

By Senator Storms

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1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to independent living preparation for  
3 youth in foster care; amending s. 409.1451, F.S.;  
4 authorizing group home provider agencies and residential  
5 agencies to prepare and implement developmental plans for  
6 children in their care; requiring the Independent Living  
7 Services Advisory Council to research and advise the  
8 Department of Children and Family Services and the  
9 Legislature on specific methods to reduce the number of  
10 youth in foster care who attain the age of 18 and do not  
11 acquire a high school diploma or its equivalent; providing  
12 an effective date.

13  
14 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

15  
16 Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) and subsection  
17 (7) of section 409.1451, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

18 409.1451 Independent living transition services.--

19 (3) PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING.--

20 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature for the Department  
21 of Children and Family Services to assist older children in  
22 foster care and young adults who exit foster care at age 18 in  
23 making the transition to independent living and self-sufficiency  
24 as adults. The department shall provide such children and young  
25 adults with opportunities to participate in life skills  
26 activities in their foster families and communities which are  
27 reasonable and appropriate for their respective ages or for any  
28 special needs they may have and shall provide them with services  
29 to build life skills and increase their ability to live

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30 independently and become self-sufficient. To support the  
31 provision of opportunities for participation in age-appropriate  
32 life skills activities, the department shall:

33 1. Develop a list of age-appropriate activities and  
34 responsibilities to be offered to all children involved in  
35 independent living transition services and their foster parents.

36 2. Provide training for staff and foster parents to address  
37 the issues of older children in foster care in transitioning to  
38 adulthood, which shall include information on high school  
39 completion, grant applications, vocational school opportunities,  
40 supporting education and employment opportunities, and  
41 opportunities to participate in appropriate daily activities.

42 3. Develop procedures to maximize the authority of foster  
43 parents, group home provider agencies, residential agencies, or  
44 other authorized caregivers to approve participation in age-  
45 appropriate activities of children in their care. The age-  
46 appropriate activities and the authority of the foster parent,  
47 group home provider agency, residential agency, or other  
48 authorized caregiver shall be developed into a written plan that  
49 the foster parent or caregiver, the child, and the case manager  
50 all develop together, sign, and follow. This plan must include  
51 specific goals and objectives and be reviewed and updated no less  
52 than quarterly. Foster parents, group home provider agencies,  
53 residential agencies, or other authorized caregivers who have  
54 developed a written plan as described in this subparagraph shall  
55 not be held responsible under administrative rules or laws  
56 pertaining to state licensure or have their licensure status in  
57 any manner jeopardized as a result of the actions of a child

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58 engaged in the approved age-appropriate activities specified in  
59 the written plan.

60 4. Provide opportunities for older children in foster care  
61 to interact with mentors.

62 5. Develop and implement procedures for older children to  
63 directly access and manage the personal allowance they receive  
64 from the department in order to learn responsibility and  
65 participate in age-appropriate life skills activities to the  
66 extent feasible.

67 6. Make a good faith effort to fully explain, prior to  
68 execution of any signature, if required, any document, report,  
69 form, or other record, whether written or electronic, presented  
70 to a child or young adult pursuant to this chapter and allow for  
71 the recipient to ask any appropriate questions necessary to fully  
72 understand the document. It shall be the responsibility of the  
73 person presenting the document to the child or young adult to  
74 comply with this subparagraph.

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

85 (a) Specifically, the advisory council shall assess the  
86 implementation and operation of the system of independent living

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87 transition services and advise the department on actions that  
88 would improve the ability of the independent living transition  
89 services to meet the established goals. The advisory council  
90 shall keep the department informed of problems being experienced  
91 with the services, barriers to the effective and efficient  
92 integration of services and support across systems, and successes  
93 that the system of independent living transition services has  
94 achieved. The department shall consider, but is not required to  
95 implement, the recommendations of the advisory council.

96 (b) The advisory council shall report to the appropriate  
97 substantive committees of the Senate and the House of  
98 Representatives on the status of the implementation of the system  
99 of independent living transition services; efforts to publicize  
100 the availability of aftercare support services, the Road-to-  
101 Independence Program, and transitional support services; the  
102 success of the services; problems identified; recommendations for  
103 department or legislative action; and the department's  
104 implementation of the recommendations contained in the  
105 Independent Living Services Integration Workgroup Report  
106 submitted to the Senate and the House substantive committees  
107 December 31, 2002. This advisory council report shall be  
108 submitted by December 31 of each year that the council is in  
109 existence and shall be accompanied by a report from the  
110 department which identifies the recommendations of the advisory  
111 council and either describes the department's actions to  
112 implement these recommendations or provides the department's  
113 rationale for not implementing the recommendations.

114 (c) Members of the advisory council shall be appointed by  
115 the secretary of the department. The membership of the advisory

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116 council must include, at a minimum, representatives from the  
117 headquarters and district offices of the Department of Children  
118 and Family Services, community-based care lead agencies, the  
119 Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Education, the  
120 Agency for Health Care Administration, the State Youth Advisory  
121 Board, Workforce Florida, Inc., the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem  
122 Office, foster parents, recipients of Road-to-Independence  
123 Program funding, and advocates for foster children. The secretary  
124 shall determine the length of the term to be served by each  
125 member appointed to the advisory council, which may not exceed 4  
126 years.

127 (d) The Department of Children and Family Services shall  
128 provide administrative support to the Independent Living Services  
129 Advisory Council to accomplish its assigned tasks. The advisory  
130 council shall be afforded access to all appropriate data from the  
131 department, each community-based care lead agency, and other  
132 relevant agencies in order to accomplish the tasks set forth in  
133 this section. The data collected may not include any information  
134 that would identify a specific child or young adult.

135 (e) The advisory council report that is due by December 31,  
136 2008, shall include a specific analysis and recommendations for  
137 the department and the Legislature to consider regarding youth  
138 who have turned 18 while in foster care and who have not earned a  
139 standard high school diploma or its equivalent as described in s.  
140 1003.43 or s. 1003.435, or have not earned a special diploma or  
141 special certificate of completion as described in s. 1003.438.  
142 The council shall consider and report on the most effective  
143 strategies to assist these specific young adults in completing  
144 high school or its equivalent through the examination of

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145 practices by other states, evidence-based practices, and  
146 promising strategies throughout this state and the country.  
147 Furthermore, the council shall recommend specific policy or  
148 statutory changes that are needed to facilitate the  
149 implementation of these strategies leading to the successful  
150 completion of high school for these specific young adults.

151 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.