

By Senator Garcia

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Step into Success Workforce
3 Education and Internship Pilot Program; creating s.
4 409.1455, F.S.; providing a short title; requiring the
5 Department of Children and Families to establish the
6 pilot program; specifying the purposes and components
7 of the program; requiring the department's Office of
8 Continuing Care, in consultation with certain
9 entities, to develop and administer the program;
10 authorizing the department to contract with certain
11 entities to collaborate with the office on development
12 and administration of the pilot program; requiring the
13 independent living professionalism and workforce
14 education component of the pilot program to culminate
15 in a specified certificate; providing that completion
16 of that component allows former foster youth to
17 participate in the onsite workforce and training
18 internship component; defining terms; providing
19 requirements for the administration of the pilot
20 program; requiring the office to initiate the
21 respective components of the pilot program by
22 specified dates; specifying the duties of the office
23 related to the two components; requiring the
24 components to address specified topics; providing
25 requirements for organizations participating in the
26 onsite workforce training internship component;
27 specifying time limitations for former foster youth
28 participating in the onsite workforce training
29 internship component; requiring the Board of Governors

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30 and the State Board of Education to adopt certain
31 regulations and rules, respectively; specifying
32 conditions for participation in the onsite workforce
33 internship component; requiring the department to
34 include a section on the pilot program in a specified
35 annual report which must include specified
36 information; requiring the department to adopt rules;
37 amending s. 414.56, F.S.; conforming a provision to
38 changes made by the act; providing an effective date.
39

40 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
41

42 Section 1. Section 409.1455, Florida Statutes, is created
43 to read:

44 409.1455 Step into Success Workforce Education and
45 Internship Pilot Program for foster youth and former foster
46 youth.-

47 (1) SHORT TITLE.-This section may be cited as the "Step
48 into Success Act."

49 (2) CREATION.-The department shall establish the 3-year
50 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot
51 Program to give eligible foster youth and former foster youth an
52 opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and
53 professional skills, to transition from the custody of the
54 department to independent living, and to become better prepared
55 for an independent and successful future. The pilot program must
56 consist of an independent living professionalism and workforce
57 education component and, for youth who complete that component,
58 an onsite workforce training internship component. In

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59 consultation with subject-matter experts and the community-based
60 care lead agencies, the office shall develop and administer the
61 pilot program for interested foster youth and former foster
62 youth; however, the department may contract with entities that
63 have demonstrable subject-matter expertise in the transition to
64 adulthood for foster youth, workforce training and preparedness,
65 professional skills, and related subjects to collaborate with
66 the office in the development and administration of the pilot
67 program. The independent living professionalism and workforce
68 education component of the program must culminate in a
69 certificate that allows a former foster youth to participate in
70 the onsite workforce training internship.

71 (3) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the term:

72 (a) "Community-based care lead agency" has the same meaning
73 as in s. 409.986(3).

74 (b) "Former foster youth" means an individual 18 years of
75 age or older but younger than 26 years of age who is currently
76 or was previously placed in licensed care, excluding Level I
77 licensed placements pursuant to s. 409.175(5)(a)1., for at least
78 60 days within this state.

79 (c) "Foster youth" means an individual older than 16 years
80 of age but younger than 18 years of age who is currently in
81 licensed care, excluding Level I licensed placements pursuant to
82 s. 409.175(5)(a)1.

83 (d) "Office" means the department's Office of Continuing
84 Care.

85 (e) "Participating organization" means a state agency, a
86 corporation under chapter 607 or chapter 617, or another
87 relevant entity that has agreed to collaborate with the office

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88 in the development and implementation of a trauma-informed
89 onsite workforce training internship program pursuant to
90 subsections (6) and (7).

91 (4) REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OFFICE.—The
92 department shall establish and the office shall develop and
93 administer the pilot program for eligible foster youth and
94 former foster youth. The pilot program must be administered as
95 part of an eligible foster youth's regular transition planning
96 under s. 39.6035 or as a post-transition service for eligible
97 former foster youth. The office must begin the professionalism
98 and workforce education component of the program on or before
99 January 1, 2024, and the onsite workforce training internship
100 component of the program on or before July 1, 2024.

