

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to children and young adults in out-
3 of-home care; creating s. 39.00146, F.S.; requiring a
4 face sheet with specified information for every case
5 record of a child under certain supervision; requiring
6 the face sheet to be updated monthly; requiring the
7 Department of Children and Families to adopt rules;
8 amending s. 39.522, F.S.; requiring the court to hear
9 all parties if any party or the current caregiver
10 denies a need for a change in placement for a child;
11 amending s. 39.523, F.S.; providing legislative
12 findings; requiring the coordination of a child and
13 family team or multidisciplinary team under certain
14 circumstances; providing priority for the initial
15 placement of a child; requiring consideration of a
16 child's siblings and child care provider or school
17 when determining the initial placement of the child;
18 providing priority for a change of placement of a
19 child; providing when a child must remain in his or
20 her current placement and when the child may be moved
21 to a new placement; requiring the coordination of a
22 child and family team under certain circumstances;
23 requiring a transition plan to be created for each
24 placement of a child and notice to be given within a
25 specified time, except in cases of emergency;

26 providing requirements for the transition plan;
27 requiring the plan to be filed with the court within a
28 specified time; creating s. 39.525, F.S.; providing
29 for a child and family team under certain
30 circumstances; providing requirements for the child
31 and family team facilitator; providing membership of
32 the child and family team; providing requirements for
33 the child and family team; providing requirements for
34 the case manager after the child and family team has
35 convened; requiring the department to make certain
36 decisions if the child and family team cannot come to
37 a unanimous consensus; creating s. 39.526, F.S.;
38 requiring the department to use reasonable efforts to
39 place siblings in the same out-of-home placement
40 unless it is not in a child's best interest; requiring
41 certain documentation if siblings are not placed
42 together; providing requirements for the department or
43 community-based care lead agency relating to sibling
44 placement; amending s. 39.6035, F.S.; requiring a
45 transition plan be developed during the year after a
46 child turns 16 years of age and be updated as needed;
47 amending s. 39.701, F.S.; requiring judicial review
48 hearings within a specified time after a child's
49 specified birthday; providing the child and other
50 relevant parties the opportunity to address the court

51 at each review hearing; requiring the department to
52 provide an updated case plan with certain information;
53 authorizing the court to review the child's status on
54 a more frequent basis; amending s. 39.806, F.S.;
55 conforming a cross-reference; creating s. 39.8155,
56 F.S; providing that parental rights may be reinstated
57 under certain conditions; requiring dismissal of the
58 motion to reinstate parental rights if certain
59 criteria are not met; providing evidence that may be
60 considered when determining a motion to reinstate
61 parental rights; requiring supervised visitation and
62 trial home visits for a specified time; requiring the
63 department to report to the court once a month;
64 requiring visitation to cease under certain
65 circumstances; requiring clear and convincing evidence
66 that reinstatement of parental rights in is the
67 child's best interest; requiring an in-home safety
68 plan if parental rights are reinstated; providing that
69 the court retains jurisdiction for a specified time;
70 amending s. 409.1451, F.S.; providing responsibilities
71 of the department for the Road-to-Independence
72 Program; providing requirements for community-based
73 care lead agencies; removing Legislative determination
74 relating to the Independent Living Services Advisory
75 Council's ability to provide valuable contributions to

76 the department; requiring certain information be
 77 reported to the Governor and the Legislature; revising
 78 membership of the council; creating s. 409.14515,
 79 F.S.; providing requirements for the department to
 80 help children achieve self-sufficiency; amending s.
 81 409.1454, F.S.; providing that children receiving
 82 certain services and support may be eligible to have
 83 certain fees paid for them; amending s. 409.988, F.S.;
 84 requiring a community-based care lead agency to serve
 85 certain children; creating s. 414.56, F.S.; creating
 86 the Office of Continuing Care; providing duties of the
 87 office; providing requirements for the Florida
 88 Institute for Child Welfare; providing evaluation and
 89 analysis requirements; requiring the evaluation and
 90 analysis report be submitted to the Governor and
 91 Legislature by specified dates; providing an effective
 92 date.

93
 94 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

95
 96 Section 1. Section 39.00146, Florida Statutes, is created
 97 to read:

98 39.00146 Case record face sheet.—

99 (1) The case record of every child under the supervision
 100 or in the custody of the department, the department's authorized

101 agents, or providers contracting with the department, including
102 community-based care lead agencies and their subcontracted
103 providers, must include a face sheet containing relevant
104 information about the child and his or her case, including all
105 of the following:

106 (a) General case information, including, but not limited
107 to:

108 1. The child's full name and date of birth.

109 2. The child's current county of residence and the child's
110 county of residence at the time of the report to the central
111 abuse hotline.

112 3. The reason for the report to the central abuse hotline
113 and any family safety concerns.

114 4. The personal identifying information of the parents or
115 caregiver who had custody of the child at the time of the report
116 to the central abuse hotline, including the full name, date of
117 birth, and county of residence of the parents or caregivers.

118 5. The date the child was removed from the home.

119 6. The name and contact information of the attorneys
120 assigned to the case in all capacities, including the attorney
121 or attorneys that represent the department, the parents or
122 caregiver, and the guardian ad litem, if one is appointed to the
123 child.

124 (b) The name and contact information for all employees of
125 the department, the department's authorized agents, or providers

126 contracting with the department, including community-based care
 127 lead agencies and their subcontracted providers, who have worked
 128 with the child, including the child's current and previous case
 129 managers, and the name and contact information for the
 130 supervisor of all such employees.

131 (c) Information pertaining to all relevant family members
 132 and other fictive kin, including, but not limited to, the full
 133 name and contact information of:

134 1. The child's parents.

135 2. Any siblings known at the time of the child's removal
 136 from the home, including the location of the current out-of-home
 137 placement of such siblings, if applicable.

138 3. The child's current caregivers and any previous out-of-
 139 home placements.

140 4. Any other adults who take care of the child in some
 141 capacity.

142 5. Any other children who reside in the out-of-home
 143 placement of the child, if applicable.

144 (d) Information pertaining to recent and upcoming court
 145 hearings, including, but not limited to:

146 1. The date, subject matter, and county of court
 147 jurisdiction of the most recent court hearing.

148 2. The date, subject matter, and county of court
 149 jurisdiction of the next scheduled court hearing.

150 (e) Contact information for persons and organizations

151 currently providing services and support to the child.

152 (f) A description of any threats of danger that place the
153 child at imminent risk of removal, if applicable.

154 (g) An explanation of concerns that each individual parent
155 or current caregiver has for the child.

156 (h) Any concerns that exist regarding the parent or the
157 current caregiver's ability to:

158 1. Engage or bond with the child if the child is an
159 infant;

160 2. Structure daily activities that stimulate the child;

161 3. Manage the child's behavior;

162 4. Maintain a safe home; or

163 5. Make healthy decisions for the child.

164 (i) Any transitions in placement the child has experienced
165 since the child's initial placement and a description of how
166 such transitions were accomplished in accordance with s. 39.523.

167 (j) Any other information the department, the department's
168 authorized agents, or providers contracting with the department,
169 including community-based care lead agencies and their
170 subcontracted providers, deem relevant.

