



CHAMBER ACTION

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The Committee on Future of Florida's Families recommends the following:

Committee Substitute

Remove the entire bill and insert:

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to independent living transition services; amending s. 409.1451, F.S.; requiring each Department of Children and Family Services district to identify adolescent foster children with developmental disabilities or special mental health needs and to assist such youth in the transition to self-sufficiency; revising eligibility requirements for independent living transition services, participation in the Road-to-Independence Scholarship Program, and transitional support services; authorizing Medicaid coverage to youth eligible for transitional support services; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (1), paragraph (a) of subsection (2), subsection (4), and paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (5) of section 409.1451, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:



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29 | 409.1451 Independent living transition services.--

30 | (1) SYSTEM OF SERVICES.--

31 | (a) The Department of Children and Family Services or its
32 | agents shall administer a system of independent living
33 | transition services to enable older children in foster care and
34 | young adults who exit foster care at age 18 to make the
35 | transition to self-sufficiency as adults.

36 | (b) The goals of independent living transition services
37 | are to assist older children in foster care and young adults who
38 | were formerly in foster care to obtain life skills and education
39 | for independent living and employment, to have a quality of life
40 | appropriate for their age, and to assume personal responsibility
41 | for becoming self-sufficient adults.

42 | (c) Each Department of Children and Family Services
43 | district shall identify adolescent foster youth with
44 | developmental disabilities or special mental health needs. The
45 | department shall work with these foster youth to help them make
46 | the transition to self-sufficiency and shall assist the youth
47 | and young adults with reasonable accommodations for their
48 | disabilities. The department shall assist the youth with
49 | accessing support and funding from other sources, such as the
50 | department's Developmental Disabilities Office and the
51 | department's Mental Health Office. The department shall
52 | coordinate the independent living plan for a youth with the
53 | school's individual education plan for a child who is in a
54 | special education program. The department shall give special
55 | attention to 17-year-old foster children residing at residential
56 | treatment facilities, therapeutic foster homes, or other mental



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57 health placements who face a particularly difficult transition
58 to living as adults in the community.

59 ~~(d)~~(e) State funds for foster care or federal funds shall
60 be used to establish a continuum of services for eligible
61 children in foster care and eligible young adults who were
62 formerly in foster care which accomplish the goals for the
63 independent living transition services and provide the service
64 components for services for foster children, as provided in
65 subsection (3), and services for young adults who were formerly
66 in foster care, as provided in subsection (5).

67 ~~(e)~~(d) For children in foster care, independent living
68 transition services are not an alternative to adoption.
69 Independent living transition services may occur concurrently
70 with continued efforts to locate and achieve placement in
71 adoptive families for older children in foster care.

72 (2) ELIGIBILITY.--

73 (a) The department shall serve children who are 13 to 18
74 years of age and who are in foster care through the program
75 component of services for foster children provided in subsection
76 (3). The department shall also serve former foster youth who are
77 18 to 23 years of age and are in high school as a special
78 education student, in a high school equivalency diploma program
79 pursuant to s. 1003.435, or in an adult education program
80 pursuant to s. 1004.93, through the program component of
81 services for foster children provided in subsection (3).

82 Children to be served must meet the eligibility requirements set
83 forth for specific services as provided in this section and
84 through department rule.



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85 (4) PARTICIPATION IN LIFE SKILLS ACTIVITIES.--In order to
86 assist older children in foster care, ages 13 to 18 years of
87 age, and former foster youth with disabilities, with the
88 transition to independent living as adults, the program must
89 provide them with opportunities to participate in and learn from
90 life skills activities in their foster families and communities
91 which are reasonable and appropriate for their age. Such
92 activities may include, but are not limited to, managing money
93 earned from a job, taking driver's education, and participating
94 in after-school or extracurricular activities. To support these
95 opportunities for participation in age-appropriate life skills
96 activities, the department may:

97 (a) Develop, with children in the program and their foster
98 parents, a list of age-appropriate activities and
99 responsibilities to be presented to all children involved in
100 independent living transition services and their foster parents.

101 (b) Provide training for staff and foster parents which
102 addresses issues of older children in foster care and the
103 transition to adulthood, including supporting education and
104 employment and providing opportunities to participate in
105 appropriate daily activities.

106 (c) Develop procedures to maximize the authority of foster
107 parents to approve participation in age-appropriate activities
108 of children in their care.

109 (d) Provide opportunities for older children in foster
110 care to interact with mentors.

111 (e) Develop and implement procedures for older children to
112 directly access and manage the personal allowance they receive



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113 from the department in order to learn responsibility and
114 participate in age-appropriate life skills activities to the
115 extent feasible.

116 (5) PROGRAM COMPONENT OF SERVICES FOR YOUNG ADULTS
117 FORMERLY IN FOSTER CARE.--Based on the availability of funds,
118 the department shall provide or arrange for the following
119 services to young adults formerly in foster care who meet the
120 prescribed conditions and are determined eligible by the
121 department. The categories of services available to assist a
122 young adult formerly in foster care to achieve independence are:

123 (b) *Road-to-Independence Scholarship Program*.--

124 1. The Road-to-Independence Scholarship Program is
125 intended to help eligible students who are former foster
126 children in this state to receive the educational and vocational
127 training needed to achieve independence. The amount of the award
128 shall equal the earnings that the student would have been
129 eligible to earn working a 40-hour-a-week federal minimum wage
130 job, after considering other grants and scholarships that are in
131 excess of the educational institutions' fees and costs, and
132 contingent upon available funds. Students eligible for the Road-
133 to-Independence Scholarship Program may also be eligible for
134 educational fee waivers for workforce development postsecondary
135 programs, community colleges, and universities, pursuant to s.
136 1009.25(2)(c).

