

By the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; and
Senator Book

586-02673-19

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to child welfare; amending s. 39.4085,
3 F.S.; providing legislative findings and intent;
4 specifying the rights of children and young adults in
5 out-of-home care; providing roles and responsibilities
6 for the Department of Children and Families,
7 community-based care lead agencies, and other agency
8 staff; providing roles and responsibilities for
9 caregivers; requiring the department to adopt certain
10 rules; creating s. 39.4088, F.S.; requiring the
11 Florida Children's Ombudsman to serve as an autonomous
12 entity within the department for certain purposes;
13 providing general roles and responsibilities for the
14 ombudsman; requiring the ombudsman to collect certain
15 data; requiring the ombudsman, in consultation with
16 the department and other specified entities and by a
17 specified date, to develop standardized information
18 explaining the rights of children and young adults
19 placed in out-of-home care; requiring the department,
20 community-based care lead agencies, and agency staff
21 to use the information provided by the ombudsman in
22 carrying out specified responsibilities; requiring the
23 department to establish a statewide toll-free
24 telephone number for the ombudsman; requiring the
25 department to adopt certain rules; amending s.
26 39.6011, F.S.; requiring that a case plan be developed
27 in a face-to-face conference with a caregiver of a
28 child under certain circumstances; providing
29 additional requirements for the content of a case

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30 plan; providing additional requirements for a case
31 plan when a child is 14 years of age or older or is of
32 an appropriate age and capacity; requiring the
33 department to provide a copy of the case plan to the
34 caregiver of a child placed in a licensed foster home;
35 amending s. 39.604, F.S.; requiring a caseworker to
36 provide information about subsidies provided by early
37 learning coalitions to caregivers of certain children;
38 amending s. 39.701, F.S.; providing additional
39 requirements for social study reports for judicial
40 review; amending s. 409.145, F.S.; providing
41 additional requirements for caregivers; providing
42 additional requirements for records and information
43 the department and any additional providers are
44 required to make available to caregivers; amending s.
45 409.175, F.S.; providing additional requirements for
46 the licensure and operation of family foster homes,
47 residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing
48 agencies; amending s. 409.1753, F.S.; requiring a lead
49 agency, rather than the department, to provide
50 caregivers with a contact when the caseworker is
51 unavailable; amending s. 409.988, F.S.; requiring lead
52 agencies to recruit and retain foster homes; amending
53 s. 39.6013, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference;
54 providing an effective date.

55
56 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

57
58 Section 1. Section 39.4085, Florida Statutes, is amended to

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59 read:

60 (Substantial rewording of section. See

61 s. 39.4085, F.S., for present text.)

62 39.4085 Foster Children's Bill of Rights.-

63 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

64 (a) The Legislature finds that children in, and young
65 adults leaving, out-of-home care face more developmental,
66 psychosocial, and economic challenges than their peers outside
67 of the child welfare system and are more likely to be
68 unemployed, undereducated, homeless, and dependent on public
69 assistance; and to experience early parenthood and to suffer
70 from substance abuse and mental health disorders.

71 (b) The Legislature also finds that emotional trauma,
72 separation from family, frequent changes in placement, and
73 frequent changes in school enrollment, as well as being
74 dependent on the state to make decisions regarding current and
75 future life options, may contribute to feelings of limited
76 control over life circumstances for children and young adults in
77 out-of-home care.

78 (c) The Legislature also recognizes that there are basic
79 human rights guaranteed to everyone, but children and young
80 adults in out-of-home care have additional rights that they
81 should be aware of in order to better advocate for themselves.

82 (d) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to
83 empower these children and young adults by helping them become
84 better informed of their rights so they can become stronger
85 self-advocates.

