the culture shift Florida faces in serving young adults in foster care and stressed the need for youth to have a permanent connection to an adult before exiting the foster care system.

The Quality Parenting Initiative, in conjunction with the Florida Foster Parent Association, provided training for caregivers on extended foster care and providing life skills training in the home. Meetings were held on July 16 and 17, 2013 in Orlando to collaborate on the development of core competencies, training needs, and assessment tools for delivering life skills to foster youth. The theme of "Normalcy" was the driving force behind all of their decisions. The focus for life skills training and assessment must be at the individual young person's developmental stage and maturity level. Caregivers are now empowered to provide the youth in their homes the training they need when they need it. The Quality Parenting Initiative produced a series of webinars for caregivers, which are posted online.

On Campus Support for Current and Former Foster Youth Enrolled in Post-secondary Education

The Department has supported the development of Florida Reach, a network for campus support efforts for current and former foster youth enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions. Florida Reach identifies best practices, supports statewide data collection and research, and is creating a resource guide for coaches and liaisons to use when working with foster youth and alumni. Florida Reach also focuses on career development opportunities to assist former foster youth in gaining stable employment.

Independent Living Services Advisory Council

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council was created in 2002 by the Florida Legislature. The Advisory Council is codified in §409.1451(7), Florida Statute. The Department of Children and Families provides administrative support to the Advisory Council.

The charge of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council is to review and make recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services. Each year the Advisory Council prepares and submits a report to the Florida Legislature and the Department of Children and Families on the status of the services being provided, including successes and barriers to these services.

As set forth in statute, the membership consists of representatives from the Department of Children and Families headquarters and region offices, Community-Based Care lead agencies, Department of Education, Agency for Health Care Administration, State Youth Advisory Board, Workforce Florida, Inc., Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, foster parents, recipients of the Road-to-Independence Program funding, and other advocates for foster children. Other appointed members include representatives from faith-based and community-based organizations, mentoring programs, higher education and the judicial system.

Below is a table of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council membership as of December 2013.

| Independent Living Services Advisory Council Membership |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bob Garner, Advisory Council Chairman, The Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship FSU College of Business, Tallahassee Community College/Flagler• Barbara Alcena, Youth Advocate, Florida Atlantic University Student• The Honorable Ronald V. Alvarez, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida• Karima Anderson, Circuit 2 Guardian ad Litem Program• Mary Cagle, Florida Department of Children and Families• Allan Chernoff, City of Life Foundation• Joyce Hobson, Florida Department of Education• Mathew Johns, 4Kids of South Florida, Inc.• Carlos Martinez, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida• Dehryl McCall, Workforce Florida, Inc.• David Oropallo, Agency for Health Care Administration• Ernst Pirrelouis, Youth Advocate, Florida State University Student• Trudy Petkovich, Florida State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association• Teri Saunders, Heartland for Children, Inc.,• Diane Schofield, Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc.• Pastor Ken Scrubbs, First Baptist Church of Leesburg• Janice Thomas, Florida Department of Children and Families• Arto Woodley, Frontline Outreach, Inc. |

During 2013, the Advisory Council held five meetings in Tallahassee. Video teleconferencing and webcasts were also used by members to reduce travel expenses and travel time. In order to ensure the public has complete access and up-to-date information, Department staff created a Web page at: <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/advisory-council>. The Web page contains information about the Advisory Council, its members, activities, subcommittees, as well as meeting dates and locations.

2013 Meetings of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council

Five meetings were held during 2013 as described below.

January 15 – Tallahassee. During the first 2013 meeting of the Advisory Council, Chairman Garner provided the members with an update on the 2012 ILSAC annual report and the Department's response to the report. Next, the members heard a presentation on the Department's recommendations for legislation for the redesign of the Independent Living Program and services.

April 29 – Tallahassee. Chairman Garner started the meeting by introducing two new ILSAC members, reviewing the 2013 meeting schedule and announcing the dates for the 2013 Child Protection Summit. The Executive Director for the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program presented an overview on the Quality Parenting for Children in Foster Care Act followed by a presentation by the DCF Secretary for Senate Bill 1036, the bill for the extension of foster care and Independent Living redesign.