137 2. A young adult 18 to 23 ~~21~~ years of age is eligible for
138 the initial award, and ~~a young adult under 23 years of age is~~
139 ~~eligible~~ for renewal awards, if he or she:



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140 a. Is a dependent child, pursuant to chapter 39, and has
141 lived ~~is living~~ in licensed foster care or in subsidized
142 independent living within 6 months ~~at the time~~ of his or her
143 18th birthday;

144 b. Has spent at least 6 months living in foster care
145 before reaching his or her 18th birthday;

146 c. Is a resident of this state as defined in s. 1009.40;
147 and

148 d. Meets one of the following qualifications:

149 (I) Has earned a standard high school diploma or its
150 equivalent as described in s. 1003.425 or s. 1003.43, and has
151 been admitted for full-time enrollment in an eligible
152 postsecondary education institution as defined in s. 1009.533;

153 (II) Is enrolled full time in an accredited high school,
154 is within 2 years of graduation, and has maintained a grade
155 point average of at least 2.0 on a scale of 4.0 for the two
156 semesters preceding the date of his or her 18th birthday or, in
157 the case of a student in a special education program in an
158 accredited high school, has met the minimum grade point average
159 required by that program to graduate; or

160 (III) Is enrolled full time in an accredited adult
161 education program or high school equivalency diploma program
162 designed to provide the student with a high school diploma or
163 its equivalent, is making satisfactory progress in that program
164 as certified by the program, and is within 2 years of attaining
165 a high school diploma or its equivalent ~~graduation~~.

166 3.a. The department must advertise the availability of the
167 program and must ensure that the children and young adults



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168 leaving foster care, foster parents, or family services
169 counselors are informed of the availability of the program and
170 the application procedures.

171 b. A young adult must apply for the initial award during
172 the 6 months immediately preceding his or her 18th birthday. A
173 young adult who fails to make an initial application, but who
174 otherwise meets the criteria for an initial award, may make one
175 application for the initial award if such application is made
176 before the young adult's 21st birthday.

177 c. If funding for the program is available, the department
178 shall issue awards from the scholarship program for each young
179 adult who meets all the requirements of the program.

180 d. An award shall be issued at the time the eligible
181 student reaches 18 years of age.

182 e. If the award recipient transfers from one eligible
183 institution to another and continues to meet eligibility
184 requirements, the award must be transferred with the recipient.

185 f. Scholarship funds awarded to any eligible young adult
186 under this program are in addition to any other services
187 provided to the young adult by the department through its
188 independent living transition services.

189 g. The department shall provide information concerning
190 young adults receiving the Road-to-Independence Scholarship to
191 the Department of Education for inclusion in the student
192 financial assistance database, as provided in s. 1009.94.

193 h. Scholarship funds shall be terminated when the young
194 adult has attained a bachelor of arts or bachelor of science



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195 degree, or equivalent undergraduate degree, or reaches 23 years
196 of age, whichever occurs earlier.

197 i. The department shall evaluate and renew each award
198 annually during the 90-day period before the young adult's
199 birthday. In order to be eligible for a renewal award for the
200 subsequent year, the young adult must:

201 (I) Complete at least 12 semester hours or the equivalent
202 in the last academic year in which the young adult earned a
203 scholarship, except for a young adult who meets the requirements
204 of s. 1009.41.

205 (II) Maintain the cumulative grade point average required
206 by the scholarship program, except that, if the young adult's
207 grades are insufficient to renew the scholarship at any time
208 during the eligibility period, the young adult may restore
209 eligibility by improving the grade point average to the required
210 level.

211 j. Scholarship funds may be terminated during the interim
212 between an award and the evaluation for a renewal award if the
213 department determines that the award recipient is no longer
214 enrolled in an educational institution as defined in sub-
215 subparagraph 2.d., or is no longer a state resident. The
216 department shall notify a student who is terminated and inform
217 the student of his or her right to appeal.

218 k. An award recipient who does not qualify for a renewal
219 award or who chooses not to renew the award may subsequently
220 apply for reinstatement. An application for reinstatement must
221 be made before the young adult reaches 23 years of age, and a
222 student may not apply for reinstatement more than once. In order



223 to be eligible for reinstatement, the young adult must meet the
224 eligibility criteria and the criteria for award renewal for the
225 scholarship program.

226 1. A young adult who is eligible for the Road-to-
227 Independence Scholarship may, in lieu of the scholarship award,
228 choose to remain in foster care and continue to receive the
229 services of the children's foster care program for as long as
230 the young adult continues to qualify for the Road-to-
231 Independence Scholarship ~~A young adult receiving continued~~
232 ~~services of the foster care program under former s. 409.145(3)~~
233 ~~must transfer to the scholarship program by July 1, 2003.~~

234 (c) *Transitional support services.--*

235 1. In addition to any services provided through after care
236 support or the Road-to-Independence Scholarship, a young adult
237 formerly in foster care, may receive other appropriate short-
238 term services, which may include financial, housing, counseling,
239 employment, education and other services, if the young adult
240 demonstrates that the services are critical to the young adult's
241 own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to develop a
242 personal support system.

243 2. A young adult formerly in foster care is eligible to
244 apply for transitional support services if he or she is 18 to 23
245 years of age, was a dependent child pursuant to chapter 39, was
246 living in licensed foster care or in subsidized independent
247 living within 6 months ~~at the time~~ of his or her 18th birthday,
248 and had spent at least 6 months living in foster care before
249 that date.



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250 3. Based on the availability of funds, a young adult
251 formerly in foster care who is eligible for transitional support
252 services pursuant to this subsection is also eligible to receive
253 Medicaid coverage through age 23.

254 ~~4.3-~~ If at any time the services are no longer critical to
255 the young adult's own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to
256 develop a personal support system, they shall be terminated.

257 Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 2003.