86 (2) BILL OF RIGHTS.-The department's child welfare system
87 shall operate with the understanding that the rights of children

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88 and young adults in out-of-home care are critical to their
89 safety, permanence, and well-being and shall work with all
90 stakeholders to help such children and young adults become
91 knowledgeable about their rights and the resources available to
92 them. A child should be able to remain in the custody of his or
93 her parents or legal custodians unless a qualified person
94 exercising competent professional judgment determines that
95 removal is necessary to protect the child's physical, mental, or
96 emotional health or safety. Except as otherwise provided in this
97 chapter, the rights of a child placed in out-of-home care are:

98 (a) To live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable home where
99 he or she is treated with respect and where the caregiver is
100 aware of and understands the child's history, needs, and risk
101 factors.

102 (b) To be free from physical, sexual, emotional, or other
103 abuse, or corporal punishment. This includes the right to be
104 placed away from other children or young adults who are known to
105 pose a threat of harm to him or her because of his or her own
106 risk factors or those of the other child or young adult.

107 (c) To receive adequate and healthful food, adequate
108 clothing, and an allowance.

109 (d) To receive medical, dental, vision, and mental health
110 services, as needed.

111 (e) To be free of the administration of psychotropic
112 medication or chemical substances, unless authorized by this
113 chapter.

114 (f) To be able to contact and visit his or her family
115 members and fictive kin, unless prohibited by court order.

116 (g) To be placed together with his or her siblings who are

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117 under the court's jurisdiction, or to maintain contact with and
118 visit his or her siblings at least once per week, unless
119 prohibited by court order.

120 (h) To be able to contact the Florida Children's Ombudsman,
121 as described in s. 39.4086, regarding violations of rights; to
122 speak to the ombudsman confidentially; and to be free from
123 threats or punishment for making complaints.

124 (i) To make and receive uncensored telephone calls and to
125 send and receive unopened mail, unless prohibited by court
126 order.

127 (j) To attend the religious services and activities of his
128 or her choice, and to not be compelled to unwillingly attend
129 religious services or activities.

130 (k) To maintain a bank account and manage personal income,
131 consistent with his or her age and developmental level, unless
132 prohibited by the case plan and to be informed about any funds
133 being held in the master trust on behalf of the child.

134 (l) To not be locked in any room, building, or facility
135 premises, unless placed in a residential treatment center
136 pursuant to this chapter.

137 (m) To attend school and participate in extracurricular,
138 cultural, and personal enrichment activities consistent with his
139 or her age and developmental level.

140 (n) To work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate
141 level that is consistent with state law.

142 (o) To have social contact with people outside of the
143 foster care system such as teachers, church members, mentors,
144 and friends.

145 (p) To attend independent living program classes and

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146 activities if he or she meets the age requirements.

147 (q) To attend all court hearings and address the court.

148 (r) To have storage space for private use.

149 (s) To participate in creating and reviewing his or her
150 case plan if he or she is 14 years of age or older or, if
151 younger, is of an appropriate age and capacity to receive
152 information about his or her out-of-home placement and case
153 plan, including being told of changes to the plan, and to have
154 the ability to object to provisions of the case plan.

155 (t) To be free from unreasonable searches of his or her
156 personal belongings.

157 (u) To the confidentiality of all juvenile court records
158 consistent with state law.

159 (v) To have fair and equal access to all available
160 services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not
161 be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of
162 actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry,
163 national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation,
164 gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

165 (w) If he or she is 16 years of age or older, to have
166 access to existing information regarding the educational and
167 financial assistance options available to him or her, including,
168 but not limited to, the coursework necessary for vocational and
169 postsecondary educational programs, postsecondary educational
170 services and support, the Keys to Independence program, and the
171 tuition waiver available under s. 1009.25.

172 (x) To not be moved by the department or a community-based
173 care lead agency to another out-of-home placement unless the
174 current home is unsafe or the change is court-ordered and, if

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175 moved, the right to a transition that respects his or her
176 relationships and property pursuant to s. 409.145.

177 (y) To have a guardian ad litem appointed to represent his
178 or her best interests and, if appropriate, an attorney ad litem
179 appointed to represent his or her legal interests. The guardian
180 ad litem and attorney ad litem shall have immediate and
181 unlimited access to the children they represent.

