

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) Inquire about the independent living skills the child

676 has acquired and whether the independent living services being  
677 provided are age appropriate, at the first judicial review  
678 hearing subsequent to the child's 16th birthday. At the ~~Hold a~~  
679 judicial review hearing, the department shall provide the court  
680 with an updated case plan that includes specific information  
681 related to the independent living skills that the child has  
682 acquired since the child's 13th birthday, or since the date the  
683 child came into foster care, whichever came later ~~within 90 days~~  
684 after a child's 17th birthday. For any child who may meet the  
685 requirements for appointment of a guardian advocate under s.  
686 393.12, or a guardian under chapter 744, the updated case plan  
687 must be developed in a face-to-face conference with the child,  
688 if appropriate; the child's attorney; any court-appointed  
689 guardian ad litem; the temporary custodian of the child; and the  
690 parent of the child, if the parent's rights have not been  
691 terminated. ~~The court shall also issue an order, separate from~~  
692 ~~the order on judicial review, that the disability of nonage of~~  
693 ~~the child has been removed pursuant to ss. 743.044, 743.045,~~  
694 ~~743.046, and 743.047, and for any of these disabilities that the~~  
695 ~~court finds is in the child's best interest to remove. The court~~  
696 ~~shall continue to hold timely judicial review hearings. If~~  
697 ~~necessary, the court may review the status of the child more~~  
698 ~~frequently during the year before the child's 18th birthday. At~~  
699 ~~each review hearing held under this subsection, in addition to~~  
700 ~~any information or report provided to the court by the foster~~

701 ~~parent, legal custodian, or guardian ad litem, the child shall~~  
702 ~~be given the opportunity to address the court with any~~  
703 ~~information relevant to the child's best interest, particularly~~  
704 ~~in relation to independent living transition services.~~

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

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

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

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

726 | to how to access those funds.

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

737 |         5. An open bank account or the identification necessary to  
 738 | open a bank account and to acquire essential banking and  
 739 | budgeting skills.

740 |         6. Information on public assistance and how to apply for  
 741 | public assistance.

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

746 |         8. Information related to the ability of the child to  
 747 | remain in care until he or she reaches 21 years of age under s.  
 748 | 39.013.

749 |         9. A letter providing the dates that the child is under  
 750 | the jurisdiction of the court.

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

753 11. The child's educational records.

754 12. The child's entire health and mental health records.

755 13. The process for accessing the child's ~~his or her~~ case  
756 file.

757 14. A statement encouraging the child to attend all  
758 judicial review hearings ~~occurring after the child's 17th~~  
759 ~~birthday.~~

760 15. Information on how to obtain a driver license or  
761 learner's driver license.

762 (c) ~~(b)~~ At the first judicial review hearing held  
763 subsequent to the child's 17th birthday, ~~the department shall~~  
764 ~~provide the court with an updated case plan that includes~~  
765 ~~specific information related to the independent living skills~~  
766 ~~that the child has acquired since the child's 13th birthday, or~~  
767 ~~since the date the child came into foster care, whichever came~~  
768 ~~later.~~

769 ~~1. For any child who may meet the requirements for~~  
770 ~~appointment of a guardian pursuant to chapter 744, or a guardian~~  
771 ~~advocate pursuant to s. 393.12, the updated case plan must be~~  
772 ~~developed in a face-to-face conference with the child, if~~  
773 ~~appropriate; the child's attorney; any court-appointed guardian~~  
774 ~~ad litem; the temporary custodian of the child; and the parent,~~  
775 ~~if the parent's rights have not been terminated.~~

776       ~~2.~~ At the judicial review hearing, if the court determines  
777 pursuant to chapter 744 that there is a good faith basis to  
778 believe that the child qualifies for appointment of a guardian  
779 advocate, limited guardian, or plenary guardian for the child  
780 and that no less restrictive decisionmaking assistance will meet  
781 the child's needs:

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

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

797       ~~3.c.~~ Proceedings may be initiated within 180 days after  
798 the child's 17th birthday for the appointment of a guardian  
799 advocate, plenary guardian, or limited guardian for the child in  
800 a separate proceeding in the court division with jurisdiction

801 over guardianship matters and pursuant to chapter 744. The  
802 Legislature encourages the use of pro bono representation to  
803 initiate proceedings under this section.

804 ~~4.3.~~ In the event another interested party or participant  
805 initiates proceedings for the appointment of a guardian  
806 advocate, plenary guardian, or limited guardian for the child,  
807 the department shall provide all necessary documentation and  
808 information to the petitioner to complete a petition under s.  
809 393.12 or chapter 744 within 45 days after the first judicial  
810 review hearing after the child's 17th birthday.

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

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

826 (e)-(d) If necessary, the court may review the status of  
 827 the child more frequently during the year before the child's  
 828 18th birthday. At the last review hearing before the child  
 829 reaches 18 years of age, and in addition to the requirements of  
 830 subsection (2), the court shall:

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

835 2. Ensure that the transition plan includes a supervised  
 836 living arrangement under s. 39.6251.

837 3. Ensure the child has been informed of:

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

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

843 c. The opportunity to reenter foster care under ~~pursuant~~  
 844 ~~to~~ s. 39.6251.