June 5 – Tallahassee. Chairman Garner provided the Advisory Council members with an update on the passage of Senate Bill 1036. The Director of Family and Community Services presented an overview of the state plan for the implementation of the new law extending foster care and restructuring the Independent Living program and services. There were also presentations from the Department's Youth Advocate and Independent Living Advisor and the Director of Faith-Based Development as well as a presentation by staff on the Spring 2013 My Services Survey Report. The members discussed the importance of using data to drive outcomes and how the passage of the new legislation provides an opportunity to re-examine the way the data is collected, reported and used. The Council members decided to create a data and research workgroup to evaluate the situation and report back to the Council at their August meeting.

August 7 – Tallahassee. The Department of Children and Families Interim Secretary welcomed the members and made opening remarks. The Chairman for the Data and Research Workgroup presented an update on the status of their work and the members approved the workgroup's recommendations for next steps. Members also heard seven updates from the implementation team leads for the extension of foster care, restructuring of the Independent Living Program, and a presentation about the new Campus Coaches Program.

October 30 – Tallahassee. The Department of Children and Families Assistant Secretary for Programs greeted the members with opening remarks. The members heard updates on the development of the administrative codes for the extension of foster care and restructuring of the Independent Living Program and the work of the ILSAC Data and Research Workgroup. There were also presentations on Florida's Workforce System and Florida's Permanency Roundtable Initiative. Discussion by the Advisory Council members focused on the unique challenges and obstacles faced by teen mothers and fathers in foster care. The Advisory Council decided to create a workgroup to research and identify best practice models for working with this population of youth.

Data and Research Workgroup

In June 2013, the Independent Living Services Advisory Council created the Data and Research Workgroup. The workgroup's charge is to re-examine the way the data is collected, reported and used, because the status of many of the youth being surveyed will, by definition, change on January 1, 2014.

The workgroup is composed of representatives from the Department of Children and Families, Community-Based Care lead agencies, Florida Coalition for Children, post-secondary education institutions, child advocates and other stakeholders.

To fulfill its charge, the workgroup held three meetings via conference call between July and October 2013. The workgroup members reviewed the My Services and Florida National Youth in Transition (FLNYTD) survey data and federal requirements for the National Youth in Transition Database Survey. The workgroup members also discussed usage of the data in Florida and other states. With assistance from the University of South Florida's (USF) Center for Child Welfare, the workgroup conducted a brief survey of the end users of the My Services and FNYTD data to request their input about the current usage of the data. Eighty responses were received from a variety of providers including all of the Community-Based Care lead agencies. An analysis of the data indicates people seem to be aware of the reports and how to access the reports, but they are not sure how to best utilize the data. Based on the input from the end users, the workgroup developed follow-up action steps which were approved by the Advisory Council members in October 2013.

Recommendations

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council has made great strides in reviewing the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services, identifying areas of success and acknowledging barriers. It is with the utmost consideration that the Advisory Council will continue to examine the Independent Living services and related programs making recommendations for future change.

At this time, the Advisory Council respectfully submits the following conclusions and recommendations to the Department of Children and Families:

1. Survey Data

- Ensure the youth voice/perspective is built into everything we do.
- Make the youth survey data available by county and/or circuit.
- Ask Connected by 25 to prepare a retrospective longitudinal data sheet in excel showing the data by state from each of the surveys. This could be a valuable tool in preparation for the transition to extended foster care in January 2014.
- Consider adding a representative from the Independent Living Services Advisory Council data workgroup, to an existing larger data workgroup, to review and analyze how survey data is being used.
- Enhance communications and technical assistance from DCF to the CBCs about how to use the data.
- Review best practices for using the survey data and present findings to the CBCs and service providers.
- Add preliminary questions to the beginning of surveys to identify the survey population (opted out, enrolled in EFC or PESS).
- Review and make recommendations for removing or adding questions to the My Services and FLNYTD surveys.

2. Permanency

Continue to focus on all permanency options so that no child leaves the foster care system without a permanent family connection.

3. Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Assist the Independent Living Services Advisory Council with identifying the issues and obstacles faced by teen mothers and fathers in foster care, the scope of this problem and best practice models for serving this population.