182 (3) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT,
183 COMMUNITY-BASED CARE LEAD AGENCIES, AND OTHER AGENCY STAFF.-

184 (a) The department shall develop training related to the
185 rights of children and young adults in out-of-home care under
186 this section. All child protective investigators, case managers,
187 and other appropriate staff must complete annual training
188 relating to these rights.

189 (b) The department shall provide a copy of this bill of
190 rights to all children and young adults entering out-of-home
191 care, and the department shall explain the bill of rights to the
192 child or young adult in a manner the child or young adult can
193 understand. Such explanation must occur in a manner that is the
194 most effective for each individual and must use words and
195 terminology that make sense to the child or young adult. If a
196 child or young adult has cognitive, physical, or behavioral
197 challenges that would prevent him or her from fully
198 comprehending the bill of rights as presented, such information
199 must be documented in the case record.

200 (c) The caseworker or other appropriate agency staff shall
201 document in court reports and case notes the date he or she
202 reviewed the bill of rights in age-appropriate language with the
203 foster child or young adult.

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204 (d) The bill of rights must be reviewed with the child or
205 young adult by appropriate staff upon entry into out-of-home
206 care and must be subsequently reviewed with the child or young
207 adult every 6 months until the child leaves care and upon every
208 change in placement. Each child or young adult must be given the
209 opportunity to ask questions about any of the rights that he or
210 she does not clearly understand.

211 (e) Facilities licensed to care for six or more children
212 and young adults in out-of-home care must post information about
213 the rights of these individuals in a prominent place in the
214 facility.

215 (4) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAREGIVERS.—All
216 caregivers must ensure that a child or young adult in their care
217 is aware of and understands his or her rights under this section
218 and must assist the child or young adult in contacting the
219 Florida Children's Ombudsman, if necessary.

220 (5) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
221 implement this section.

222 Section 2. Section 39.4088, Florida Statutes, is created to
223 read:

224 39.4088 Florida Children's Ombudsman.—The Florida
225 Children's Ombudsman shall serve as an autonomous entity within
226 the department for the purpose of providing children and young
227 adults who are placed in out-of-home care with a means to
228 resolve issues related to their care, placement, or services
229 without fear of retribution. The ombudsman shall have access to
230 any record of a state or local agency which is necessary to
231 carry out his or her responsibilities and may meet or
232 communicate with any child or young adult in the child or young

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233 adult's placement or elsewhere.

234 (1) GENERAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OMBUDSMAN.—

235 The ombudsman shall:

236 (a) Disseminate information on the rights of children and
237 young adults in out-of-home care under s. 39.4085 and the
238 services provided by the ombudsman.

239 (b) Attempt to resolve a complaint informally.

240 (c) Conduct whatever investigation he or she determines is
241 necessary to resolve a complaint.

242 (d) Update the complainant on the progress of the
243 investigation and notify the complainant of the final outcome.

244

245 The ombudsman may not investigate, challenge, or overturn court-
246 ordered decisions.

247 (2) DATA COLLECTION.—The ombudsman shall:

248 (a) Document the number, source, origin, location, and
249 nature of all complaints.

250 (b) Compile all data collected over the course of the year
251 including, but not limited to, the number of contacts to the
252 toll-free telephone number; the number of complaints made,
253 including the type and source of those complaints; the number of
254 investigations performed by the ombudsman; the trends and issues
255 that arose in the course of investigating complaints; the number
256 of referrals made; and the number of pending complaints.

257 (c) Post the compiled data on the department's website.

258 (3) DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—

259 (a) By January 1, 2020, the ombudsman, in consultation with
260 the department, children's advocacy and support groups, and
261 current or former children and young adults in out-of-home care,

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262 shall develop standardized information explaining the rights
263 granted under s. 39.4085. The information must be age-
264 appropriate, reviewed and updated by the ombudsman annually, and
265 made available through a variety of formats.

266 (b) The department, community-based care lead agencies, and
267 other agency staff must use the information provided by the
268 ombudsman to carry out their responsibilities to inform children
269 and young adults in out-of-home care of their rights pursuant to
270 the duties established under s. 409.145.

271 (c) The department shall establish a statewide toll-free
272 telephone number for the ombudsman and post the number on the
273 homepage of the department's website.

