

FOR CONSIDERATION By the Committee on Appropriations

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to health; amending s. 216.136, F.S.;
requiring the Social Services Estimating Conference to
develop certain official information relating to the
pilot program for individuals with developmental
disabilities; amending s. 394.495, F.S.; authorizing
the Department of Children and Families, as authorized
by and consistent with appropriated funding, to
contract with a specified organization to provide
grief support services to help certain children and
youth; requiring that the services be provided at no
cost; authorizing the contracted organization to also
provide grief awareness training and outreach to local
schools and medical facilities under the contract;
amending s. 409.145, F.S.; revising the monthly room
and board rates the department is required to pay to
certain foster parents and caregivers; amending s.
409.1455, F.S.; renaming the Step into Success
Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program as
the Step into Success Workforce Education and
Internship Program; deleting a provision limiting the
duration of the program; requiring the Office of
Continuing Care within the department to develop
certain cohorts within specified regions, to
collaborate with certain organizations to recruit
mentors and organizations, and to provide eligible
former foster youth with internship placement
opportunities; deleting a provision requiring that the
program be administered in a certain manner; deleting

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

30 obsolete language; requiring the office to develop
31 trauma-informed training for mentors of certain former
32 foster youth; providing requirements for the training;
33 authorizing the office to provide certain additional
34 trainings on mentorship of special populations;
35 revising the amount of monthly financial assistance
36 that the office provides to participating former
37 foster youth; requiring the office to assign
38 experienced staff to serve as program liaisons for a
39 specified purpose; revising qualifications to serve as
40 a mentor; authorizing the department to offer certain
41 training to mentors in subsequent years; authorizing
42 an employee who serves as a mentor to participate in
43 certain additional trainings; deleting a provision
44 authorizing the offset of a reduction in or loss of
45 certain benefits due to receipt of a Step into Success
46 stipend by an additional stipend payment; creating s.
47 409.1475, F.S.; providing legislative findings and
48 intent; creating the Foster and Family Support Grant
49 Program within the department; requiring the
50 department to award grants to not-for-profit, faith-
51 based organizations for specified purposes; requiring
52 that the program emphasize certain support; specifying
53 authorized uses for awarded grant funds; requiring
54 grant recipients to submit reports to the department
55 in a format and at intervals prescribed by the
56 department; authorizing the department to adopt rules;
57 amending s. 409.908, F.S.; revising the parameters for
58 the prospective payment methodology used for

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

determining the Agency for Health Care Administration's long-term care reimbursement plan for nursing home care; requiring the agency to consider specified recommendations when revising its methodology for calculating Quality Incentive Program payments; requiring the agency to delay the effective date of any changes to its methodology for a specified timeframe; amending s. 409.9855, F.S.; requiring the agency to collect and analyze certain data relating to the pilot program for individuals with developmental disabilities for a specified timeframe; requiring the agency to report specified information to the Social Services Estimating Conference; amending s. 409.990, F.S.; revising the cumulative amount of unexpended state funds that a community-based care lead agency may carry forward to the next fiscal year; amending s. 414.56, F.S.; conforming a provision to changes made by the act; reenacting ss. 39.5085(2)(d), 39.6225(5)(d), 393.065(5)(b), and 409.1451(2)(b), F.S., relating to the Relative Caregiver Program, the Guardianship Assistance Program, application and eligibility determinations, and the Road-to-Independence Program, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 409.145, F.S., in references thereto; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (c) is added to subsection (6) of

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

section 216.136, Florida Statutes, to read:

216.136 Consensus estimating conferences; duties and principals.—

(6) SOCIAL SERVICES ESTIMATING CONFERENCE.—

(c) The Social Services Estimating Conference shall develop official information relating to the pilot program for individuals with developmental disabilities implemented pursuant to s. 409.9855, including, but not limited to, data related to enrollment, caseloads, utilization of services, program expenditures, and any other information that the conference determines necessary for the state planning and budgeting system and to project future budgets and drawdown of federal matching funds.

Section 2. Subsection (8) is added to section 394.495, Florida Statutes, to read:

394.495 Child and adolescent mental health system of care; programs and services.—

(8) As authorized by and consistent with funding appropriated in the General Appropriations Act, the department may contract with Valerie's House, Inc., a nonprofit organization exempt from taxation pursuant to s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, to provide grief support services to help children and youth ages 4 to 19 who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling. The services provided must be at no cost to the bereaved child or his or her caregiver and may include, but need not be limited to, grief support groups, mentoring, individual grief counseling, financial crisis support, and in-school support services. Valerie's House, Inc., may also provide grief awareness training and outreach to local

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

schools and medical facilities under the contract.