171 (2) The department, the department's authorized agents, or
172 providers contracting with the department, including community-
173 based care lead agencies and their subcontracted providers, must
174 ensure that the face sheet for each case record is updated
175 monthly.

176 (3) The department shall adopt rules necessary to
177 implement this section.

178 Section 2. Subsections (1) through (4) of section 39.522,
179 Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (2) through (5),
180 respectively, present subsection (1) of that section is amended,
181 and a new subsection (1) is added to that section, to read:

182 39.522 Postdisposition change of custody.—

183 (1) The court may change the temporary legal custody or
184 the conditions of protective supervision at a postdisposition
185 hearing, without the necessity of another adjudicatory hearing.

186 (2) (a) ~~(1) (a)~~ At any time before a child is residing in the
187 permanent placement approved at the permanency hearing, a child
188 who has been placed in the child's own home under the protective
189 supervision of an authorized agent of the department, in the
190 home of a relative, in the home of a legal custodian, or in some
191 other place may be brought before the court by the department or
192 by any other interested person, upon the filing of a motion
193 alleging a need for a change in the conditions of protective
194 supervision or the placement. If any party or the current
195 caregiver denies ~~the parents or other legal custodians deny~~ the
196 need for a change, the court shall hear all parties in person or
197 by counsel, or both.

198 (b) Upon the admission of a need for a change or after
199 such hearing, the court shall enter an order changing the
200 placement, modifying the conditions of protective supervision,

201 or continuing the conditions of protective supervision as
202 ordered. The standard for changing custody of the child shall be
203 the best interests of the child. When determining whether a
204 change of legal custody or placement is in the best interests of
205 the child, the court shall consider:

206 1. The child's age.

207 2. The physical, mental, and emotional health benefits to
208 the child by remaining in his or her current placement or moving
209 to the proposed placement.

210 3. The stability and longevity of the child's current
211 placement.

212 4. The established bonded relationship between the child
213 and the current or proposed caregiver.

214 5. The reasonable preference of the child, if the court
215 has found that the child is of sufficient intelligence,
216 understanding, and experience to express a preference.

217 6. The recommendation of the child's current caregiver.

218 7. The recommendation of the child's guardian ad litem, if
219 one has been appointed.

220 8. The child's previous and current relationship with a
221 sibling, if the change of legal custody or placement will
222 separate or reunite siblings.

223 9. The likelihood of the child attaining permanency in the
224 current or proposed placement.

225 10. Any other relevant factors.

226 (c)~~(b)~~ If the child is not placed in foster care, the new
 227 placement for the child must meet the home study criteria and
 228 court approval under this chapter.

229 Section 3. Section 39.523, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 230 read:

231 39.523 Placement in out-of-home care.—

232 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

233 (a) The Legislature finds that it is a basic tenet of
 234 child welfare practice and the law that a child be placed in the
 235 least restrictive, most family-like setting available in close
 236 proximity to the home of his or her parents which meets the
 237 needs of the child, and that a child be placed in a permanent
 238 home in a timely manner.

239 (b) The Legislature ~~also~~ finds that there is an
 240 association between placements that do not meet the needs of the
 241 child and adverse outcomes for the child, that mismatching
 242 placements to children's needs has been identified as a factor
 243 that negatively impacts placement stability, and that
 244 identifying the right placement for each child requires
 245 effective assessment.

246 (c) The Legislature finds that an effective assessment of
 247 where a child should be placed is particularly important for
 248 young children who are 3 years of age or younger as evidenced by
 249 research on the science of attachment and brain development.
 250 Such research shows that a stable and nurturing relationship in

251 the first years of life, as well as the quality of such
252 relationships, shape a child's brain development, provide a
253 foundation for lifelong mental health and determine well-being
254 as an adult.

255 (d)(e) It is the intent of the Legislature that whenever a
256 child is unable to safely remain at home with a parent, the most
257 appropriate available out-of-home placement shall be chosen
258 after an assessment of the child's needs and the availability of
259 caregivers qualified to meet the child's needs.

260 (2) ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT.—When any child is removed
261 from a home and placed in ~~into~~ out-of-home care, a comprehensive
262 placement assessment process shall be completed to determine the
263 level of care needed by the child and match the child with the
264 most appropriate placement.

265 (a) The community-based care lead agency or subcontracted
266 agency with the responsibility for assessment and placement
267 shall ~~must~~ coordinate a child and family team if required under
268 s. 39.525, and may coordinate either a child or family team or a
269 multidisciplinary team staffing for other placement decisions.

270 (b) The multidisciplinary team staffing must be with any
271 available individual currently involved with the child,
272 including, but not limited to, a representative from the
273 department and the case manager for the child; a therapist,
274 attorney ad litem, guardian ad litem, teachers, coaches,
275 Children's Medical Services; and other community providers of

276 services to the child or stakeholders as applicable. The
 277 multidisciplinary team may also include clergy, relatives, and
 278 fictive kin if appropriate. Multidisciplinary team participants
 279 must gather data and information on the child which is known at
 280 the time including, but not limited to:

- 281 1. Mental, medical, behavioral health, and medication
 282 history.~~†~~
- 283 2. Community ties and school placement.~~†~~
- 284 3. Current placement decisions relating to any siblings.~~†~~
- 285 4. Alleged type of abuse, ~~or~~ neglect, or abandonment,
 286 including sexual abuse and trafficking history.~~†~~~~and~~
- 287 5. The child's age, maturity, strengths, hobbies or
 288 activities, and the child's preference for placement.

289 (c)~~(b)~~ The comprehensive placement assessment process may
 290 also include the use of an assessment instrument or tool that is
 291 best suited for the individual child.

292 (d)~~(e)~~ The most appropriate available out-of-home
 293 placement shall be chosen after consideration by all members of
 294 the multidisciplinary team or child and family team of all of
 295 the information and data gathered, including the results and
 296 recommendations of any evaluations conducted, and the
 297 prioritization for placement under subsection (3) or subsection
 298 (4).

299 (e)~~(d)~~ Placement decisions for each child in out-of-home
 300 placement shall be reviewed as often as necessary to ensure

301 permanency for that child and address special issues related to
302 this population of children.

303 (f)~~(e)~~ The department, a sheriff's office acting under s.
304 39.3065, a community-based care lead agency, or a case
305 management organization must document all placement assessments
306 and placement decisions in the Florida Safe Families Network.

307 (g)~~(f)~~ If it is determined during the comprehensive
308 placement assessment process that residential treatment as
309 defined in s. 39.407 would be suitable for the child, the
310 procedures in that section must be followed.

311 (3) INITIAL PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—

312 (a) When a child cannot safely remain at home with a
313 parent, the department must consider the following options, in
314 order of priority, as the initial out-of-home placement for the
315 child:

- 316 1. The nonoffending parent.
- 317 2. A relative caregiver.
- 318 3. An adoptive parent of the child's sibling.
- 319 4. A fictive kin or nonrelative.
- 320 5. A licensed foster home.
- 321 6. A group home or congregate care.

322 (b) Siblings must be placed in the same placement if
323 possible and if placement together is in the best interest of
324 each child. A child must be placed separately from a sibling if
325 it is in that child's best interest to be separated from that

326 | sibling.