274 (4) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
275 implement this section.

276 Section 3. Subsections (4) through (8) of section 39.6011,
277 Florida Statutes, are redesignated as subsections (5) through
278 (9), respectively, paragraph (a) of subsection (1) and paragraph
279 (b) of present subsection (6) of that section are amended,
280 paragraph (f) is added to subsection (2) of that section, and a
281 new subsection (4) is added to that section, to read:

282 39.6011 Case plan development.—

283 (1) The department shall prepare a draft of the case plan
284 for each child receiving services under this chapter. A parent
285 of a child may not be threatened or coerced with the loss of
286 custody or parental rights for failing to admit in the case plan
287 of abusing, neglecting, or abandoning a child. Participating in
288 the development of a case plan is not an admission to any
289 allegation of abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and it is not a
290 consent to a finding of dependency or termination of parental

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291 rights. The case plan shall be developed subject to the
292 following requirements:

293 (a) The case plan must be developed in a face-to-face
294 conference with the parent of the child, any court-appointed
295 guardian ad litem, and, if appropriate, the child and the
296 temporary custodian or caregiver of the child.

297 (2) The case plan must be written simply and clearly in
298 English and, if English is not the principal language of the
299 child's parent, to the extent possible in the parent's principal
300 language. Each case plan must contain:

301 (f) If the child has attained 14 years of age or is
302 otherwise of an appropriate age and capacity:

303 1. A document that describes the rights of the child under
304 s. 39.4085 and the right to be provided with the documents
305 pursuant to s. 39.701.

306 2. A signed acknowledgement by the child or young adult, or
307 the caregiver if the child is too young or otherwise unable to
308 sign, that the child has been provided with a copy of the
309 document and that the rights contained in the document have been
310 explained to the child in a way that the child understands.

311 3. Documentation that a consumer credit report for the
312 child was requested from all three credit reporting agencies
313 pursuant to federal law at no charge to the child and that any
314 results were provided to the child. The case plan must include
315 documentation of any barriers to obtaining the credit reports.
316 If the consumer credit report reveals any accounts, the case
317 plan must detail how the department ensured the child received
318 assistance with interpreting the credit report and resolving any
319 inaccuracies, including any referrals made for such assistance.

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320 (4) If the child has attained 14 years of age or, if
321 younger, is of an appropriate age and capacity, the child must:

322 (a) Be consulted on the development of the case plan; have
323 the opportunity to attend a face-to-face conference, if
324 appropriate; have the opportunity to express a placement
325 preference; and have the option to choose two members for the
326 case planning team who are not a foster parent or caseworker for
327 the child.

328 1. An individual selected by a child to be a member of the
329 case planning team may be rejected at any time if there is good
330 cause to believe that the individual would not act in the best
331 interest of the child. One individual selected by a child to be
332 a member of the child's case planning team may be designated to
333 act as the child's advisor and, as necessary, advocate with
334 respect to the application of the reasonable and prudent parent
335 standard to the child.

336 2. The child may not be included in any aspect of case plan
337 development if information could be revealed or discussed which
338 is of a nature that would best be presented to the child in a
339 therapeutic setting.

340 (b) Sign the case plan, unless there is reason to waive the
341 child's signature.

342 (c) Receive an explanation of the provisions of the case
343 plan from the department.

344 (d) After the case plan is agreed on and signed by all
345 parties, and after jurisdiction attaches and the case plan is
346 filed with the court, be provided a copy of the case plan within
347 72 hours before the disposition hearing.

348 (7)~~(6)~~ After the case plan has been developed, the

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349 department shall adhere to the following procedural
350 requirements:

351 (b) After the case plan has been agreed upon and signed by
352 the parties, a copy of the plan must be given immediately to the
353 parties, including the child if appropriate, the caregiver if
354 the child is placed in a licensed foster home, and to other
355 persons as directed by the court.

356 1. A case plan must be prepared, but need not be submitted
357 to the court, for a child who will be in care no longer than 30
358 days unless that child is placed in out-of-home care a second
359 time within a 12-month period.