Section 3. Subsection (3) of section 409.145, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

409.145 Care of children; "reasonable and prudent parent" standard.—The child welfare system of the department shall operate as a coordinated community-based system of care which empowers all caregivers for children in foster care to provide quality parenting, including approving or disapproving a child's participation in activities based on the caregiver's assessment using the "reasonable and prudent parent" standard.

(3) ROOM AND BOARD RATES.—

(a) Effective July 1, 2026 ~~2022~~, room and board rates shall be paid to foster parents, including relative and nonrelative caregivers who are licensed as a level I child-specific foster placement, and to relative and nonrelative caregivers who are participating in the Relative Caregiver Program and receiving payments pursuant to s. 39.5085(2)(d)1. or 2., as follows:

Monthly Room and Board Rate

0-5 Years Age	6-12 Years Age	13-21 Years Age
<u>\$663.03</u> \$517.94	<u>\$680.01</u> \$531.21	<u>\$795.94</u> \$621.77

(b) Each January, foster parents, including relative and nonrelative caregivers who are licensed as a level I child-specific foster placement and relative and nonrelative

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

caregivers who are participating in the Relative Caregiver Program and receiving payments pursuant to s. 39.5085(2)(d)1. or 2., shall receive an annual cost of living increase. The department shall calculate the new room and board rate increase equal to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, U.S. City Average, All Items, not seasonally adjusted, or successor reports, for the preceding December compared to the prior December as initially reported by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The department shall make available the adjusted room and board rates annually.

(c) The amount of the monthly room and board rate may be increased upon agreement among the department, the community-based care lead agency, and the foster parent.

(d) Effective July 1, 2022, community-based care lead agencies providing care under contract with the department shall pay a supplemental room and board payment to foster parents, including relative and nonrelative caregivers who are licensed as a level I child-specific foster placement and relative and nonrelative caregivers who are participating in the Relative Caregiver Program and receiving payments pursuant to s. 39.5085(2)(d)1. or 2., on a per-child basis, for providing independent life skills and normalcy supports to children who are 13 through 17 years of age placed in their care. The supplemental payment must be paid monthly in addition to the current monthly room and board rate payment. The supplemental monthly payment shall be based on 10 percent of the monthly room and board rate for children 13 through 21 years of age as provided under this section and adjusted annually.

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

170 Section 4. Section 409.1455, Florida Statutes, is amended
171 to read:

172 409.1455 Step into Success Workforce Education and
173 Internship ~~Pilot~~ Program for foster youth and former foster
174 youth.—

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

177 (2) CREATION.—The department shall establish the ~~3-year~~
178 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship ~~Pilot~~
179 Program to give eligible foster youth and former foster youth an
180 opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and
181 professional skills, to transition from the custody of the
182 department to independent living, and to become better prepared
183 for an independent and successful future. The ~~pilot~~ program must
184 consist of an independent living professionalism and workforce
185 education component and, for youth who complete that component,
186 an onsite workforce training internship component. In
187 consultation with subject-matter experts and the community-based
188 care lead agencies, the office shall develop and administer the
189 ~~pilot~~ program for interested foster youth and former foster
190 youth; however, the department may contract with entities that
191 have demonstrable subject-matter expertise in the transition to
192 adulthood for foster youth, workforce training and preparedness,
193 professional skills, and related subjects to collaborate with
194 the office in the development and administration of the ~~pilot~~
195 program. The independent living professionalism and workforce
196 education component of the program must culminate in a
197 certificate that allows a former foster youth to participate in
198 the onsite workforce training internship.

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

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

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

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

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

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

(e) "Participating organization" means a state agency, a corporation under chapter 607 or chapter 617, or another relevant entity that has agreed to collaborate with the office in the development and implementation of a trauma-informed onsite workforce training internship program pursuant to subsections (6) and (7).

(4) REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OFFICE.—The department shall establish and the office shall develop and administer the ~~pilot~~ program for eligible foster youth and former foster youth. The office shall do all of the following:

(a) Develop eligible foster youth and former foster youth cohorts within the department's regions.