327 | (c) The department shall consider the child's current
328 | child care provider or school and seek to maintain attendance at
329 | the same child care provider or school until a review is
330 | conducted to determine whether changing child care providers or
331 | schools is in the child's best interest.

332 | (4) SUBSEQUENT PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—When the department is
333 | considering moving a child from a previous placement, it shall
334 | prioritize placement options as provided in this subsection.

335 | (a) A child shall remain in his or her current placement
336 | if:

337 | 1.a. Reunification is not a permanency option for the
338 | child.

339 | b. The child has resided in the same out-of-home placement
340 | for more than 9 months.

341 | c. The current caregiver of the child in the out-of-home
342 | placement requests and is eligible for consideration as an
343 | adoptive parent or a permanent custodian for the child.

344 | d. The child is under 6 years old or is of sufficient age
345 | and understanding to express a preference and that preference is
346 | to remain with the current caregiver;

347 | 2.a. The child is between the ages of 1 and 2 years old
348 | and has been in the placement for at least 1 month.

349 | b. The proposed placement is not to reunify the child with
350 | a parent.

351 c. The current caregiver is willing to continue caring for
 352 the child; or

353 3.a. The proposed placement is not to reunify a child with
 354 a parent or intended to be a permanent placement.

355 b. The child has a strong bond with the current caregiver.

356 c. The proposed placement is to unify the child with a
 357 sibling with whom the child does not have an existing
 358 relationship or the child, if of sufficient age and
 359 understanding, expresses a preference to remain with the current
 360 caregiver.

361 d. The current caregiver is willing to continue caring for
 362 the child.

363 (b) A child may be moved to a new placement when:

364 1. Circumstances do not meet the criteria in subparagraph
 365 (a).

366 2. The child is separated from a sibling with whom the
 367 child had a preexisting relationship with before the most recent
 368 removal, and the placement would be with that sibling.

369 3. The child's placement would not be contrary to the
 370 safety or well-being of any child within the group of siblings
 371 placed together.

372 4. The child is of sufficient age and understanding to
 373 express a preference and that preference is to be placed with
 374 the child's sibling and proposed caregiver.

375 5. One or more children from the same sibling group are

376 currently placed with a foster parent or in a group home, and
377 the new placement would reunify the entire sibling group with a
378 relative or fictive kin.

379 (c) If the proposed placement would involve a child
380 meeting the criteria in paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) and the
381 proposed placement is other than the placement prioritized for
382 that child, the department shall convene a child and family team
383 meeting under s. 39.525.

384 (5) TRANSITION PLANNING.—

385 (a) An individualized transition plan must be created and
386 implemented for each placement change of a child.

387 (b)1. The transition plan shall begin as early as possible
388 before moving a child and extend as long as necessary to meet
389 the child's developmental stage and psychological needs.

390 2. If a change of placement is due to an emergency which
391 precludes transition activities before the child's move, the
392 department or community-based care lead agency shall provide
393 support services immediately before, during, and after the move.
394 The department shall create a transition plan as soon as
395 possible after the move to assist the child in achieving closure
396 with the former placement and adjusting to the new placement.

397 (c) Except in an emergency, the department or community-
398 based care lead agency must provide at least 14 days' notice of
399 the planned move and must include in the notice the reason a
400 placement change is necessary. A copy of the notice must be

401 filed with the court and be provided to the parties involved in
402 the child's case and the child's current caregiver.

403 (d) The transition plan must be developed through
404 cooperation among the parties to the child's case and the case
405 manager, and such persons must share any relevant information
406 necessary to develop the transition plan.

407 (e) The transition plan must, to the extent it is in the
408 best interest for the child:

409 1. Respect the child's developmental stage and
410 psychological needs.

411 2. Ensure the child has all of his or her belongings and
412 is allowed to help pack those belongings when age appropriate.

413 3. Allow for a gradual transition from the current
414 caregiver's home with adequate overlap between the two
415 caregivers, and must permit the child to have a final visitation
416 with everyone important to the child from the current placement,
417 including, but not limited to, pets.

418 4. Allow, when possible, for continued contact with the
419 previous caregiver and others in the home after removal.

420 5. Except in an emergency, prohibit a change in placement
421 that occurs between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m.

422 (f) The department or the community-based care lead agency
423 must file the transition plan with the court within 48 hours
424 after the creation of such plan and provide a copy of the plan
425 to the parties to which notice was provided under paragraph (c).

426 (6)~~(3)~~ JUDICIAL REVIEW.—At each judicial review, the court
427 shall consider the results of the assessment, the placement
428 decision made for the child, and services provided to the child
429 as required under s. 39.701.

430 (7)~~(4)~~ DATA COLLECTION.—The department shall collect the
431 following information by community-based care lead agencies and
432 post it on the Department of Children and Families' website. The
433 information is to be updated on January 1 and July 1 of each
434 year.

435 (a) The number of children placed with relatives and
436 nonrelatives, in family foster homes, and in residential group
437 care.

438 (b) An inventory of available services that are necessary
439 to maintain children in the least restrictive setting that meets
440 the needs of the child and a plan for filling any identified gap
441 in those services.

442 (c) The number of children who were placed based upon the
443 assessment.

444 (d) An inventory of existing placements for children by
445 type and by community-based care lead agency.

446 (e) The strategies being used by community-based care lead
447 agencies to recruit, train, and support an adequate number of
448 families to provide home-based family care.

449 (8)~~(5)~~ RULEMAKING.—The department may adopt rules to
450 implement this section.

451 Section 4. Section 39.525, Florida Statutes, is created to
452 read:

453 39.525 Child and family teams.—Child and family team
454 meetings may be held when an important decision has to be made
455 about the child's life and must be held when a proposed
456 subsequent placement is not consistent with the placement
457 prioritized for the child as required in s. 39.523(4).

458 (1) Based on the identified goal of the child and family
459 team meeting, the case manager shall determine which individuals
460 are necessary for that meeting. The team must be as diverse as
461 possible to ensure that the optimal combination of technical
462 skills, cultural knowledge, community resources, and personal
463 relationships is developed and maintained for the child and
464 family.

465 (2) The child and family team must be led by a trained,
466 skilled facilitator. The facilitator must maintain an
467 environment that is conducive to respectful, productive
468 collaboration and help team members identify the child's and
469 family's strengths.

470 (3) When possible, and subject to the ability of the
471 facilitator to carry out his or her responsibilities as provided
472 in subsection (2), a child and family team must include all of
473 the following individuals:

474 (a) The child, if of sufficient age and understanding to
475 participate.

476 (b) The child's family members and other individuals
477 identified by the family as being important to the child,
478 provided that a parent who has a no contact order or injunction,
479 is alleged to have sexually abused the child, or is subject to a
480 termination of parental rights may not participate.

481 (c) The child's current caregiver.

482 (d) The child's case manager.

483 (e) The child's therapist or other behavioral health
484 professional, when applicable.

485 (4) The child and family team may also include other
486 professionals, including, but not limited to:

487 (a) A representative from Children's Medical Services, if
488 Children's Medical Services is involved with the family;

489 (b) A guardian ad litem, if one is appointed;

490 (c) The parent's attorney, if applicable.