360 2. In each case in which a child has been placed in out-of-
361 home care, a case plan must be prepared within 60 days after the
362 department removes the child from the home and shall be
363 submitted to the court before the disposition hearing for the
364 court to review and approve.

365 3. After jurisdiction attaches, all case plans must be
366 filed with the court, and a copy provided to all the parties
367 whose whereabouts are known, not less than 3 business days
368 before the disposition hearing. The department shall file with
369 the court, and provide copies to the parties, all case plans
370 prepared before jurisdiction of the court attached.

371 Section 4. Paragraph (c) is added to subsection (3) of
372 section 39.604, Florida Statutes, to read:

373 39.604 Rilya Wilson Act; short title; legislative intent;
374 child care; early education; preschool.—

375 (3) REQUIREMENTS.—

376 (c) For children placed in a licensed foster home and who
377 are required to be enrolled in an early education or child care

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378 program under this section, the caseworker shall inform the
379 caregiver of the amount of the subsidy provided by an early
380 learning coalition, that this amount may not be sufficient to
381 pay the full cost of the services, and that the caregiver will
382 be responsible for paying the difference between the subsidy and
383 the full cost charged by the early education or child care
384 program.

385 Section 5. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) and paragraph
386 (a) of subsection (3) of section 39.701, Florida Statutes, are
387 amended to read:

388 39.701 Judicial review.—

389 (2) REVIEW HEARINGS FOR CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 YEARS OF
390 AGE.—

391 (a) *Social study report for judicial review.*—Before every
392 judicial review hearing or citizen review panel hearing, the
393 social service agency shall make an investigation and social
394 study concerning all pertinent details relating to the child and
395 shall furnish to the court or citizen review panel a written
396 report that includes, but is not limited to:

397 1. A description of the type of placement the child is in
398 at the time of the hearing, including the safety of the child
399 and the continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the
400 placement.

401 2. Documentation of the diligent efforts made by all
402 parties to the case plan to comply with each applicable
403 provision of the plan.

404 3. The amount of fees assessed and collected during the
405 period of time being reported.

406 4. The services provided to the foster family or legal

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407 custodian in an effort to address the needs of the child as
408 indicated in the case plan.

409 5. A statement that either:

410 a. The parent, though able to do so, did not comply
411 substantially with the case plan, and the agency
412 recommendations;

413 b. The parent did substantially comply with the case plan;
414 or

415 c. The parent has partially complied with the case plan,
416 with a summary of additional progress needed and the agency
417 recommendations.

418 6. A statement from the foster parent or legal custodian
419 providing any material evidence concerning the return of the
420 child to the parent or parents.

421 7. A statement concerning the frequency, duration, and
422 results of the parent-child visitation, if any, and the agency
423 recommendations for an expansion or restriction of future
424 visitation.

425 8. The number of times a child has been removed from his or
426 her home and placed elsewhere, the number and types of
427 placements that have occurred, and the reason for the changes in
428 placement.

429 9. The number of times a child's educational placement has
430 been changed, the number and types of educational placements
431 which have occurred, and the reason for any change in placement.

432 10. If the child has reached 13 years of age but is not yet
433 18 years of age, a statement from the caregiver on the progress
434 the child has made in acquiring independent living skills.

435 11. Copies of all medical, psychological, and educational

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436 records that support the terms of the case plan and that have
437 been produced concerning the parents or any caregiver since the
438 last judicial review hearing.

439 12. Copies of the child's current health, mental health,
440 and education records as identified in s. 39.6012.

441 13. Documentation that the Foster Children's Bill of
442 Rights, as described in s. 39.4085, has been provided to and
443 reviewed with the child.

444 14. A signed acknowledgement by the child, or the caregiver
445 if the child is too young or otherwise unable to sign, stating
446 that the child has been provided an explanation of the rights
447 under s. 39.4085.