(b) Collaborate with local chambers of commerce and recruit mentors and organizations within the department's regions, emphasizing recruitment of mentors and organizations in the

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

following counties:

1. Duval.
2. Escambia.
3. Hillsborough.
4. Palm Beach.
5. Polk.

(c) Provide eligible former foster youth with a variety of internship placement opportunities, including by connecting existing third-party mentorship organizations that focus on former foster youth with eligible former foster youth who have an interest in such organizations' programs ~~The pilot program must be administered as part of an eligible foster youth's regular transition planning under s. 39.6035 or as a post-transition service for eligible former foster youth. The office must begin the professionalism and workforce education component of the program on or before January 1, 2024, and the onsite workforce training internship component of the program on or before July 1, 2024.~~

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

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

(b) Develop all workshops, presentations, and curricula for

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

the component, including, but not limited to, all written educational and training materials for foster youth and former foster youth. Resources may include, but are not limited to, workshops and materials to assist with preparing résumés, mock interviews, experiential training, and assistance with securing an internship or employment. The office must review and update these materials as necessary. The training materials must address, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Interview skills;
2. Professionalism;
3. Teamwork;
4. Leadership;
5. Problem solving; and
6. Conflict resolution in the workplace.

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

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

(e) Provide materials to inform eligible foster youth and former foster youth of the program, the requirements for participation, and contact information for enrollment. The

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

community-based care lead agencies shall ensure that any subcontracted providers that directly serve youth receive this information.

(f) Advertise and promote the availability of the education and internship program to engage as many eligible foster youth and former foster youth as possible.

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

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

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

1. Recruitment of agencies, corporations, and other entities to host interns as participating organizations;
2. Assisting participating organizations with mentor recruitment, training, and matching;
3. Mentor-led performance reviews, including a review of the intern's work product, professionalism, time management, communication style, and stress-management strategies;
4. Daily mentorship and coaching on topics such as:

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

315 a. Professionalism;
316 b. Teamwork;
317 c. Leadership;
318 d. Problem solving; and
319 e. Conflict resolution in the workplace;
320 5. Development of opportunities for interns to become
321 employees of the participating organization; and
322 6. Reporting requirements specified in subsection (11).
323 (b) ~~Develop a minimum of 1 hour of~~ required trauma-informed
324 training for mentors to satisfy the requirements of sub-
325 subparagraph (7) (b) 1.e. Such training must include interactive
326 or experiential components, such as role-playing, scenario
327 discussion, or case studies. The office may provide at least
328 four additional 1-hour trainings on mentorship of special
329 populations as optional training opportunities, which must be
330 asynchronous and accessible to mentors online at their
331 convenience, and must inform participating organizations of
332 these optional training opportunities ~~teach the skills necessary~~
333 ~~to engage with participating eligible former foster youth.~~
334 (c) Provide assistance to eligible foster youth and former
335 foster youth interested in participating in the internship
336 component, including, but not limited to, identifying and
337 monitoring internship opportunities, being knowledgeable of the
338 training and skills needed to match eligible foster youth and
339 former foster youth with appropriate internships, and assisting
340 eligible foster youth and former foster youth with applying for
341 post-internship employment opportunities.
342 (d) Publicize specific internship positions in an easily
343 accessible manner and inform eligible foster youth and former

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

foster youth of where to locate such information.

(e) Provide a participating former foster youth with financial assistance in the amount of \$1,717 ~~\$1,517~~ monthly and develop a process and schedule for the distribution of payments to former foster youth participating in the component, subject to the availability of funds.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(i) Assign experienced staff to serve as program liaisons who are available for mentors to contact whenever the mentors need to debrief or have questions concerning a former foster

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

373 youth.

374 (7) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS.—Each
375 organization participating in the onsite workforce training
376 internship component shall:

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

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

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

382 a. Have worked in his or her career field or area ~~for the~~
383 ~~participating organization~~ for at least 1 year;

384 b. Have experience relevant to the job and task
385 responsibilities of the intern;

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

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

391 e. Complete ~~a minimum of 1 hour of~~ trauma-informed training
392 to gain and maintain skills critical for successfully engaging
393 former foster youth. Before being matched with a former foster
394 youth, the employee must complete a 1-hour training that covers
395 core topics, including, but not limited to:

396 (I) Understanding trauma and its impacts.