491 (d) A representative from the child's school or child care
492 provider who personally knows the child; or

493 (e) Other community providers of services to the child or
494 parents, when applicable.

495 (5) The child and family team may also include other
496 individuals associated with and supportive of the child and
497 family, including, but not limited to, relatives, friends,
498 neighbors, coaches or other adult leaders of the child's
499 extracurricular activities, clergy or other members of the
500 family's religious community, coworkers of the parents, or other

501 individuals whom the family identifies as a potential source of
502 support.

503 (6) When a child and family team has been convened, the
504 case manager must make every effort to engage extended family
505 and individuals who provide community-based support who will
506 continue supporting the family after the department is no longer
507 involved.

508 (7) Child and family team meetings must be structured to
509 accomplish the identified goal of the meeting. When developing a
510 plan to implement the identified goal of the meeting, team
511 members must consider all of the following:

512 (a) Ensuring that a child is safe and is in the least
513 restrictive placement that can meet the child's needs.

514 (b) Minimizing the trauma associated with separation from
515 the child's family and helping the child maintain meaningful
516 connections with family members and other individuals who are
517 important to the child.

518 (c) Providing input into the placement decision made by
519 the community-based care lead agency and the services to be
520 provided in order to support the child.

521 (d) Providing input into the decision to preserve or
522 maintain the placement, including necessary placement
523 preservation strategies.

524 (e) Contributing to an ongoing assessment of the child and
525 the family's strengths and needs.

526 (f) Facilitating the timely achievement of permanency for
527 the child.

528 (8) After a child and family team meeting has occurred,
529 the child's case manager must:

530 (a) Document in the child's case plan a description of
531 roles, responsibilities, and tasks of team members in carrying
532 out the plan to address the identified goal.

533 (b) Monitor the plan for progress and ensure that plans
534 are revised or updated as the child's or family's circumstances
535 change.

536 (c) Notify the court of the reason for the child and
537 family team meeting and action steps to carry out the team's
538 plan to address the identified goal for the child and family.

539 (9) If the child and family team cannot come to a
540 unanimous consensus on a plan to address the identified goal,
541 the facilitator shall notify the court and the department within
542 48 hours after the conclusion of the team meeting. The
543 department shall then determine how to address the identified
544 goal of the meeting by what is in the child's best interest.

545 (10) The identified goal of a child and family team that
546 is convened under s. 39.523(4)(c) must be to recommend what
547 placement would be in the best interest of the child.

548 (a) At the conclusion of the team meeting, the case
549 manager shall provide a report to the department on the
550 recommended placement and why it is in the best interest of the

551 child.

552 (b) If the child and family team cannot come to a
553 unanimous consensus on a placement for the child, the
554 facilitator shall provide a report to the court and department
555 of the concerns and disagreements raised during the team
556 meeting. The department shall determine what placement is in the
557 best interest of the child by considering the concerns raised in
558 the facilitator's report and the factors provided in s. 39.522.

559 (11) The Florida Institute for Child Welfare established
560 under s. 1004.615 shall provide recommendations to the
561 department on the effective use of child and family teams.

562 Section 5. Section 39.526, Florida Statutes, is created to
563 read:

564 39.526 Siblings in out-of-home care.-

565 (1) Except as provided in s. 39.523(3) and (4), the
566 department or community-based care lead agency shall make
567 reasonable efforts to place siblings with an existing
568 relationship in the same out-of-home placement. Such placement
569 is not required if it is not in the best interest of one of the
570 siblings. The department or community-based care lead agency
571 must document in the child's case file and in the case record
572 face sheet required under s. 39.00146 the reasons that joint
573 placement for the siblings was not able to occur and the
574 reasonable efforts the department will make to provide frequent
575 visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings. If

576 the court finds that visitation or interaction is not in the
577 best interest of one of the siblings, the court shall limit or
578 restrict visitation or interaction between the siblings.

579 (2) The department or the community-based care lead agency
580 shall, to the extent that it is in each sibling's best interest:

581 (a) Assign siblings to the same case manager, regardless
582 of when a child enters care.

583 (b) Provide training to case managers on the importance of
584 preserving sibling connections.

585 (c) Periodically reassess sibling placement, visitation,
586 and other sibling interaction in cases where siblings are
587 separated, not visiting, or not interacting to determine if a
588 change in placement is warranted, subject to s. 39.523(4).

589 (d) Place siblings geographically near each other, such as
590 in the same neighborhood or school district, to make it easier
591 for the siblings to see each other regularly, when possible.

592 (e) Work with caregivers to help maintain or strengthen
593 relationships among separated siblings by:

594 1. Creating opportunities for siblings to engage in
595 frequent and regular visitation, to be actively involved in each
596 other's lives, and to participate in celebrations, including,
597 but not limited to, birthdays, graduations, holidays, school and
598 extracurricular activities, cultural customs, and other
599 milestones.

600 2. Utilizing other forms of interaction when regular in-

601 person meetings are not possible or are not sufficient to meet
602 the needs or desires of the siblings, including but not limited
603 to electronic communication, letters and cards, social media, or
604 telephone calls.

605 3. Coordinating joint outings or summer or weekend camp
606 experiences to facilitate time together, including, but not
607 limited to, activities or camps specifically designed for
608 siblings residing in out-of-home care.

609 4. Utilizing joint respite care to assist the caregivers
610 who are caring for separated siblings to have needed breaks
611 while also facilitating interaction among the siblings,
612 including, but not limited to, providing babysitting or respite
613 care for each other.

614 5. Prohibiting withholding visitation or interaction among
615 the siblings as a form of punishment.

616 6. Providing a caregiver with information, guidance,
617 training, and support necessary to maintain or strengthen
618 relationships among separated siblings.

619 7. Promptly providing a child with information as to the
620 location of and contact information for his or her siblings who
621 are under the supervision of the department. If the existence or
622 location of, or contact information for, a child's siblings is
623 not known, the department or community-based care lead agency
624 must make reasonable efforts to ascertain such information.

625 (3) If it becomes known that a child in out-of-home care

626 | has a sibling of whom the child was previously unaware, the
 627 | department or community-based care lead agency must determine
 628 | whether the child's current placement or permanency plan
 629 | requires modification and whether contact between the siblings
 630 | would be in the best interests of each child, subject to s.
 631 | 39.523(4).

632 | Section 6. Subsection (1) of section 39.6035, Florida
 633 | Statutes, is amended to read:

634 | 39.6035 Transition plan.—

635 | (1) During the year ~~180-day period~~ after a child reaches
 636 | 16 ~~17~~ years of age, the department and the community-based care
 637 | provider, in collaboration with the caregiver and any other
 638 | individual whom the child would like to include, shall assist
 639 | the child in developing a transition plan. The required
 640 | transition plan is in addition to standard case management
 641 | requirements. The transition plan must address specific options
 642 | for the child to use in obtaining services, including housing,
 643 | health insurance, education, financial literacy, a driver
 644 | license, and workforce support and employment services. The plan
 645 | must also include tasks to establish and maintain ~~consider~~
 646 | ~~establishing and maintaining~~ naturally occurring mentoring
 647 | relationships and other personal support services. The
 648 | transition plan may be as detailed as the child chooses. This
 649 | plan shall be updated as needed before the child reaches 18
 650 | years of age. In developing and updating the transition plan,

651 the department and the community-based care lead agency ~~provider~~
 652 shall:

653 (a) Provide the child with the documentation required
 654 under ~~pursuant to~~ s. 39.701(3).~~†~~

655 (b) Coordinate the transition plan with the independent
 656 living provisions in the case plan and, for a child with
 657 disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 658 transition plan.~~†~~ ~~and~~

659 (c) Provide information for the financial literacy
 660 curriculum for youth offered by the Department of Financial
 661 Services.