448 (3) REVIEW HEARINGS FOR CHILDREN 17 YEARS OF AGE.—

449 (a) In addition to the review and report required under
450 paragraphs (1)(a) and (2)(a), respectively, the court shall hold
451 a judicial review hearing within 90 days after a child's 17th
452 birthday. The court shall also issue an order, separate from the
453 order on judicial review, that the disability of nonage of the
454 child has been removed pursuant to ss. 743.044, 743.045,
455 743.046, and 743.047, and for any of these disabilities that the
456 court finds is in the child's best interest to remove. The court
457 shall continue to hold timely judicial review hearings. If
458 necessary, the court may review the status of the child more
459 frequently during the year before the child's 18th birthday. At
460 each review hearing held under this subsection, in addition to
461 any information or report provided to the court by the foster
462 parent, legal custodian, or guardian ad litem, the child shall
463 be given the opportunity to address the court with any
464 information relevant to the child's best interest, particularly

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465 in relation to independent living transition services. The
466 department shall include in the social study report for judicial
467 review written verification that the child has:

468 1. A current Medicaid card and all necessary information
469 concerning the Medicaid program sufficient to prepare the child
470 to apply for coverage upon reaching the age of 18, if such
471 application is appropriate.

472 2. A certified copy of the child's birth certificate and,
473 if the child does not have a valid driver license, a Florida
474 identification card issued under s. 322.051.

475 3. A social security card and information relating to
476 social security insurance benefits if the child is eligible for
477 those benefits. If the child has received such benefits and they
478 are being held in trust for the child, a full accounting of
479 these funds must be provided and the child must be informed as
480 to how to access those funds.

481 4. All relevant information related to the Road-to-
482 Independence Program, including, but not limited to, eligibility
483 requirements, information on participation, and assistance in
484 gaining admission to the program. If the child is eligible for
485 the Road-to-Independence Program, he or she must be advised that
486 he or she may continue to reside with the licensed family home
487 or group care provider with whom the child was residing at the
488 time the child attained his or her 18th birthday, in another
489 licensed family home, or with a group care provider arranged by
490 the department.

491 5. An open bank account or the identification necessary to
492 open a bank account and to acquire essential banking and
493 budgeting skills.

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- 494 6. Information on public assistance and how to apply for
495 public assistance.
- 496 7. A clear understanding of where he or she will be living
497 on his or her 18th birthday, how living expenses will be paid,
498 and the educational program or school in which he or she will be
499 enrolled.
- 500 8. Information related to the ability of the child to
501 remain in care until he or she reaches 21 years of age under s.
502 39.013.
- 503 9. A letter providing the dates that the child is under the
504 jurisdiction of the court.
- 505 10. A letter stating that the child is in compliance with
506 financial aid documentation requirements.
- 507 11. The child's educational records.
- 508 12. The child's entire health and mental health records.
- 509 13. The process for accessing his or her case file.
- 510 14. A statement encouraging the child to attend all
511 judicial review hearings occurring after the child's 17th
512 birthday.
- 513 15. Information on how to obtain a driver license or
514 learner's driver license.
- 515 16. Been provided with the Foster Children's Bill of
516 Rights, as described in s. 39.0485, and that the rights have
517 been reviewed with the child.
- 518 17. Signed an acknowledgement stating that he or she has
519 been provided an explanation of the rights or, if the child is
520 too young or otherwise unable to sign, that such acknowledgment
521 has been signed by the child's caregiver.
- 522 Section 6. Paragraphs (a) and (d) of subsection (2) of

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523 section 409.145, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

524 409.145 Care of children; quality parenting; "reasonable
525 and prudent parent" standard.—The child welfare system of the
526 department shall operate as a coordinated community-based system
527 of care which empowers all caregivers for children in foster
528 care to provide quality parenting, including approving or
529 disapproving a child's participation in activities based on the
530 caregiver's assessment using the "reasonable and prudent parent"
531 standard.

532 (2) QUALITY PARENTING.—A child in foster care shall be
533 placed only with a caregiver who has the ability to care for the
534 child, is willing to accept responsibility for providing care,
535 and is willing and able to learn about and be respectful of the
536 child's culture, religion and ethnicity, special physical or
537 psychological needs, any circumstances unique to the child, and
538 family relationships. The department, the community-based care
539 lead agency, and other agencies shall provide such caregiver
540 with all available information necessary to assist the caregiver
541 in determining whether he or she is able to appropriately care
542 for a particular child.