397 (II) Recognizing and responding to trauma-related
398 behaviors.

399 (III) De-escalation strategies and crisis response.

400 (IV) Boundaries and mentor self-care.

401 (V) Communication skills.

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

402
403 The department may offer a 1-hour training to review topics
404 covered by the training required under this sub-subparagraph
405 every subsequent year that the employee chooses to serve as a
406 mentor.

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

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

418 4. An employee who serves as a mentor may participate in
419 additional trainings on the mentorship of special populations as
420 made available by the office.

421 (c) When necessary, have a discussion with an intern's
422 assigned mentor, the participating organization's internship
423 program liaison, and the office about the creation of a
424 corrective action plan to address issues related to the intern's
425 professionalism, work product, or performance and, if
426 applicable, after giving the intern a reasonable opportunity to
427 comply with the corrective action plan, document the intern's
428 failure to do so before discharging him or her.

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

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

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

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

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

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

(a) To become a participant in the internship component of the program, the applicant must be a foster youth or a former

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

460 foster youth as those terms are defined in subsection (3) at the
461 time such youth applies for an internship position with a
462 participating organization. A foster youth or former foster
463 youth who has completed the training component with the
464 department may apply for a position with a participating
465 organization but may not begin an internship until attaining the
466 age of 18 years.

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

470 (c) A former foster youth must spend any stipend funds
471 specified for clothing on clothing that is in compliance with
472 the dress code requirements of the participating organization
473 with which the former foster youth is interning. Notwithstanding
474 any limitation on funds provided to purchase clothing, the
475 former foster youth must comply with any dress code requirements
476 of the participating organization with which he or she is
477 interning.

478 (d) Stipend money earned pursuant to the internship
479 component may not be considered earned income for purposes of
480 computing eligibility for federal or state benefits, including,
481 but not limited to, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
482 Program, a housing choice assistance voucher program, the
483 Temporary Cash Assistance Program, the Medicaid program, or the
484 school readiness program. ~~Notwithstanding this paragraph, any~~
485 ~~reduction in the amount of benefits or loss of benefits due to~~
486 ~~receipt of the Step into Success stipend may be offset by an~~
487 ~~additional stipend payment equal to the value of the maximum~~
488 ~~benefit amount for a single person allowed under the~~

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

~~Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.~~

(e) A former foster youth may, at the discretion of a postsecondary educational institution within this state in which such youth is enrolled, earn postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for work performed as an intern under the internship component. Postsecondary credit and career education clock hours earned for work performed under the internship component may be in addition to any compensation earned for the same work performed under the internship component and may be awarded for completion of all or any part of the internship component. Participating organizations shall cooperate with postsecondary educational institutions to provide any information about internship positions which is necessary to enable the institutions to determine whether to grant the participating former foster youth postsecondary credit or career education clock hours toward his or her degree.

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

(11) REPORT.—The department shall include a section on the Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship ~~Pilot~~ Program in the independent living annual report prepared

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

pursuant to s. 409.1451(6) which includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 5. Section 409.1475, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

409.1475 Foster and Family Support Grant Program.—

(1) The Legislature recognizes that children and families thrive when caregivers are engaged, supported, and equipped to meet their responsibilities. It is the intent of the Legislature to strengthen community-based support that promotes stable

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

547 caregiving relationships, responsible parenting, and improved
548 outcomes for vulnerable children. Therefore, the Foster and
549 Family Support Grant Program is created within the department.

550 (2) The department shall award grants to not-for-profit,
551 faith-based organizations to support their efforts in the
552 recruitment of foster and adoptive families through faith-based
553 organizations and strengthening local capacity to support
554 foster, adoptive, and kinship families and families caring for
555 vulnerable children in underserved and rural communities. The
556 program shall emphasize sustained, community-based support
557 beyond initial licensure or training in order to improve
558 caregiver retention and outcomes for children.

559 (3) Awarded grant funds must be used to provide education,
560 resources, training, and technical assistance to eligible faith-
561 based organizations involved in foster care, adoption, and
562 family preservation activities and to support the development of
563 trauma-informed, community-based support systems for families
564 throughout the caregiving continuum. Allowable uses of funds
565 include, but are not limited to:

566 (a) Outreach and recruitment activities to increase the
567 number of licensed foster and adoptive families;

568 (b) Training and support for organizations and volunteers
569 assisting foster, adoptive, and kinship families and families;

570 (c) Trauma-informed training, coaching, and counseling
571 services for caregivers, families, and individuals involved in
572 supporting children in out-of-home care or at risk of entry into
573 care;

574 (d) Program support and other activities to strengthen
575 local capacities to support foster, adoptive, and kinship

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

576 families and families.