662 Section 7. Subsection (3) of section 39.701, Florida
 663 Statutes, is amended to read:

664 39.701 Judicial review.—

665 (3) REVIEW HEARINGS FOR CHILDREN 16 AND 17 YEARS OF AGE.—

666 At each review hearing held under this subsection, the court
 667 shall give the child the opportunity to address the court and
 668 provide any information relevant to the child's best interest,
 669 particularly in relation to independent living transition
 670 services. The foster parent, legal custodian, or guardian ad
 671 litem may also provide any information relevant to the child's
 672 best interest to the court.

673 ~~(a)~~ In addition to the review and report required under
 674 paragraphs (1)(a) and (2)(a), respectively, the court shall:

675 (a) Hold a judicial review hearing within 90 days after a

676 | child's 16th 17th birthday. At the first judicial review hearing
677 | held subsequent to the child's 16th birthday, the department
678 | shall provide the court with an updated case plan that includes
679 | specific information related to the independent living skills
680 | that the child has acquired since the child's 13th birthday, or
681 | since the date the child came into foster care, whichever came
682 | later. For any child who may meet the requirements for
683 | appointment of a guardian advocate under s. 393.12, or a
684 | guardian under chapter 744, the updated case plan must be
685 | developed in a face-to-face conference with the child, if
686 | appropriate; the child's attorney; any court-appointed guardian
687 | ad litem; the temporary custodian of the child; and the parent
688 | of the child, if the parent's rights have not been terminated.
689 | ~~The court shall also issue an order, separate from the order on~~
690 | ~~judicial review, that the disability of nonage of the child has~~
691 | ~~been removed pursuant to ss. 743.044, 743.045, 743.046, and~~
692 | ~~743.047, and for any of these disabilities that the court finds~~
693 | ~~is in the child's best interest to remove. The court shall~~
694 | ~~continue to hold timely judicial review hearings. If necessary,~~
695 | ~~the court may review the status of the child more frequently~~
696 | ~~during the year before the child's 18th birthday. At each review~~
697 | ~~hearing held under this subsection, in addition to any~~
698 | ~~information or report provided to the court by the foster~~
699 | ~~parent, legal custodian, or guardian ad litem, the child shall~~
700 | ~~be given the opportunity to address the court with any~~

701 ~~information relevant to the child's best interest, particularly~~
702 ~~in relation to independent living transition services.~~

703 (b) The court shall hold a judicial review hearing within
704 90 days after a child's 17th birthday. The court shall issue an
705 order, separate from the order on judicial review, that the
706 disability of nonage of the child has been removed under ss.
707 743.044, 743.045, 743.046, and 743.047, for any disability that
708 the court finds is in the child's best interest to remove. The
709 department shall include in the social study report for the
710 first judicial review that occurs after the child's 17th
711 birthday written verification that the child has:

712 1. A current Medicaid card and all necessary information
713 concerning the Medicaid program sufficient to prepare the child
714 to apply for coverage upon reaching the age of 18, if such
715 application is appropriate.

716 2. A certified copy of the child's birth certificate and,
717 if the child does not have a valid driver license, a Florida
718 identification card issued under s. 322.051.

719 3. A social security card and information relating to
720 social security insurance benefits if the child is eligible for
721 those benefits. If the child has received such benefits and they
722 are being held in trust for the child, a full accounting of
723 these funds must be provided and the child must be informed as
724 to how to access those funds.

725 4. All relevant information related to the Road-to-

726 Independence Program under s. 409.1451, including, but not
727 limited to, eligibility requirements, information on
728 participation, and assistance in gaining admission to the
729 program. If the child is eligible for the Road-to-Independence
730 Program, he or she must be advised that he or she may continue
731 to reside with the licensed family home or group care provider
732 with whom the child was residing at the time the child attained
733 his or her 18th birthday, in another licensed family home, or
734 with a group care provider arranged by the department.

735 5. An open bank account or the identification necessary to
736 open a bank account and to acquire essential banking and
737 budgeting skills.

738 6. Information on public assistance and how to apply for
739 public assistance.

740 7. A clear understanding of where he or she will be living
741 on his or her 18th birthday, how living expenses will be paid,
742 and the educational program or school in which he or she will be
743 enrolled.

744 8. Information related to the ability of the child to
745 remain in care until he or she reaches 21 years of age under s.
746 39.013.

747 9. A letter providing the dates that the child is under
748 the jurisdiction of the court.

749 10. A letter stating that the child is in compliance with
750 financial aid documentation requirements.

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- 751 11. The child's educational records.
- 752 12. The child's entire health and mental health records.
- 753 13. The process for accessing the child's ~~his or her~~ case
754 file.
- 755 14. A statement encouraging the child to attend all
756 judicial review hearings ~~occurring after the child's 17th~~
757 ~~birthday.~~
- 758 15. Information on how to obtain a driver license or
759 learner's driver license.
- 760 (c) ~~(b)~~ At the first judicial review hearing held
761 subsequent to the child's 17th birthday, ~~the department shall~~
762 ~~provide the court with an updated case plan that includes~~
763 ~~specific information related to the independent living skills~~
764 ~~that the child has acquired since the child's 13th birthday, or~~
765 ~~since the date the child came into foster care, whichever came~~
766 ~~later.~~
- 767 1. ~~For any child who may meet the requirements for~~
768 ~~appointment of a guardian pursuant to chapter 744, or a guardian~~
769 ~~advocate pursuant to s. 393.12, the updated case plan must be~~
770 ~~developed in a face-to-face conference with the child, if~~
771 ~~appropriate; the child's attorney; any court-appointed guardian~~
772 ~~ad litem; the temporary custodian of the child; and the parent,~~
773 ~~if the parent's rights have not been terminated.~~
- 774 2. ~~At the judicial review hearing,~~ if the court determines
775 pursuant to chapter 744 that there is a good faith basis to

776 believe that the child qualifies for appointment of a guardian
777 advocate, limited guardian, or plenary guardian for the child
778 and that no less restrictive decisionmaking assistance will meet
779 the child's needs:

780 ~~1.a.~~ The department shall complete a multidisciplinary
781 report which must include, but is not limited to, a psychosocial
782 evaluation and educational report if such a report has not been
783 completed within the previous 2 years.

784 ~~2.b.~~ The department shall identify one or more individuals
785 who are willing to serve as the guardian advocate under ~~pursuant~~
786 ~~to~~ s. 393.12 or as the plenary or limited guardian under
787 ~~pursuant to~~ chapter 744. Any other interested parties or
788 participants may make efforts to identify such a guardian
789 advocate, limited guardian, or plenary guardian. The child's
790 biological or adoptive family members, including the child's
791 parents if the parents' rights have not been terminated, may not
792 be considered for service as the plenary or limited guardian
793 unless the court enters a written order finding that such an
794 appointment is in the child's best interests.