543 (a) *Roles and responsibilities of caregivers.*—A caregiver
544 shall:

545 1. Participate in developing the case plan for the child
546 and his or her family and work with others involved in his or
547 her care to implement this plan. This participation includes the
548 caregiver's involvement in all team meetings or court hearings
549 related to the child's care.

550 2. Complete all training needed to improve skills in
551 parenting a child who has experienced trauma due to neglect,

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552 abuse, or separation from home, to meet the child's special
553 needs, and to work effectively with child welfare agencies, the
554 court, the schools, and other community and governmental
555 agencies.

556 3. Respect and support the child's ties to members of his
557 or her biological family and assist the child in maintaining
558 allowable visitation and other forms of communication.

559 4. Effectively advocate for the child in the caregiver's
560 care with the child welfare system, the court, and community
561 agencies, including the school, child care, health and mental
562 health providers, and employers.

563 5. Participate fully in the child's medical, psychological,
564 and dental care as the caregiver would for his or her biological
565 child.

566 6. Support the child's educational success by participating
567 in activities and meetings associated with the child's school or
568 other educational setting, including Individual Education Plan
569 meetings and meetings with an educational surrogate if one has
570 been appointed, assisting with assignments, supporting tutoring
571 programs, and encouraging the child's participation in
572 extracurricular activities.

573 a. Maintaining educational stability for a child while in
574 out-of-home care by allowing the child to remain in the school
575 or educational setting that he or she attended before entry into
576 out-of-home care is the first priority, unless not in the best
577 interest of the child.

578 b. If it is not in the best interest of the child to remain
579 in his or her school or educational setting upon entry into out-
580 of-home care, the caregiver must work with the case manager,

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581 guardian ad litem, teachers and guidance counselors, and
582 educational surrogate if one has been appointed to determine the
583 best educational setting for the child. Such setting may include
584 a public school that is not the school of origin, a private
585 school pursuant to s. 1002.42, a virtual instruction program
586 pursuant to s. 1002.45, or a home education program pursuant to
587 s. 1002.41.

588 7. Work in partnership with other stakeholders to obtain
589 and maintain records that are important to the child's well-
590 being, including child resource records, medical records, school
591 records, photographs, and records of special events and
592 achievements.

593 8. Ensure that the child in the caregiver's care who is
594 between 13 and 17 years of age learns and masters independent
595 living skills.

596 9. Ensure that the child in the caregiver's care is aware
597 of the requirements and benefits of the Road-to-Independence
598 Program.

599 10. Work to enable the child in the caregiver's care to
600 establish and maintain naturally occurring mentoring
601 relationships.

602 11. Pay the difference between the subsidy from an early
603 learning coalition and the full cost charged by an early
604 education or child care program.

605 12. Ensure that the child in the caregiver's care is aware
606 of and understands his or her rights under s. 309.4085.

607 13. Assist the child in contacting the Florida Children's
608 Ombudsman, if necessary.

609 (d) *Information sharing.*—Whenever a foster home or

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610 residential group home assumes responsibility for the care of a
611 child, the department and any additional providers shall make
612 available to the caregiver as soon as is practicable all
613 relevant information concerning the child. Records and
614 information that are required to be shared with caregivers
615 include, but are not limited to:

616 1. Medical, dental, psychological, psychiatric, and
617 behavioral history, as well as ongoing evaluation or treatment
618 needs or treatment plans and information on how the caregiver
619 can support any treatment plan within the foster home;

620 2. School records;

621 3. Copies of his or her birth certificate and, if
622 appropriate, immigration status documents;

623 4. Consents signed by parents;

624 5. Comprehensive behavioral assessments and other social
625 assessments and information on how the caregiver can manage any
626 behavioral issues;

627 6. Court orders;

628 7. Visitation and case plans;

629 8. Guardian ad litem reports;

630 9. Staffing forms; and

631 10. Judicial or citizen review panel reports and
632 attachments filed with the court, except confidential medical,
633 psychiatric, and psychological information regarding any party
634 or participant other than the child.