577 (e) Expansion of foster parent training initiatives
578 designed to improve caregiver engagement, retention, and
579 placement stability;

580 (f) Development of volunteer-based wraparound support
581 services for foster and adoptive families, including kinship
582 caregivers;

583 (g) Assistance with essential family needs for families
584 actively fostering, adopting, or pursuing licensure, consistent
585 with federal and state law; and

586 (h) Ongoing family mentoring and peer support to promote
587 placement stability, permanency, and family well-being.

588 (4) Grant recipients must submit reports to the department
589 in a format and at intervals, at least annually, as prescribed
590 by the department.

591 (5) The department may adopt rules to implement this
592 section.

593 Section 6. Upon the expiration and reversion of the
594 amendments made to s. 409.908, Florida Statutes, pursuant to
595 section 26 of chapter 2025-199, Laws of Florida, paragraph (b)
596 of subsection (2) of section 409.908, Florida Statutes, is
597 amended to read:

598 409.908 Reimbursement of Medicaid providers.—Subject to
599 specific appropriations, the agency shall reimburse Medicaid
600 providers, in accordance with state and federal law, according
601 to methodologies set forth in the rules of the agency and in
602 policy manuals and handbooks incorporated by reference therein.
603 These methodologies may include fee schedules, reimbursement
604 methods based on cost reporting, negotiated fees, competitive

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

bidding pursuant to s. 287.057, and other mechanisms the agency considers efficient and effective for purchasing services or goods on behalf of recipients. If a provider is reimbursed based on cost reporting and submits a cost report late and that cost report would have been used to set a lower reimbursement rate for a rate semester, then the provider's rate for that semester shall be retroactively calculated using the new cost report, and full payment at the recalculated rate shall be effected retroactively. Medicare-granted extensions for filing cost reports, if applicable, shall also apply to Medicaid cost reports. Payment for Medicaid compensable services made on behalf of Medicaid-eligible persons is subject to the availability of moneys and any limitations or directions provided for in the General Appropriations Act or chapter 216. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent or limit the agency from adjusting fees, reimbursement rates, lengths of stay, number of visits, or number of services, or making any other adjustments necessary to comply with the availability of moneys and any limitations or directions provided for in the General Appropriations Act, provided the adjustment is consistent with legislative intent.

(2)

(b) Subject to any limitations or directions in the General Appropriations Act, the agency shall establish and implement a state Title XIX Long-Term Care Reimbursement Plan for nursing home care in order to provide care and services in conformance with the applicable state and federal laws, rules, regulations, and quality and safety standards and to ensure that individuals eligible for medical assistance have reasonable geographic

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

access to such care.

1. The agency shall amend the long-term care reimbursement plan and cost reporting system to create direct care and indirect care subcomponents of the patient care component of the per diem rate. These two subcomponents together shall equal the patient care component of the per diem rate. Separate prices shall be calculated for each patient care subcomponent, initially based on the September 2016 rate setting cost reports and subsequently based on the most recently audited cost report used during a rebasing year. The direct care subcomponent of the per diem rate for any providers still being reimbursed on a cost basis shall be limited by the cost-based class ceiling, and the indirect care subcomponent may be limited by the lower of the cost-based class ceiling, the target rate class ceiling, or the individual provider target. The ceilings and targets apply only to providers being reimbursed on a cost-based system. Effective October 1, 2018, a prospective payment methodology shall be implemented for rate setting purposes with the following parameters:

a. Peer Groups, including:

(I) North-SMMC Regions 1-9, less Palm Beach and Okeechobee Counties; and

(II) South-SMMC Regions 10-11, plus Palm Beach and Okeechobee Counties.

b. Percentage of Median Costs based on the cost reports used for September 2016 rate setting:

(I) Direct Care Costs100 percent.

(II) Indirect Care Costs92 percent.

(III) Operating Costs86 percent.

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

c. Floors:

(I) Direct Care Component95 percent.

(II) Indirect Care Component92.5 percent.

