

20231190e1

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 pilot program; requiring the department's  
8           Office of Continuing Care, in consultation with  
9           certain entities, to develop and administer the pilot  
10          program; authorizing the department to contract with  
11          certain entities to collaborate with the office on  
12          development and administration of the pilot program;  
13          requiring the independent living professionalism and  
14          workforce education component of the pilot program to  
15          culminate in a specified certificate; providing that  
16          completion of that component allows former foster  
17          youth to participate in the onsite workforce and  
18          training internship component; defining terms;  
19          providing requirements for the administration of the  
20          pilot 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

20231190e1

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 appropriation;  
39 providing an effective date.

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

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

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

48 (1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “Step  
49 into Success Act.”

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

20231190e1

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

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

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

75 (b) "Former foster youth" means an individual 18 years of  
76 age or older but younger than 26 years of age who is currently  
77 or was previously placed in licensed care, excluding Level I  
78 licensed placements pursuant to s. 409.175(5)(a)1., for at least  
79 60 days within this state.

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

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

86 (e) "Participating organization" means a state agency, a  
87 corporation under chapter 607 or chapter 617, or another

20231190e1

88 relevant entity that has agreed to collaborate with the office  
89 in the development and implementation of a trauma-informed  
90 onsite workforce training internship program pursuant to  
91 subsections (6) and (7).

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

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

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

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

20231190e1

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

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

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

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

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

145 (f) Advertise and promote the availability of the education

20231190e1

146 and internship program to engage as many eligible foster youth  
147 and former foster youth as possible.

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

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

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

163 1. Recruitment of agencies, corporations, and other  
164 entities to host interns as participating organizations;

165 2. Assisting participating organizations with mentor  
166 recruitment, training, and matching;

167 3. Mentor-led performance reviews, including a review of  
168 the intern's work product, professionalism, time management,  
169 communication style, and stress-management strategies;

170 4. Daily mentorship and coaching on topics such as:

171 a. Professionalism;

172 b. Teamwork;

173 c. Leadership;

174 d. Problem solving; and

20231190e1

175 e. Conflict resolution in the workplace;

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

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

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

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

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

193 (e) Provide a participating former foster youth with  
194 financial assistance in the amount of \$1,517 monthly and develop  
195 a process and schedule for the distribution of payments to  
196 former foster youth participating in the component, subject to  
197 the availability of funds.

198 (f) Distribute funds appropriated for the compensation of  
199 mentors who are participating in the component as provided in  
200 paragraph (7) (b).

201 (g) By May 1, 2024, provide to the Board of Governors and  
202 the State Board of Education all relevant internship information  
203 necessary to support the award of postsecondary credit or career

20231190e1

204 education clock hours for internship positions held by former  
205 foster youth participating in the onsite workforce training  
206 internship component.

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

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

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

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

218 (7) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS.—Each  
219 organization participating in the onsite workforce training  
220 internship component shall:

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

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

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

226 a. Have worked for the participating organization for at  
227 least 1 year;

228 b. Have experience relevant to the job and task  
229 responsibilities of the intern;

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

231 d. Allocate at least 1 hour per month to conduct mentor-led  
232 performance reviews, to include a review of the intern's work



20231190e1

233 product, professionalism, time management, communication style,  
234 and stress-management strategies; and

235 e. Complete a minimum of 1 hour of trauma-informed training  
236 to gain skills critical for successfully engaging former foster  
237 youth.

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

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

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

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

259 (e) Collaborate with the department to provide any  
260 requested information necessary to prepare the annual report  
261 required under subsection (11).

20231190e1

262 (8) TIME LIMITATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—A former foster  
263 youth who obtains an internship with a participating  
264 organization may participate in the internship component for no  
265 more than 1 year, calculated as 12 monthly stipend periods. The  
266 year begins on his or her start date with a participating  
267 organization. A former foster youth may intern under the  
268 internship program with more than one participating  
269 organization, but may not intern with more than one  
270 participating organization at the same time. A participating  
271 organization may hire the intern as an employee, but the hiring  
272 of a former foster youth may not be for an internship under this  
273 section.

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

284 (10) CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNSHIP  
285 COMPONENT.—

286 (a) To become a participant in the internship component of  
287 the program, the applicant must be a foster youth or a former  
288 foster youth as those terms are defined in subsection (3) at the  
289 time such youth applies for an internship position with a  
290 participating organization. A foster youth or former foster

20231190e1

291 youth who has completed the training component with the  
292 department may apply for a position with a participating  
293 organization but may not begin an internship until attaining the  
294 age of 18 years.

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

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

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

318 (e) A former foster youth may, at the discretion of a  
319 postsecondary educational institution within this state in which

20231190e1

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

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

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

348 (a) Whether the pilot program is in compliance with this

20231190e1

349 section, and if not, barriers to compliance.

350 (b) A list of participating organizations and the number of  
351 interns.

352 (c) A summary of recruitment efforts to increase the number  
353 of participating organizations.

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

357 (e) Recommendations, if any, for actions necessary to  
358 improve the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of the pilot  
359 program.

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

366 (12) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to  
367 implement this section.

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

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

20231190e1

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

381       Section 3. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the sum of  
382 \$500,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the General  
383 Revenue Fund to the Department of Children and Families for the  
384 purpose of implementing this act.

385       Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.