795 ~~3.e.~~ Proceedings may be initiated within 180 days after
796 the child's 17th birthday for the appointment of a guardian
797 advocate, plenary guardian, or limited guardian for the child in
798 a separate proceeding in the court division with jurisdiction
799 over guardianship matters and pursuant to chapter 744. The
800 Legislature encourages the use of pro bono representation to

801 initiate proceedings under this section.

802 ~~4.3.~~ In the event another interested party or participant
803 initiates proceedings for the appointment of a guardian
804 advocate, plenary guardian, or limited guardian for the child,
805 the department shall provide all necessary documentation and
806 information to the petitioner to complete a petition under s.
807 393.12 or chapter 744 within 45 days after the first judicial
808 review hearing after the child's 17th birthday.

809 ~~5.4.~~ Any proceedings seeking appointment of a guardian
810 advocate or a determination of incapacity and the appointment of
811 a guardian must be conducted in a separate proceeding in the
812 court division with jurisdiction over guardianship matters and
813 pursuant to chapter 744.

814 ~~(d)-(e)~~ If the court finds at the judicial review hearing
815 after the child's 17th birthday that the department has not met
816 its obligations to the child as stated in this part, in the
817 written case plan, or in the provision of independent living
818 services, the court may issue an order directing the department
819 to show cause as to why it has not done so. If the department
820 cannot justify its noncompliance, the court may give the
821 department 30 days within which to comply. If the department
822 fails to comply within 30 days, the court may hold the
823 department in contempt.

824 ~~(e)-(d)~~ If necessary, the court may review the status of
825 the child more frequently during the year before the child's

826 18th birthday. At the last review hearing before the child
 827 reaches 18 years of age, and in addition to the requirements of
 828 subsection (2), the court shall:

829 1. Address whether the child plans to remain in foster
 830 care, and, if so, ensure that the child's transition plan
 831 includes a plan for meeting one or more of the criteria
 832 specified in s. 39.6251.

833 2. Ensure that the transition plan includes a supervised
 834 living arrangement under s. 39.6251.

835 3. Ensure the child has been informed of:

836 a. The right to continued support and services from the
 837 department, ~~and~~ the community-based care lead agency, and the
 838 Office of Continuing Care under s. 414.56.

839 b. The right to request termination of dependency
 840 jurisdiction and be discharged from foster care.

841 c. The opportunity to reenter foster care under ~~pursuant~~
 842 ~~to~~ s. 39.6251.

843 4. Ensure that the child ~~young adult~~, if he or she
 844 requests termination of dependency jurisdiction and discharge
 845 from foster care, has been informed of:

846 a. Services or benefits for which the child ~~young adult~~
 847 may be eligible based on his or her former placement in foster
 848 care, including, but not limited to, the assistance of the
 849 Office of Continuing Care under s. 414.56.

850 b. Services or benefits that may be lost through

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851 termination of dependency jurisdiction. ~~and~~

852 c. Other federal, state, local, or community-based
853 services or supports available to him or her.

854 Section 8. Paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of section
855 39.806, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

856 39.806 Grounds for termination of parental rights.—

857 (1) Grounds for the termination of parental rights may be
858 established under any of the following circumstances:

859 (e) When a child has been adjudicated dependent, a case
860 plan has been filed with the court, and:

861 1. The child continues to be abused, neglected, or
862 abandoned by the parent or parents. The failure of the parent or
863 parents to substantially comply with the case plan for a period
864 of 12 months after an adjudication of the child as a dependent
865 child or the child's placement into shelter care, whichever
866 occurs first, constitutes evidence of continuing abuse, neglect,
867 or abandonment unless the failure to substantially comply with
868 the case plan was due to the parent's lack of financial
869 resources or to the failure of the department to make reasonable
870 efforts to reunify the parent and child. The 12-month period
871 begins to run only after the child's placement into shelter care
872 or the entry of a disposition order placing the custody of the
873 child with the department or a person other than the parent and
874 the court's approval of a case plan having the goal of
875 reunification with the parent, whichever occurs first; ~~or~~

876 2. The parent or parents have materially breached the case
877 plan by their action or inaction. Time is of the essence for
878 permanency of children in the dependency system. In order to
879 prove the parent or parents have materially breached the case
880 plan, the court must find by clear and convincing evidence that
881 the parent or parents are unlikely or unable to substantially
882 comply with the case plan before time to comply with the case
883 plan expires; or.

884 3. The child has been in care for any 12 of the last 22
885 months and the parents have not substantially complied with the
886 case plan so as to permit reunification under s. 39.522(3) ~~s.~~
887 ~~39.522(2)~~ unless the failure to substantially comply with the
888 case plan was due to the parent's lack of financial resources or
889 to the failure of the department to make reasonable efforts to
890 reunify the parent and child.

891 Section 9. Section 39.8155, Florida Statutes, is created
892 to read:

893 39.8155 Reinstatement of parental rights.-

894 (1) After parental rights have been terminated in
895 accordance with this part, the department, the parent whose
896 rights were terminated, or the child may file a motion to
897 reinstate the parent's parental rights. The court may consider a
898 motion to reinstate parental rights if:

899 (a) The grounds for termination of parental rights were
900 based on s. 39.806(1)(a) or (e)1.-3.

901 (b) The parent was not the verified perpetrator of sexual
902 or physical abuse of the child.

903 (c) The parent has not been a perpetrator involved in any
904 verified reports of abuse, neglect, or abandonment since his or
905 her parental rights for the child were terminated, or the parent
906 has not had his or her parental rights terminated for any other
907 child, under any grounds, in this state or any other
908 jurisdiction.

909 (d) The child is at least 13 years of age.

910 (e) The child has not achieved permanency and is not in a
911 preadoptive placement, and at least 36 months have passed since
912 the termination of parental rights.

913 (2) The court shall dismiss a motion to reinstate parental
914 rights if the criteria are not met in subsection (1).

915 (3) If a motion to reinstate parental rights is filed, the
916 court shall consider all relevant evidence, including whether:

917 (a) The child possesses sufficient maturity to express a
918 preference regarding the reinstatement of parental rights.

919 (b) The child is not in a preadoptive home or under
920 permanent guardianship.

921 (c) The parent has a documented change in behavior such
922 that, given the current age and maturity of the child, the
923 circumstances that brought the child into care are remedied.

924 (d) The parent demonstrates sufficient protective
925 capacities, given the child's age, physical and behavioral

926 health, and any other specific characteristics and needs, such
927 that the risk of the child reentering care is low.

928 (e) Both the parent and child wish to reinstate parental
929 rights.

930 (f) A child and family team was convened under s. 39.525
931 and recommends the reinstatement of parental rights and has
932 developed a plan to transition the child to the former parent's
933 care.

