



**Response to the
Independent Living Services Advisory Council
2010 Annual Report**

**Department of Children and Families
Office of Family Safety**

December 31, 2010

**George H. Sheldon
Secretary**

**Charlie Crist
Governor**

DCF Response to the 2010 ILSAC Annual Report

As required by Section 409.1451(7), F.S., the Department has reviewed the preceding report of the ILSAC and submits the following report to the Governor and the Legislature.

Summary of Factors Reported On By The Council

The 2010 Annual Report includes the following major sections: Introduction, Recommendations for 2011, Successes, Challenges and Progress on Prior Recommendations.

The primary factor described in the report is the continuing struggle for the Department and community-based care agencies to effectively translate policy into consistent practice across Florida. The report also included a description of recommendations made in prior years and the status of achievement to date. Generally, progress had been made to some degree but the recommendations have not been fully achieved. Based on DCF Quality Assurance reviews and reports from various stakeholders, the practices related to permanency, normalcy, educational stability, life skills training, and youth engagement are not adequate to meet young people's needs. In each of these areas of practice, improvements were noted in the Council report. The recommendations for 2011 encompass each of these practice aspects. Efforts to improve practice are described below in reference to each of the specific recommendations of the Council to the Department.

2010 Report Recommendations and Department's Implementation Plans for 2011

ILSAC Recommendation #1: Adopt and support the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act optional provisions regarding extension of foster care, guardianship and adoption assistance as recommended by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Services to Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care Redesign Workgroup.

DCF Implementation Plan #1: The Department is preparing a legislative proposal for the 2011 Legislative Session including the adoption of the federal options for extended foster care, guardianship, and adoption assistance. The proposal has incorporated many of the recommendations of the redesign workgroup.

ILSAC Recommendation #2: Develop a program planning and delivery reporting tool for determining appropriate information regarding independent living services,

outcomes and fiscal implications on projected and actual delivery of independent living services for all community-based care lead agencies and providers.

DCF Implementation Plan #2: The Department has begun implementing this recommendation through promulgation of emergency rule (65C-31 Services to Young Adults Formerly in The Custody of the Department) specific to spending and projections data collection and analysis. Furthermore, outcome measures were added to the community-based care contract template and baseline information will be collected from the 2010-11 fiscal year. Finally, a contract has been executed to collect substantially more data from teens and former foster youth for program planning and implementation. By summer 2011, the Family Safety Program Office will report its progress on the above actions to the ILSAC. Based on consultation with ILSAC, additional steps will be taken to accomplish this recommendation.

ILSAC Recommendation #3: Establish permanency planning as a priority for youth aging out of foster care that result in permanent family connections.

DCF Implementation Plan #3: The Department and community-based care agencies continue to implement various action steps to improve permanency achievement. This includes identification of permanency planning as a primary strategy in the federal Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan. Additional actions or activities impacting permanence include the National Governors Association Policy Academy to Safely Reduce the Number of Children in Foster Care, the Quality Parenting Initiative with Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation, Children's Legal Services, Family Centered Practice training and technical assistance, permanency round tables, and a focused review on all youth with the goal of Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement. Each of these is designed to result in improving permanency achievement performance. As referenced in DCF Implementation Plan #2 above, by the summer of 2011, the Department will report on its progress on these various actions to the ILSAC. Based on consultation with ILSAC, next steps will be determined.

ILSAC Recommendation # 4: Ensure that competency based training in life skills, education planning, career path development, financial literacy and other services mandated by Florida Statutes is of the same quality regardless of the "home" of the youth in Florida's foster care system or the location of the contracted provider.

DCF Implementation Plan # 4: By spring 2011, the Department will convene a workgroup of youth, foster parents, lead agencies, provider agencies, and stakeholders to identify best practices for achieving this recommendation. The

workgroup will be asked to review existing successful practices, identify community resources, and submit recommendations for implementation. Lessons learned from the “Everybody’s A Teacher” initiative will be explored for incorporation or additional action.

ILSAC Recommendation #5: Translate policy into practice consistently across the state.

DCF Implementation Plan #5: The Department will provide an overview of the multi-pronged approach to performance management of key issues (permanency, normalcy, educational stability, life skills training, and youth engagement) identified in this report at the first meeting of the 2011 ILSAC. The overview will include community-based care contract requirements, contract oversight functions, Policy Council and Program Committees updates, Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan, Family Centered Practice implementation and links to various resources posted on the University of South Florida Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice. Based on consultation with members of the ILSAC, the Department will determine needed information and/or develop additional strategies to consistently translate policy into practice across Florida.