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1
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

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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 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,

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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).

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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

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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

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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

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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:

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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.