

By Representative Justice

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to foster-family incentives;  
3           amending s. 409.1753, F.S.; creating a  
4           foster-parent mentoring program; directing the  
5           Department of Children and Family Services to  
6           adopt rules; providing for a retirement account  
7           for certain foster families; providing for  
8           funds to be paid into a master trust for  
9           certain foster children; specifying eligibility  
10          criteria; providing an effective date.

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12 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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14           Section 1. Section 409.1753, Florida Statutes, is  
15 amended to read:

16           409.1753 Foster care; duties; incentives.--

17           (1) The department shall ensure that, within each  
18 district, each foster home is given a telephone number for the  
19 foster parent to call during normal working hours whenever  
20 immediate assistance is needed and the child's caseworker is  
21 unavailable. This number must be staffed and answered by  
22 individuals possessing the knowledge and authority necessary  
23 to assist foster parents.

24           (2) Within resources specifically appropriated for  
25 this purpose, the department shall establish a mentoring  
26 program for foster families. In order to enhance recruitment  
27 and retention efforts, new or inexperienced families will be  
28 matched with experienced and trained foster-parent mentors for  
29 the purpose of providing guidance and support. The components  
30 of the foster-parent mentoring program shall be established in  
31 rule and address selection criteria, compensation guidelines,

1 competency-based training for mentor parents, and a  
2 standardized method for evaluation.

3 (3)(a)1. On July 1 of each year beginning in 2001,  
4 each eligible foster family shall be given a \$500 allowance to  
5 be paid into a tax-sheltered retirement account as an  
6 incentive for participation in the foster-parent program.  
7 There shall be another \$500 allowance provided for each family  
8 eligible for and participating in a foster-parent mentoring  
9 program, as determined by the department. Funds shall be paid  
10 pro-rated monthly. The department may procure a single vendor  
11 to be the fund custodian or permit each eligible family to  
12 select its own financial institution. Payment shall be made  
13 directly to the financial institution on behalf of the foster  
14 parents. The objectives of the investment account shall be  
15 determined by the foster family.

16 2. On July 1 of each year beginning in 2001, each  
17 eligible foster child on that date shall be given a \$500  
18 allowance to be paid into a master trust as provided in s.  
19 402.17, payable to the child upon the attainment of the age of  
20 majority or termination from receiving foster-care services,  
21 whichever is later. The moneys shall be held in trust for the  
22 child by a financial institution in investments that will  
23 produce maximum liquidity and preservation of capital. Funds  
24 paid shall be pro-rated monthly for the term of participation  
25 and eligible age.

26 3. Funds provided for the purposes set forth in this  
27 paragraph may not be used for any other purpose.

28 4. The department shall apply for any federal or other  
29 grants that are available to expand the pool of monetary  
30 resources that may be used for this program.

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1           (b)1. In order to be eligible for the first \$500  
2 annual foster-parent payment provided in subparagraph (a)1., a  
3 foster parent must have been providing family foster-home  
4 services to children placed with them through the state's  
5 child protection system for a minimum of 1 year, must not be  
6 licensed to care for any particular child, and must have cared  
7 for at least one child during each year a payment is made.

8           2. In order to be eligible for the second \$500 annual  
9 foster-parent payment provided in subparagraph (a)1., a foster  
10 parent must have been selected for and be participating in the  
11 statewide foster-parent mentor program.

12           3. In order for a foster child to be eligible for the  
13 \$500 annual allowance provided in subparagraph (a)2., the  
14 child must be at least 13 years old and must have been in  
15 foster care or residential group care for at least 6 months.

16           Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2001.

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19           SENATE SUMMARY

20           Creates a mentoring program for foster families under the  
21           Department of Children and Family Services. Provides a  
22           \$500 annual cash allowance to foster families, to  
23           families participating in the foster-parent mentoring  
24           program, and to eligible foster children who meet  
25           statutory eligibility criteria.  
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