101 (5) INDEPENDENT LIVING PROFESSIONALISM AND WORKFORCE
102 EDUCATION COMPONENT REQUIREMENTS.—The office shall do all of the
103 following in connection with the independent living
104 professionalism and workforce education component for eligible
105 foster youth and former foster youth:

106 (a) Designate and ensure that the number of qualified staff
107 is sufficient to implement and administer the component, which
108 may be part of a larger independent living or life skills
109 training program if the larger program meets the requirements of
110 this subsection.

111 (b) Develop all workshops, presentations, and curricula for
112 the component, including, but not limited to, all written
113 educational and training materials for foster youth and former
114 foster youth. Resources may include, but are not limited to,
115 workshops and materials to assist with preparing resumes, mock
116 interviews, experiential training, and assistance with securing

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117 an internship or employment. The office must review and update
118 these materials as necessary. The training materials must
119 address, but are not limited to, the following:

- 120 1. Interview skills;
- 121 2. Professionalism;
- 122 3. Teamwork;
- 123 4. Leadership;
- 124 5. Problem solving; and
- 125 6. Conflict resolution in the workplace.

126 (c) Require that the training provided be in addition to
127 any other life skills or employment training required by law.
128 The training may be developed or administered by the department,
129 community-based care lead agencies, or the lead agencies'
130 subcontracted providers, or in collaboration with colleges or
131 universities or other nonprofit organizations in the community
132 with workforce education and training resources.

133 (d) Provide relevant written materials from the component
134 and any relevant tools developed to ensure participants'
135 successful transition to internships to all participating
136 organizations that offer workforce training internship
137 opportunities.

138 (e) Provide materials to inform eligible foster youth and
139 former foster youth of the program, the requirements for
140 participation, and contact information for enrollment. The
141 community-based care lead agencies shall ensure that any
142 subcontracted providers that directly serve youth receive this
143 information.

144 (f) Advertise and promote the availability of the education
145 and internship program to engage as many eligible foster youth

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146 and former foster youth as possible.

147 (g) Assess the career interests of each eligible foster
148 youth and former foster youth who expresses interest in
149 participating in the program and determine the most appropriate
150 internship and post-internship opportunities for that youth
151 based on his or her expressed interests.

152 (6) ONSITE WORKFORCE TRAINING INTERNSHIP COMPONENT
153 REQUIREMENTS.—The office shall do all of the following in
154 connection with the onsite workforce training internship program
155 for eligible former foster youth:

156 (a) Develop processes and procedures to implement a trauma-
157 informed onsite workforce training internship component. The
158 processes and procedures of the internship component must be
159 designed so that they can be replicated and scaled to meet
160 various organizational structures and sizes. The component must
161 include:

- 162 1. Recruitment of agencies, corporations, and other
163 entities to host interns as participating organizations;
164 2. Assisting participating organizations with mentor
165 recruitment, training, and matching;
166 3. Mentor-led performance reviews, including a review of
167 the intern's work product, professionalism, time management,
168 communication style, and stress-management strategies;
169 4. Daily mentorship and coaching on topics such as:
170 a. Professionalism;
171 b. Teamwork;
172 c. Leadership;
173 d. Problem solving; and
174 e. Conflict resolution in the workplace;

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175 5. Development of opportunities for interns to become
176 employees of the participating organization; and

177 6. Reporting requirements specified in subsection (11).

178 (b) Develop a minimum of 1 hour of required trauma-informed
179 training for mentors to teach the skills necessary to engage
180 with participating eligible former foster youth.

181 (c) Provide assistance to eligible foster youth and former
182 foster youth interested in participating in the internship
183 component, including, but not limited to, identifying and
184 monitoring internship opportunities, being knowledgeable of the
185 training and skills needed to match eligible foster youth and
186 former foster youth with appropriate internships, and assisting
187 eligible foster youth and former foster youth with applying for
188 post-internship employment opportunities.

189 (d) Publicize specific internship positions in an easily
190 accessible manner and inform eligible foster youth and former
191 foster youth of where to locate such information.