(III) Operating ComponentNone.

d. Pass-through PaymentsReal Estate and

.....Personal Property

.....Taxes and Property Insurance.

e. Quality Incentive Program Payment

Pool.....14.77 ~~10~~ percent of September

.....2016 non-property related

.....payments of included facilities.

f. Quality Score Threshold to Qualify for Quality Incentive
Payment.....33 percent of all available points in the MedicaidQuality Incentive Program ~~20th~~~~.....percentile of included facilities.~~

g. Fair Rental Value System Payment Parameters:

(I) Building Value per Square Foot based on 2018 RS Means.

(II) Land Valuation.....10 percent of Gross Building value.

(III) Facility Square Footage.....Actual Square Footage.

(IV) Movable Equipment Allowance.....\$8,000 per bed.

(V) Obsolescence Factor.....1.5 percent.

(VI) Fair Rental Rate of Return.....8 percent.

(VII) Minimum Occupancy.....90 percent.

(VIII) Maximum Facility Age.....40 years.

(IX) Minimum Square Footage per Bed.....350.

(X) Maximum Square Footage for Bed.....500.

(XI) Minimum Cost of a renovation/replacements \$500 per bed.

h. Ventilator Supplemental payment of \$200 per Medicaid day
of 40,000 ventilator Medicaid days per fiscal year.

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

692 2. The agency shall revise its methodology for calculating
693 Quality Incentive Program payments to:

694 a. Include the results of consumer satisfaction surveys
695 conducted pursuant to s. 400.0225 as a measure of nursing home
696 quality. The agency shall so revise the methodology after the
697 surveys have been in effect for an amount of time the agency
698 deems sufficient for statistical and scientific validity as a
699 meaningful quality measure that may be incorporated into the
700 methodology.

701 b. During the next rebasing for the Quality Incentive
702 Program, consider implementing the recommendations proposed in
703 sections 3.1.2-3.1.5 of the Study of Nursing Home Quality
704 Incentive Programs Final Report that was prepared by Guidehouse,
705 Inc., and presented to the agency on December 22, 2025.

706 c. Delay the effective date of any change made to its
707 methodology or scoring due to rebasing for 1 year after any
708 recalculations have been completed and the scores have been made
709 available to the public.

710 3. The direct care subcomponent shall include salaries and
711 benefits of direct care staff providing nursing services
712 including registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and
713 certified nursing assistants who deliver care directly to
714 residents in the nursing home facility, allowable therapy costs,
715 and dietary costs. This excludes nursing administration, staff
716 development, the staffing coordinator, and the administrative
717 portion of the minimum data set and care plan coordinators. The
718 direct care subcomponent also includes medically necessary
719 dental care, vision care, hearing care, and podiatric care.

720 4. All other patient care costs shall be included in the

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

indirect care cost subcomponent of the patient care per diem rate, including complex medical equipment, medical supplies, and other allowable ancillary costs. Costs may not be allocated directly or indirectly to the direct care subcomponent from a home office or management company.

5. On July 1 of each year, the agency shall report to the Legislature direct and indirect care costs, including average direct and indirect care costs per resident per facility and direct care and indirect care salaries and benefits per category of staff member per facility.

6. Every fourth year, the agency shall rebase nursing home prospective payment rates to reflect changes in cost based on the most recently audited cost report for each participating provider.

7. A direct care supplemental payment may be made to providers whose direct care hours per patient day are above the 80th percentile and who provide Medicaid services to a larger percentage of Medicaid patients than the state average.

8. Pediatric, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, and government-owned facilities are exempt from the pricing model established in this subsection and shall remain on a cost-based prospective payment system. Effective October 1, 2018, the agency shall set rates for all facilities remaining on a cost-based prospective payment system using each facility's most recently audited cost report, eliminating retroactive settlements.

9. By October 1, 2025, and each year thereafter, the agency shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report on each

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

750 Quality Incentive Program payment made pursuant to sub-
751 subparagraph 1.e. The report must, at a minimum, include all of
752 the following information:

753 a. The name of each facility that received a Quality
754 Incentive Program payment and the dollar amount of such payment
755 each facility received.

756 b. The total number of quality incentive metric points
757 awarded by the agency to each facility and the number of points
758 awarded by the agency for each individual quality metric
759 measured.

760 c. An examination of any trends in the improvement of the
761 quality of care provided to nursing home residents which may be
762 attributable to incentive payments received under the Quality
763 Incentive Program. The agency shall include examination of
764 trends both for the program as a whole as well as for each
765 individual quality metric used by the agency to award program
766 payments.

