



Response to the
Independent Living Services Advisory Council
2014 Annual Report

Department of Children and Families

March 23, 2015

Mike Carroll
Secretary

Rick Scott
Governor

Florida Statutes established the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, and mandates the issuance of an annual report from the Council, as well as a response from the Department of Children and Families.

Statutory Authority:

409.1451

(7) INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The Secretary of the Department of Children and Families shall establish the Independent Living Services Advisory Council for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living transition services. This advisory council shall continue to function as specified in this subsection until the Legislature determines that the advisory council can no longer provide a valuable contribution to the department's efforts to achieve the goals of the independent living transition services.

(a) Specifically, the advisory council shall assess the implementation and operation of the system of independent living transition services and advise the department on actions that would improve the ability of the independent living transition services to meet the established goals. The advisory council shall keep the department informed of problems being experienced with the services, barriers to the effective and efficient integration of services and support across systems, and successes that the system of independent living transition services has achieved. The department shall consider, but is not required to implement, the recommendations of the advisory council.

(b) The advisory council shall report to the secretary on the status of the implementation of the system of independent living transition services; efforts to publicize the availability of Aftercare Support Services, the Road-to-Independence Program, and Transitional Support Services; the success of the services; problems identified; and recommendations for department or legislative action; and the department's implementation of the recommendations for department's implementation of the recommendations contained in the Independent Living Services Integration Workgroup Report submitted to the appropriate substantive committees of the legislature by December 31, 2002. **The department shall submit a report by December 31 of each year to the Governor and the Legislature which includes a summary of the factors reported on by the council and 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.**

(c) Members of the advisory council shall be appointed by the secretary of the department. The membership of the advisory council must include, at a minimum, representatives from the headquarters and district offices of the Department of Children

and Family Services, Community-Based Care lead agencies, the Department of Education, the Agency for Health Care Administration, the State Youth Advisory Board, Workforce Florida, Inc., the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office, foster parents, recipients of Road-to-Independence Program funding, and advocates for foster children. The secretary shall determine the length of the term to be served by each member appointed to the advisory council, which may not exceed 4 year.

(d) The Department of Children and Families shall provide administrative support to the Independent Living Services Advisory Council to accomplish its assigned tasks. The advisory council shall be afforded access to all appropriate data from the department, each Community-Based Care lead agency, and other relevant agencies in order to accomplish the tasks set forth in this section. The data collected may not include any information that would identify a specific child or young adult.

Recommendations by the Independent Living Services Council for the Florida Department of Children and Families

As required by statute, the Department is submitting the following response to the following workgroup conclusions and recommendations for the Department of Children and Families contained in the Independent Living Services Advisory Council's 2014 report.

1. Pregnant and Parenting Teens

The state child welfare system is responsible for ensuring that all youth in foster care are safe, healthy, permanently connected to families and have the skills needed to be successful. There is an emerging recognition that designing service delivery specifically for pregnant and parenting youth in foster care is a critical part of this responsibility. Adolescent parents face multiple obstacles balancing their own transition to adulthood with raising a child. The Workgroup made recommendations concerning the safety of the mother and the child, family engagement and relationship building components of the family unit, developmental influences of the mother and child, the need for cross system trainings for providers of care and the need to improve the data collection and evaluation for the group.

Department Response: The Department recognizes the value of systematic intervention strategies, focused on safety, family engagement, and developmental influences, Cross-Systems Training, Data Collection and Evaluation for the defining of risk and parental empowerment and case management guidance. The Department will work with the Independent Living Services Advisory Council Pregnant and Parenting

Teens Workgroup and Community-Based Care (CBC) Lead Agencies to determine the best avenue for this service delivery modality. In addition, the Department will convene a quality care workgroup to review, analyze and define quality of care standards for Group care providers, which will reflect the federally identified data collection and performance measurements per the Social Security Act, SEC.477.(42 U.S.C 677). The goal of the group will be to link the Department's service modality with the development of outcome measurements that directly affect educational attainment, employment and employability, avoidance of dependency, homelessness, nonmarital childbirth, incarceration and high risk behaviors in youth and young adults.

2. Employment

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council recommends the creation of an employment workgroup to assess the effectiveness of the youth accessing workforce services at the regional workforce boards, to include reviewing:

- Barriers
- Common services accessed
- Service needs
- Gaps in service provision
- Recommendations to improve access

Department Response: The Department recognizes the value of youth employability skills development and its implementation in the framework of service delivery. Therefore the Department has partnered directly with the Department of Economic Opportunities (DEO) and the Department of Education (DOE) to develop the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data analysis. This analysis reflects an overwhelming number of young adults that have reached age 18 in care within the past seven years that are currently being enrolled in Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF)/ Cash assistance programs or who are considerably under-employed. The Department will work with the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, Career SOURCE, DEO, DOE and CBCs to determine the most helpful service partnerships and program delivery to increase the number of young adults obtaining jobs and employability skills development. In addition, the Department will partner with the Florida Coalition for Children Independent Living Subcommittee to identify young adults in care that experience educational challenges and barriers. Assistance to these individuals will be provided through linkages between system partners to identify cross system resources that can be used by the youth and young adults.

3. Education

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council recommends the creation of an education workgroup to assess the effectiveness of the youth accessing educational services, to include reviewing:

- School stability
- Reading at grade level
- School dropout, truancy, and disciplinary actions
- High school graduation rates

Department Response: The Department recognizes the need for early educational barrier identification and the development of cross systems options to assist with efficient service delivery to young adults in care. The Department will work with the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, DOE and CBCs to determine the most effective way to obtain the requested data, with the acknowledgement that the Department needs to obtain system entry data in order to identify an outcome benchmark. In addition, the Department will partner directly with the Florida REACH and Florida College Access Network workgroup to obtain, analyze and provide recommendations on the school stability, reading and math levels, school dropout, and truancy factors of the young adult at the time of entry into dependency care. The Department will partner with the Florida College system and the Board of Governors State University System to identify, analyze and provide on campus targeted services to young adults in care.

4. Juvenile Justice

Currently 15% of youth ages 13-17 in foster care also have open cases with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The vast majority of these cases involve felony charges. The result of these charges can have long lasting and debilitating effects on a youth's transition to adulthood. The Independent Living Services Advisory Council recommends that child-welfare organizations across the state participate in each of the above DJJ projects and workgroups.

Department Response: The Department recognizes the need for system to system collaboration in order to maximize service delivery. The Department will work with the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, DJJ and CBCs as a part of the workgroup to review cross system data, analyze commitment timeframes, living arrangement at time of delinquency activity, trainings for system professionals and development of a robust community re-entry platform for Crossover young adults.

5. Youth Workgroup

Current and former foster youth are able to provide invaluable input and feedback on adolescent programming and policy. The Independent Living Services Advisory Council recommends the creation of a workgroup comprised of a young adult from each of the seven Department regions, to discuss how to improve the policies, procedures and services provided to them by the Department of Children and Families. This workgroup will be chaired or co-chaired by a current young adult ILSAC member(s).

- Youth participating in this workgroup will be requested to participate in one additional, substantive workgroup, such as the group care, employment, education, or juvenile justice workgroups.

Department Response: The Department recognizes the value of the youth voice and perspective, as well as the need for data to inform effective policy development and improve practice change. The Department will work with its statewide youth-focused and youth-driven advocacy groups on developing a youth-driven customer service workgroup. The Department will partner with this workgroup in developing a communication plan to share the youth voice with statewide partners.