192 (e) Develop a process and schedule for the distribution of
193 stipends to former foster youth participating in the component,
194 subject to the availability of funds.

195 (f) Distribute funds appropriated for the compensation of
196 mentors who are participating in the component as provided in
197 paragraph (7) (b).

198 (g) By May 1, 2024, provide to the Board of Governors and
199 the State Board of Education all relevant internship information
200 necessary to support the award of postsecondary credit or career
201 education clock hours for internship positions held by former
202 foster youth participating in the onsite workforce training
203 internship component.

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204 (h) Develop and conduct follow-up surveys with:

205 1. Former foster youth within 3 months after their
206 internship start date to ensure successful transition into the
207 work environment and to gather feedback on how to improve the
208 experience for future participants.

209 2. Mentors assigned to participating former foster youth.
210 Such data must be collected by October 1, 2024, and by October 1
211 annually thereafter, for inclusion in the independent living
212 services annual report.

213 3. Any other persons the office deems relevant for purposes
214 of continued improvement of the internship component.

215 (7) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS.—Each
216 organization participating in the onsite workforce training
217 internship component shall:

218 (a) Collaborate with the office to implement a trauma-
219 informed approach to mentoring and training former foster youth.

220 (b) Recruit employees to serve as mentors for former foster
221 youth interning with such organizations.

222 1. To serve as a mentor, an employee must:

223 a. Have worked for the participating organization for at
224 least 1 year;

225 b. Have experience relevant to the job and task
226 responsibilities of the intern;

227 c. Sign a monthly hour statement for the intern;

228 d. Allocate at least 1 hour per month to conduct mentor-led
229 performance reviews, to include a review of the intern's work
230 product, professionalism, time management, communication style,
231 and stress-management strategies; and

232 e. Complete a minimum of 1 hour of trauma-informed training

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233 to gain skills critical for successfully engaging former foster
234 youth.

235 2. Subject to available funding, an employee who serves as
236 a mentor and receives the required trauma-informed training is
237 eligible for a maximum payment of \$1,200 per intern per fiscal
238 year, to be issued as a \$100 monthly payment for every month of
239 service as a mentor.

240 3. An employee may serve as a mentor for a maximum of three
241 interns at one time and may not receive more than \$3,600 in
242 compensation per fiscal year for serving as a mentor. Any time
243 spent serving as a mentor to an intern under this section counts
244 toward the minimum service required for eligibility for payments
245 pursuant to subparagraph 2. and this subparagraph.

246 (c) When necessary, have a discussion with an intern's
247 assigned mentor, the participating organization's internship
248 program liaison, and the office about the creation of a
249 corrective action plan to address issues related to the intern's
250 professionalism, work product, or performance and, if
251 applicable, after giving the intern a reasonable opportunity to
252 comply with the corrective action plan, document the intern's
253 failure to do so before discharging him or her.

254 (d) Provide relevant feedback to the office at least
255 annually for the office to comply with paragraph (6) (h).

256 (e) Collaborate with the department to provide any
257 requested information necessary to prepare the annual report
258 required under subsection (11).

259 (8) TIME LIMITATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—A former foster
260 youth who obtains an internship with a participating
261 organization may participate in the internship component for no

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262 more than 1 year, calculated as 12 monthly stipend periods. The
263 year begins on his or her start date with a participating
264 organization. A former foster youth may intern under the
265 internship program with more than one participating
266 organization, but may not intern with more than one
267 participating organization at the same time. A participating
268 organization may hire the intern as an employee, but the hiring
269 of a former foster youth may not be for an internship under this
270 section.

271 (9) AWARD OF POSTSECONDARY CREDIT.—The Board of Governors
272 and the State Board of Education shall adopt regulations and
273 rules, respectively, to award postsecondary credit or career
274 education clock hours for eligible former foster youth
275 participating in the internship component pursuant to subsection
276 (4). The regulations and rules must include procedures for the
277 award of postsecondary credit or career education clock hours,
278 including, but not limited to, equivalency and alignment of the
279 internship component with appropriate postsecondary courses and
280 course descriptions.