767
768 It is the intent of the Legislature that the reimbursement plan
769 achieve the goal of providing access to health care for nursing
770 home residents who require large amounts of care while
771 encouraging diversion services as an alternative to nursing home
772 care for residents who can be served within the community. The
773 agency shall base the establishment of any maximum rate of
774 payment, whether overall or component, on the available moneys
775 as provided for in the General Appropriations Act. The agency
776 may base the maximum rate of payment on the results of
777 scientifically valid analysis and conclusions derived from
778 objective statistical data pertinent to the particular maximum

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

rate of payment. The agency shall base the rates of payments in accordance with the minimum wage requirements as provided in the General Appropriations Act.

Section 7. Paragraph (d) is added to subsection (6) of section 409.9855, Florida Statutes, to read:

409.9855 Pilot program for individuals with developmental disabilities.—

(6) PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION.—

(d) The agency shall collect and analyze data needed to project program enrollment costs, current and projected caseloads, utilization, and current and projected expenditures for the next 3 years. The agency shall report caseload and expenditure data and trends and any other information requested by the Social Services Estimating Conference in accordance with chapter 216.

Section 8. Subsection (5) of section 409.990, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

409.990 Funding for lead agencies.—A contract established between the department and a lead agency must be funded by a grant of general revenue, other applicable state funds, or applicable federal funding sources.

(5) A lead agency may carry forward documented unexpended state funds from one fiscal year to the next; however, the cumulative amount carried forward may not exceed 8 percent of the annual amount of the ~~total~~ contract. Any unexpended state funds in excess of that percentage must be returned to the department.

(a) The funds carried forward may not be used in any way that would create increased recurring future obligations, and

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

such funds may not be used for any type of program or service that is not currently authorized by the existing contract with the department.

(b) Expenditures of funds carried forward must be separately reported to the department.

(c) Any unexpended funds that remain at the end of the contract period shall be returned to the department.

(d) Funds carried forward may be retained through any contract renewals and any new procurements as long as the same lead agency is retained by the department.

Section 9. Subsection (5) of section 414.56, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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

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

Section 10. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 409.145, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (d) of subsection (2) of section 39.5085, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

39.5085 Relative Caregiver Program.—

(2)

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

837 (d)1. Relatives or nonrelatives who have a child placed
838 with them in out-of-home care and who have obtained licensure as
839 a child-specific level I foster placement, regardless of whether
840 a court has found the child to be dependent, shall receive a
841 monthly payment in accordance with s. 409.145(3) from the date
842 the child is placed in out-of-home care with his or her
843 relatives or with nonrelatives until the child achieves
844 permanency as determined by the court pursuant to s. 39.621.

845 2. Relatives or nonrelatives who have a child who has been
846 found to be dependent placed with them in out-of-home care shall
847 receive a monthly payment at a rate equal to the rate
848 established in s. 409.145(3) for licensed foster parents,
849 regardless of whether the relatives or nonrelatives have
850 obtained a child-specific level I foster license, from the date
851 the child is found to be dependent or from the date the child is
852 placed with them in out-of-home care, whichever is later, for a
853 period of no more than 6 months or until the child achieves
854 permanency as determined by the court pursuant to s. 39.621,
855 whichever occurs first.

856 3. Relatives or nonrelatives who have a child who has been
857 found to be dependent placed with them in out-of-home care and
858 who have not obtained a child-specific level I foster license
859 within 6 months from the date of such placement shall receive a
860 monthly payment in an amount determined by department rule from
861 6 months after the date the child is found to be dependent or
862 from 6 months after the child is placed with them in out-of-home
863 care, whichever is later, until the relatives or nonrelatives
864 obtain a child-specific level I foster license or until the
865 child achieves permanency as determined by the court pursuant to

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

s. 39.621, whichever occurs first. The monthly payment amount paid to relatives or nonrelatives pursuant to this subparagraph must be less than the monthly payment amount provided to a participant enrolled in the Guardianship Assistance Program pursuant to s. 39.6225.