934 (4) Upon finding that the criteria in subsection (3) are
935 established by clear and convincing evidence, the court shall
936 order the department to conduct supervised visitation and trial
937 home visits between the child and former parent for at least 3
938 consecutive months. The court shall consider the plan developed
939 by the child and family team. The department shall report to the
940 court at least once every 30 days regarding the former parent's
941 interactions with the child and recommend whether the court
942 should reinstate parental rights. The department shall
943 immediately cease the visitation with the former parent if there
944 is an allegation of abuse, neglect, or abandonment of the child
945 by the parent; if the department determines that the child's
946 safety or well-being is threatened; or that such visitation is
947 not in the child's best interest. The department shall
948 immediately notify the court if it ceases visitation between the
949 child and former parent.

950 (5) The court may reinstate parental rights upon a finding

951 of clear and convincing evidence that it is in the best interest
952 of the child. Upon ordering reinstatement of parental rights,
953 the court shall place the child in the custody of the former
954 parent with an in-home safety plan. The court shall retain
955 jurisdiction for at least 6 months, during which the department
956 shall supervise the placement and report to the court on the
957 stability of the placement. The court may continue jurisdiction
958 for up to 12 months after it reinstates parental rights.

959 Section 10. Subsections (5) and (7) of section 409.1451,
960 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

961 409.1451 The Road-to-Independence Program.—

962 (5) DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES ~~PORTABILITY~~.—

963 (a) The services provided under this section are portable
964 across county lines and between community-based care lead
965 agencies.

966 ~~1.(a)~~ The service needs that are identified in the
967 original or updated transition plan under, ~~pursuant to s.~~
968 39.6035 must, ~~shall~~ be provided by the lead agency where the
969 young adult is currently residing but shall be funded by the
970 lead agency that ~~who~~ initiated the transition plan.

971 ~~2.(b)~~ The lead agency with primary case management
972 responsibilities shall provide maintenance payments, case
973 planning, including a written description of all services that
974 will assist a child 16 years of age or older in preparing for
975 the transition from care to independence, as well as regular

976 case reviews that conform with all federal scheduling and
977 content requirements, for all children in foster care who are
978 placed or visiting out-of-state.

979 (b) Each community-based care lead agency shall at least
980 annually attempt to contact each young adult who has aged out of
981 foster care, who is potentially eligible for continuing care
982 under s. 39.6251 or for the services available under this
983 section, and who is not participating in any of these services.
984 Through this contact, the lead agency shall communicate the
985 continued availability of these programs and the services of the
986 Office of Continuing Care established under s. 414.56. The lead
987 agency shall also inquire into the young adult's needs and refer
988 him or her to other programs that may be of assistance.

989 (c) Each community-based care lead agency must offer
990 services for intensive life skill development for young adults
991 who have aged out of foster care and have the greatest deficits
992 in life skills.

993 (7) INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The
994 secretary shall establish the Independent Living Services
995 Advisory Council for the purpose of reviewing and making
996 recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of
997 ~~the provisions of s. 39.6251 and the Road-to-Independence~~
998 ~~Program. The advisory council shall function as specified in~~
999 ~~this subsection until the Legislature determines that the~~
1000 ~~advisory council can no longer provide a valuable contribution~~

1001 ~~to the department's efforts to achieve the goals of the services~~
 1002 ~~designed to enable a young adult to live independently.~~

1003 (a) The advisory council shall assess the implementation
 1004 and operation of the Road-to-Independence Program and advise the
 1005 department on actions that would improve the ability of the
 1006 ~~these~~ Road-to-Independence Program services to meet the
 1007 established goals. The advisory council shall keep the
 1008 department informed of problems being experienced with the
 1009 services, barriers to the effective and efficient integration of
 1010 services and support across systems, and successes that the
 1011 system of services has achieved. The department shall consider,
 1012 but is not required to implement, the recommendations of the
 1013 advisory council.

1014 (b)1. The advisory council shall report to the secretary
 1015 on the status of the implementation of the Road-to-Independence
 1016 Program, efforts to publicize the availability of the Road-to-
 1017 Independence Program, the success of the services under the
 1018 program, problems identified with the program, and
 1019 recommendations for department or legislative action, ~~and the~~
 1020 ~~department's implementation of the recommendations contained in~~
 1021 ~~the Independent Living Services Integration Workgroup Report~~
 1022 ~~submitted to the appropriate substantive committees of the~~
 1023 ~~Legislature by December 31, 2013.~~

1024 2. The department shall submit a report by December 31 of
 1025 each year to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the

1026 Speaker of the House of Representatives which includes ~~a summary~~
1027 ~~of the factors reported on by the council and identifies the~~
1028 recommendations of the advisory council and the department's
1029 response ~~either describes the department's actions to implement~~
1030 ~~the recommendations or provides the department's rationale for~~
1031 ~~not implementing the recommendations.~~ The report must also
1032 include the most recent data regarding the status of and
1033 outcomes for young adults who turned 18 years of age while in
1034 foster care, relating to education, employment, housing,
1035 financial, transportation, health and well-being, and
1036 connections, and an analysis of such data and outcomes.

1037 (c) Members of the advisory council shall be appointed by
1038 the secretary of the department. The membership of the advisory
1039 council must include, at a minimum, young adults who receive
1040 services and funding through the Road-to-Independence Program,
1041 representatives from the headquarters and regional offices of
1042 the department ~~of Children and Families,~~ community-based care
1043 lead agencies, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the
1044 Department of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Education,
1045 the Agency for Health Care Administration, the State Youth
1046 Advisory Board, CareerSource Florida, Inc., the Statewide
1047 Guardian Ad Litem Office, foster parents, ~~recipients of services~~
1048 ~~and funding through the Road-to-Independence Program,~~ and
1049 advocates for children in care. The secretary shall determine
1050 the length of the term to be served by each member appointed to

1051 the advisory council, which may not exceed 4 years.

1052 (d) The advisory council may maintain a committee composed
1053 of children currently in care and young adults who aged out of
1054 care with which to consult regarding their needs, preferences,
1055 and concerns related to preparation for, transition to, and
1056 support during independent living.

1057 (e)~~(d)~~ The department shall provide administrative support
1058 to the ~~Independent Living Services~~ advisory council to
1059 accomplish its assigned tasks. The advisory council shall be
1060 afforded access to all appropriate data from the department,
1061 each community-based care lead agency, and other relevant
1062 agencies in order to accomplish the tasks set forth in this
1063 section. The data collected may not include any information that
1064 would identify a specific child or young adult.

1065 ~~(e) The advisory council report required under paragraph~~
1066 ~~(b) must include an analysis of the system of independent living~~
1067 ~~transition services for young adults who reach 18 years of age~~
1068 ~~while in foster care before completing high school or its~~
1069 ~~equivalent and recommendations for department or legislative~~
1070 ~~action. The council shall assess and report on the most~~
1071 ~~effective method of assisting these young adults to complete~~
1072 ~~high school or its equivalent by examining the practices of~~
1073 ~~other states.~~

1074 Section 11. Section 409.14515, Florida Statutes, is
1075 created to read:

1076 409.14515 Independent living preparation.—The department
1077 shall assist children who are in foster care in making the
1078 transition to independent living and self-sufficiency as adults.
1079 To support opportunities for participation in age-appropriate
1080 life skills activities, the department shall:

1081 (1) Identify important life skills that children in out-
1082 of-home care should acquire.