281 (10) CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNSHIP
282 COMPONENT.—

283 (a) To become a participant in the internship component of
284 the program, the applicant must be a foster youth or a former
285 foster youth as those terms are defined in subsection (3) at the
286 time such youth applies for an internship position with a
287 participating organization. A foster youth or former foster
288 youth who has completed the training component with the
289 department may apply for a position with a participating
290 organization but may not begin an internship until attaining the

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291 age of 18 years.

292 (b) If offered an internship, a former foster youth must be
293 classified as an intern and must work 80 hours per month to be
294 eligible for the stipend payment.

295 (c) A former foster youth must spend any stipend funds
296 specified for clothing on clothing that is in compliance with
297 the dress code requirements of the participating organization
298 with which the former foster youth is interning. Notwithstanding
299 any limitation on funds provided to purchase clothing, the
300 former foster youth must comply with any dress code requirements
301 of the participating organization with which he or she is
302 interning.

303 (d) Stipend money earned pursuant to the internship
304 component may not be considered earned income for purposes of
305 computing eligibility for federal or state benefits, including,
306 but not limited to, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
307 Program, a housing choice assistance voucher program, the
308 Temporary Cash Assistance Program, the Medicaid program, or the
309 school readiness program. Notwithstanding this paragraph, any
310 reduction in the amount of benefits or loss of benefits due to
311 receipt of the Step into Success stipend may be offset by an
312 additional stipend payment equal to the value of the maximum
313 benefit amount for a single person allowed under the
314 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

315 (e) A former foster youth may, at the discretion of a
316 postsecondary educational institution within this state in which
317 such youth is enrolled, earn postsecondary credit or career
318 education clock hours for work performed as an intern under the
319 internship component. Postsecondary credit and career education

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320 clock hours earned for work performed under the internship
321 component may be in addition to any compensation earned for the
322 same work performed under the internship component and may be
323 awarded for completion of all or any part of the internship
324 component. Participating organizations shall cooperate with
325 postsecondary educational institutions to provide any
326 information about internship positions which is necessary to
327 enable the institutions to determine whether to grant the
328 participating former foster youth postsecondary credit or career
329 education clock hours toward his or her degree.

330 (f) A former foster youth who accepts an internship with a
331 participating organization pursuant to this section may only be
332 discharged from the internship component after the participating
333 organization engages the intern's assigned mentor and the
334 participating organization's internship program staff to assist
335 the intern in performing the duties of the internship. Before
336 discharging the former foster youth, the participating
337 organization must also document the intern's failure to comply
338 with a corrective action plan after being given a reasonable
339 opportunity to do so.

340 (11) REPORT.—The department shall include a section on the
341 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Program in
342 the independent living annual report prepared pursuant to s.
343 409.1451(6) which includes, but is not limited to, all of the
344 following:

345 (a) Whether the pilot program is in compliance with this
346 section, and if not, barriers to compliance.

347 (b) A list of participating organizations and the number of
348 interns.

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349 (c) A summary of recruitment efforts to increase the number
350 of participating organizations.

351 (d) A summary of the feedback and surveys received pursuant
352 to paragraph (6) (h) from participating former foster youth,
353 mentors, and others who have participated in the program.

354 (e) Recommendations, if any, for actions necessary to
355 improve the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of the pilot
356 program.

357 (f) Employment outcomes of former foster youth who
358 participated in the pilot program, including employment status
359 after completion of the program, whether he or she is employed
360 by the participating organization in which he or she interned or
361 by another entity, and job description and salary information,
362 if available.

363 (12) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
364 implement this section.

365 Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 414.56,
366 Florida Statutes, to read:

367 414.56 Office of Continuing Care.—The department shall
368 establish an Office of Continuing Care to ensure young adults
369 who age out of the foster care system between 18 and 21 years of
370 age, or 22 years of age with a documented disability, have a
371 point of contact until the young adult reaches the age of 26 in
372 order to receive ongoing support and care coordination needed to
373 achieve self-sufficiency. Duties of the office include, but are
374 not limited to:

375 (5) Developing and administering the Step into Success
376 Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program for foster
377 youth and former foster youth as required under s. 409.1455.

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Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.