

By Senator Rodriguez

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to dependent children; amending s. 39.4085, F.S.; requiring the Department of Children and Families and each community-based care lead agency to coordinate with certain organizations and meet at least quarterly for a specified purpose; authorizing such meetings to be in person or via teleconference or other electronic means; requiring such meetings to have a formal agenda; requiring the department and each community-based care lead agency to make certain information available on their respective websites; requiring, beginning in a specified year, the department and each community-based care lead agency to publish on their respective websites a biannual report containing specified information; amending s. 409.145, F.S.; providing legislative findings; requiring a caregiver to provide a weekly cash allowance to each child in his or her care beginning when the child attains a certain age; prohibiting a caregiver from withholding a child's allowance as punishment; providing that a child may not be required to use his or her allowance for certain items; providing the amount of such weekly allowance; encouraging caregivers to offer certain opportunities and help to children in their care; authorizing the department to adopt rules; providing an effective date.

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

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Section 1. Subsection (6) is added to section 39.4085, Florida Statutes, to read:

39.4085 Goals for dependent children; responsibilities; education; Office of the Children's Ombudsman.—

(6) (a) The department shall coordinate with organizations that are focused on empowering children with lived experience for the purpose of addressing challenges and opportunities for children in the child welfare system. The department and such organizations must meet at least quarterly in person or via teleconference or other electronic means to solicit input on ways to address such challenges and opportunities. Each meeting must have a formal agenda, and such agenda and the minutes from each meeting must be made available on the department's website.

(b) Each community-based care lead agency shall coordinate with organizations that are focused on empowering children with lived experience for the purpose of addressing challenges and opportunities for children in the child welfare system. The community-based care lead agency and such organizations must meet at least quarterly in person or via teleconference or other electronic means to solicit input on ways to address such challenges and opportunities. Each meeting must have a formal agenda, and such agenda and the minutes from each meeting must be made available on the community-based care lead agency's website.

(c) By February 1 and August 1 of each year, beginning in 2027, the department and each community-based care lead agency must make publicly accessible on their respective websites a report that outlines how the department and the community-based

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care lead agencies have implemented the suggestions received
from organizations in the meetings required under paragraphs (a)
and (b).

Section 2. Present subsection (5) of section 409.145,
Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (6), a new
subsection (5) is added to that section, and paragraph (b) of
subsection (2) 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.

(2) REASONABLE AND PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD.—

(b) *Application of standard of care.*—

1. Every child who comes into out-of-home care pursuant to
this chapter is entitled to participate in age-appropriate
extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities and to
receive a weekly cash allowance for personal use in accordance
with subsection (5).

2. Each caregiver shall use the reasonable and prudent
parent standard in determining whether to give permission for a
child living in out-of-home care to participate in
extracurricular, enrichment, or social activities. When using
the reasonable and prudent parent standard, the caregiver must
consider:

a. The child's age, maturity, and developmental level to
maintain the overall health and safety of the child.

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b. The potential risk factors and the appropriateness of the extracurricular, enrichment, or social activity.

c. The best interest of the child, based on information known by the caregiver.

d. The importance of encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth.

e. The importance of providing the child with the most family-like living experience possible.

f. The behavioral history of the child and the child's ability to safely participate in the proposed activity.

(5) CASH ALLOWANCE.—

(a) The Legislature finds that receiving a cash allowance is a critical aspect of normalcy for a child. A cash allowance teaches a child the value and use of money and promotes independence, responsibility, and decisionmaking.

(b) A caregiver must provide each child in his or her care, beginning when the child attains 6 years of age, a weekly cash allowance that is not tied to the child's behavior or the completion of the child's chores. A caregiver may not withhold the child's allowance as a form of punishment. A child may not be required to use his or her allowance to purchase personal hygiene items, school supplies, clothing, or other necessities that are the responsibility of the child's caregiver. The minimum allowance is as follows:

1. For children ages 6 to 12 years, \$1 for each year of age per week.

2. For children ages 13 to 17 years, \$20 per week.

(c) In addition to providing the allowance required under paragraph (b), a caregiver is encouraged to do all of the

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117 following:

118 1. Offer the opportunity to earn money through chores to a
119 child placed in his or her care.

120 2. Help a child placed in his or her care to obtain
121 employment, if the child wants to be employed.

122 (d) The department may adopt rules to implement this
123 subsection.

124 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.