1083 (2) Develop a list of age-appropriate activities and
1084 responsibilities useful for the development of specific life
1085 skills for use by children and their caregivers.

1086 (3) Design and disseminate training for caregivers related
1087 to building needed life skills. The training must include
1088 components that address the challenges of children in foster
1089 care in transitioning to adulthood and information on programs
1090 for children who are aging out of care under ss. 414.56 and
1091 409.1451, high school completion, applications for financial
1092 assistance for higher education, vocational school
1093 opportunities, supporting education, and employment
1094 opportunities.

1095 (4) Beginning after the child's 13th birthday, regularly
1096 assess the degree of life skills acquisition by each child. The
1097 department shall share the results of the assessments with the
1098 caregiver and support the caregiver in creating, implementing,
1099 monitoring, and revising plans as necessary to address the
1100 child's life skills deficits, if any.

1101 (5) Provide opportunities for children in foster care to
 1102 interact with qualified, trained mentors who are committed to
 1103 engaging reliably with the child long-term.

1104 (6) Develop and implement procedures for children of
 1105 sufficient age and understanding to directly access and manage
 1106 the personal allowance they receive from the department.

1107 Section 12. Subsection (4) of section 409.1454, Florida
 1108 Statutes, is amended to read:

1109 409.1454 Motor vehicle insurance and driver licenses for
 1110 children in care.—

1111 (4) Payment shall be made to eligible recipients in the
 1112 order of eligibility until available funds are exhausted. If a
 1113 child determined to be eligible reaches permanency status or
 1114 turns 18 years of age, the program may pay for that child to
 1115 complete a driver education program and obtain a driver license
 1116 for up to 6 months after the date the child reaches permanency
 1117 status or 6 months after the date the child turns 18 years of
 1118 age. A child continuing in care under s. 39.6251, or who was in
 1119 licensed care when the child reached 18 years of age and is
 1120 currently receiving postsecondary education services and support
 1121 under s. 409.1451(2), may be eligible to have the costs of
 1122 licensure and costs incidental to licensure paid if the child
 1123 demonstrates that such costs are creating barriers for obtaining
 1124 employment or completing educational goals.

1125 Section 13. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section

1126 409.988, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1127 409.988 Community-based care lead agency duties; general
 1128 provisions.—

1129 (1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

1130 (a) 1. Shall serve:

1131 a. All children referred as a result of a report of abuse,
 1132 neglect, or abandonment to the department's central abuse
 1133 hotline, including, but not limited to, children who are the
 1134 subject of verified reports and children who are not the subject
 1135 of verified reports but who are at moderate to extremely high
 1136 risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, as determined using the
 1137 department's risk assessment instrument, regardless of the level
 1138 of funding allocated to the lead agency by the state if all
 1139 related funding is transferred.

1140 b. Children who were adopted from the child welfare system
 1141 and whose families require post-adoption supports.

1142 2. ~~The lead agency~~ May also serve children who have not
 1143 been the subject of reports of abuse, neglect, or abandonment,
 1144 but who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, to
 1145 prevent their entry into the child protection and child welfare
 1146 system.

1147 Section 14. Section 414.56, Florida Statutes, is created
 1148 to read:

1149 414.56 Office of Continuing Care.—The department shall
 1150 establish an Office of Continuing Care to ensure young adults

1151 who age out of the foster care system between 18 and 21 years of
1152 age, or 22 years of age with a documented disability, have a
1153 point of contact until the young adult reaches the age of 26 in
1154 order to receive ongoing support and care coordination needed to
1155 achieve self-sufficiency. Duties of the office include, but are
1156 not limited to:

1157 (1) Informing young adults who age out of the foster care
1158 system of the purpose of the office, the types of support the
1159 office provides, and how to contact the office.

1160 (2) Serving as a direct contact to the young adult in
1161 order to provide information on how to access services to
1162 support the young adult's self-sufficiency, including, but not
1163 limited to, food assistance, behavioral health services,
1164 housing, Medicaid, and educational services.

1165 (3) Assisting in accessing services and supports for the
1166 young adult to attain self-sufficiency, including, but not
1167 limited to, completing documentation required to apply for
1168 services.

1169 (4) Collaborating with community-based care lead agencies
1170 to identify local resources that can provide support to young
1171 adults served by the office.

1172 (5) Remaining in contact with young adults who age out of
1173 the foster care system until the young adult reaches the age of
1174 30 in order to assist them in accessing the supports needed to
1175 be self-sufficient.

1176 Section 15. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare
1177 established under s. 1004.615 shall:

1178 (1) (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's efforts
1179 to assist young adults in foster care in developing independent
1180 living skills. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall
1181 consult with the Institute for Food and Agricultural Services
1182 Extension Program at the University of Florida in conducting its
1183 evaluation.

1184 (b) The evaluation shall, at a minimum:

1185 1. Describe current requirements for caregivers to assist
1186 young adults in acquiring independent living skills, the
1187 information and available supports provided to caregivers for
1188 doing so, and the actual level of engagement in these efforts by
1189 caregivers.

1190 2. Specify methods and measures used to determine if young
1191 adults have acquired or developed adequate independent living
1192 skills and how that information is used to support independent-
1193 living skill development for individual young adults.

1194 3. Describe outcomes on a statewide basis, as well as by
1195 individual community-based care lead agency, and describe how
1196 this information is currently being used to improve performance.

1197 4. Identify best practices for helping young adults in
1198 foster care develop independent living skills and compare the
1199 state's current approach to the best practices.

1200 5. Specify any barriers that may prevent young adults from

1201 becoming self-sufficient.

1202 6. Evaluate whether the state's current approach to
1203 developing independent living skills for young adults in foster
1204 care is adequate, and recommend any changes to enhance the
1205 effectiveness of the state's approach to prepare young adults
1206 for self-sufficiency. Any recommendations must prioritize
1207 maintaining the state's current approach of primarily relying on
1208 caregivers to assist young adults in developing life skills, and
1209 recommend that such efforts be part of everyday life experiences
1210 to the extent possible.

1211 (c) The Institute for Child Welfare shall submit its
1212 evaluation by November 1, 2022, to the Governor, the President
1213 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

1214 (2) (a) Analyze permanency outcomes in the state. The
1215 analysis shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:

1216 1. The frequency of permanency outcomes, both long-term
1217 and within 2 years of entering foster care, and the differences
1218 observed when data are disaggregated by the child's age at entry
1219 into foster care.

1220 2. The length of time before parental rights are
1221 terminated, disaggregated by the child's age at entry into
1222 foster care.

1223 3. The frequency of permanency outcomes for children whose
1224 parents have had their parental rights terminated, the length of
1225 time before permanency is achieved, and the differences in the

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1226 type of permanency and length of time it took to achieve
1227 permanency, disaggregated by age of the child when parental
1228 rights were terminated.

1229 4. The patterns, indicated by the analysis, regarding the
1230 length of time it took to achieve permanency, the types of
1231 permanency outcomes experienced by children entering foster care
1232 at different ages, and how the types of permanency vary based on
1233 the status of the rights of the parents' of the children.

1234 (b) The Institute for Child Welfare shall submit its
1235 report by October 1, 2022, to the Governor, the President of the
1236 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

1237 Section 16. This act shall take effect October 1, 2021.