4. Relatives or nonrelatives who have a child placed in their care by permanent guardianship pursuant to s. 39.6221, in a permanent placement with a fit and willing relative pursuant to s. 39.6231, or under former s. 39.622 if the placement was made before July 1, 2006, and who are not enrolled in the Guardianship Assistance Program pursuant to s. 39.6225 shall receive a monthly payment in an amount determined by department rule which must be less than the monthly payment amount provided to a participant enrolled in the Guardianship Assistance Program under s. 39.6225.

Section 11. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 409.145, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (d) of subsection (5) of section 39.6225, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

39.6225 Guardianship Assistance Program.—

(5) A guardian with an application approved pursuant to subsection (2) who is caring for a child placed with the guardian by the court pursuant to this part may receive guardianship assistance payments based on the following criteria:

(d) The department shall provide guardianship assistance payments in the amount of \$4,000 annually, paid on a monthly basis, or in an amount other than \$4,000 annually as determined by the guardian and the department and memorialized in a written

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

895 agreement between the guardian and the department. The agreement
896 shall take into consideration the circumstances of the guardian
897 and the needs of the child. Changes may not be made without the
898 concurrence of the guardian. However, the amount of the monthly
899 payment may not exceed the foster care maintenance payment that
900 would have been paid during the same period if the child had
901 been in licensed care at his or her designated level of care at
902 the rate established in s. 409.145(3).

903 Section 12. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
904 made by this act to section 409.145, Florida Statutes, in a
905 reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section
906 393.065, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

907 393.065 Application and eligibility determination.—

908 (5) Except as provided in subsections (6) and (7), if a
909 client seeking enrollment in the developmental disabilities home
910 and community-based services Medicaid waiver program meets the
911 level of care requirement for an intermediate care facility for
912 individuals with intellectual disabilities pursuant to 42 C.F.R.
913 ss. 435.217(b)(1) and 440.150, the agency must assign the client
914 to an appropriate preenrollment category pursuant to this
915 subsection and must provide priority to clients waiting for
916 waiver services in the following order:

917 (b) Category 2, which includes clients in the preenrollment
918 categories who are:

919 1. From the child welfare system with an open case in the
920 Department of Children and Families' statewide automated child
921 welfare information system and who are either:

922 a. Transitioning out of the child welfare system into
923 permanency; or

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

b. At least 18 years but not yet 22 years of age and who need both waiver services and extended foster care services; or

2. At least 18 years but not yet 22 years of age and who withdrew consent pursuant to s. 39.6251(5)(c) to remain in the extended foster care system.

For individuals who are at least 18 years but not yet 22 years of age and who are eligible under sub-subparagraph 1.b., the agency must provide waiver services, including residential habilitation, and must actively participate in transition planning activities, including, but not limited to, individualized service coordination, case management support, and ensuring continuity of care pursuant to s. 39.6035. The community-based care lead agency must fund room and board at the rate established in s. 409.145(3) and provide case management and related services as defined in s. 409.986(3)(e). Individuals may receive both waiver services and services under s. 39.6251. Services may not duplicate services available through the Medicaid state plan.

Within preenrollment categories 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, the agency shall prioritize clients in the order of the date that the client is determined eligible for waiver services.

Section 13. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 409.145, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 409.1451, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

409.1451 The Road-to-Independence Program.—

(2) POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SERVICES AND SUPPORT.—

576-02796A-26

20262518pb

(b) The amount of the financial assistance shall be as follows:

1. For a young adult who does not remain in foster care and is attending a postsecondary school as provided in s. 1009.533, the amount is \$1,720 monthly.

2. For a young adult who remains in foster care, is attending a postsecondary school, as provided in s. 1009.533, and continues to reside in a licensed foster home, the amount is the established room and board rate for foster parents. This takes the place of the payment provided for in s. 409.145(3).

3. For a young adult who remains in foster care, but temporarily resides away from a licensed foster home for purposes of attending a postsecondary school as provided in s. 1009.533, the amount is \$1,720 monthly. This takes the place of the payment provided for in s. 409.145(3).

4. For a young adult who remains in foster care, is attending a postsecondary school as provided in s. 1009.533, and continues to reside in a licensed group home, the amount is negotiated between the community-based care lead agency and the licensed group home provider.

5. For a young adult who remains in foster care, but temporarily resides away from a licensed group home for purposes of attending a postsecondary school as provided in s. 1009.533, the amount is \$1,720 monthly. This takes the place of a negotiated room and board rate.

6. A young adult is eligible to receive financial assistance during the months when he or she is enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution.

Section 14. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.