635 Section 7. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section
636 409.175, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

637 409.175 Licensure of family foster homes, residential
638 child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public

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639 records exemption.—

640 (5) The department shall adopt and amend rules for the
641 levels of licensed care associated with the licensure of family
642 foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-
643 placing agencies. The rules may include criteria to approve
644 waivers to licensing requirements when applying for a child-
645 specific license.

646 (b) The requirements for licensure and operation of family
647 foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-
648 placing agencies shall include:

649 1. The operation, conduct, and maintenance of these homes
650 and agencies and the responsibility which they assume for
651 children served and the evidence of need for that service.

652 2. The provision of food, clothing, educational
653 opportunities, services, equipment, and individual supplies to
654 assure the healthy physical, emotional, and mental development
655 of the children served.

656 3. The appropriateness, safety, cleanliness, and general
657 adequacy of the premises, including fire prevention and health
658 standards, to provide for the physical comfort, care, and well-
659 being of the children served.

660 4. The ratio of staff to children required to provide
661 adequate care and supervision of the children served and, in the
662 case of foster homes, the maximum number of children in the
663 home.

664 5. The good moral character based upon screening,
665 education, training, and experience requirements for personnel.

666 6. The department may grant exemptions from
667 disqualification from working with children or the

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668 developmentally disabled as provided in s. 435.07.

669 7. The provision of preservice and inservice training for
670 all foster parents and agency staff.

671 8. Satisfactory evidence of financial ability to provide
672 care for the children in compliance with licensing requirements.

673 9. The maintenance by the agency of records pertaining to
674 admission, progress, health, and discharge of children served,
675 including written case plans and reports to the department.

676 10. The provision for parental involvement to encourage
677 preservation and strengthening of a child's relationship with
678 the family.

679 11. The transportation safety of children served.

680 12. The provisions for safeguarding the cultural,
681 religious, and ethnic values of a child.

682 13. Provisions to safeguard the legal rights of children
683 served, as well as rights of children established under s.
684 39.4085.

685 Section 8. Section 409.1753, Florida Statutes, is amended
686 to read:

687 409.1753 Foster care; duties.—The department shall ensure
688 that each lead agency provides, ~~within each district,~~ each
689 foster home with is given a telephone number for the foster
690 parent to call during normal working hours whenever immediate
691 assistance is needed and the child's caseworker is unavailable.
692 This number must be staffed and answered by individuals
693 possessing the knowledge and authority necessary to assist
694 foster parents.

695 Section 9. Paragraph (1) is added to subsection (1) of
696 section 409.988, Florida Statutes, to read:

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697 409.988 Lead agency duties; general provisions.—

698 (1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

699 (1) Shall recruit and retain foster homes. In performing
700 such duty, a lead agency shall:

701 1. Develop a plan to recruit and retain foster homes using
702 best practices identified by the department and specify how the
703 lead agency complies with s. 409.1753.

704 2. Annually submit such plan to the department for
705 approval.

706 3. Provide to the department a quarterly report detailing
707 the number of licensed foster homes and beds and occupancy rate.

708 4. Conduct exit interviews with foster parents who
709 voluntarily give up their license to determine the reasons for
710 giving up their license and identify suggestions for how to
711 better recruit and retain foster homes, and provide a quarterly
712 summary of such interviews to the department.

713 Section 10. Subsection (8) of section 39.6013, Florida
714 Statutes, is amended to read:

715 39.6013 Case plan amendments.—

716 (8) Amendments must include service interventions that are
717 the least intrusive into the life of the parent and child, must
718 focus on clearly defined objectives, and must provide the most
719 efficient path to quick reunification or permanent placement
720 given the circumstances of the case and the child's need for
721 safe and proper care. A copy of the amended plan must be
722 immediately given to the persons identified in s. 39.6011(7)(b)
723 ~~s. 39.6011(6)(b)~~.

724 Section 11. This act shall take effect October 1, 2019.