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

848 a. Services or benefits for which the child ~~young adult~~  
 849 may be eligible based on his or her former placement in foster  
 850 care, including, but not limited to, the assistance of the

851 Office of Continuing Care under s. 414.56.~~†~~

852 b. Services or benefits that may be lost through  
853 termination of dependency jurisdiction.~~†~~~~and~~

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

856 Section 8. Paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of section  
857 39.806, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

858 39.806 Grounds for termination of parental rights.—

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

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

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

876 the court's approval of a case plan having the goal of  
 877 reunification with the parent, whichever occurs first; ~~or~~

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

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

893 Section 9. Section 39.8155, Florida Statutes, is created  
 894 to read:

895 39.8155 Reinstatement of parental rights.-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

926        (d) The parent demonstrates sufficient protective  
927 capacities, given the child's age, physical and behavioral  
928 health, and any other specific characteristics and needs, such  
929 that the risk of the child reentering care is low.

930        (e) Both the parent and child wish to reinstate parental  
931 rights.

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

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

951 child and former parent.

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

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

963 409.1451 The Road-to-Independence Program.—

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

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

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

973 ~~2.(b)~~ The lead agency with primary case management  
 974 responsibilities shall provide maintenance payments, case  
 975 planning, including a written description of all services that

976 will assist a child 16 years of age or older in preparing for  
977 the transition from care to independence, as well as regular  
978 case reviews that conform with all federal scheduling and  
979 content requirements, for all children in foster care who are  
980 placed or visiting out-of-state.

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

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

995 (7) INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The  
996 secretary shall establish the Independent Living Services  
997 Advisory Council for the purpose of reviewing and making  
998 recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of  
999 ~~the provisions of~~ s. 39.6251 and the Road-to-Independence  
1000 Program. ~~The advisory council shall function as specified in~~

1001 ~~this subsection until the Legislature determines that the~~  
1002 ~~advisory council can no longer provide a valuable contribution~~  
1003 ~~to the department's efforts to achieve the goals of the services~~  
1004 ~~designed to enable a young adult to live independently.~~

1005 (a) The advisory council shall assess the implementation  
1006 and operation of the Road-to-Independence Program and advise the  
1007 department on actions that would improve the ability of the  
1008 ~~these~~ Road-to-Independence Program services to meet the  
1009 established goals. The advisory council shall keep the  
1010 department informed of problems being experienced with the  
1011 services, barriers to the effective and efficient integration of  
1012 services and support across systems, and successes that the  
1013 system of services has achieved. The department shall consider,  
1014 but is not required to implement, the recommendations of the  
1015 advisory council.

1016 (b)1. The advisory council shall report to the secretary  
1017 on the status of the implementation of the Road-to-Independence  
1018 Program, efforts to publicize the availability of the Road-to-  
1019 Independence Program, the success of the services under the  
1020 program, problems identified with the program, and  
1021 recommendations for department or legislative action, ~~and the~~  
1022 ~~department's implementation of the recommendations contained in~~  
1023 ~~the Independent Living Services Integration Workgroup Report~~  
1024 ~~submitted to the appropriate substantive committees of the~~  
1025 ~~Legislature by December 31, 2013.~~

1026        2. The department shall submit a report by December 31 of  
1027 each year to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the  
1028 Speaker of the House of Representatives which includes ~~a summary~~  
1029 ~~of the factors reported on by the council and identifies the~~  
1030 recommendations of the advisory council and the department's  
1031 response either describes the department's actions to implement  
1032 the recommendations or provides the department's rationale for  
1033 not implementing the recommendations. The report must also  
1034 include the most recent data regarding the status of and  
1035 outcomes for young adults who turned 18 years of age while in  
1036 foster care, relating to education, employment, housing,  
1037 financial, transportation, health and well-being, and  
1038 connections, and an analysis of such data and outcomes.

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

1051 advocates for children in care. The secretary shall determine  
1052 the length of the term to be served by each member appointed to  
1053 the advisory council, which may not exceed 4 years.

1054 (d) The advisory council may maintain a committee composed  
1055 of children currently in care and young adults who aged out of  
1056 care with which to consult regarding their needs, preferences,  
1057 and concerns related to preparation for, transition to, and  
1058 support during independent living.

1059 (e)~~(d)~~ The department shall provide administrative support  
1060 to the ~~Independent Living Services~~ advisory council to  
1061 accomplish its assigned tasks. The advisory council shall be  
1062 afforded access to all appropriate data from the department,  
1063 each community-based care lead agency, and other relevant  
1064 agencies in order to accomplish the tasks set forth in this  
1065 section. The data collected may not include any information that  
1066 would identify a specific child or young adult.

1067 ~~(c) The advisory council report required under paragraph~~  
1068 ~~(b) must include an analysis of the system of independent living~~  
1069 ~~transition services for young adults who reach 18 years of age~~  
1070 ~~while in foster care before completing high school or its~~  
1071 ~~equivalent and recommendations for department or legislative~~  
1072 ~~action. The council shall assess and report on the most~~  
1073 ~~effective method of assisting these young adults to complete~~  
1074 ~~high school or its equivalent by examining the practices of~~  
1075 ~~other states.~~

1076 Section 11. Section 409.14515, Florida Statutes, is  
1077 created to read:

1078 409.14515 Independent living preparation.—The department  
1079 shall assist children who are in foster care in making the  
1080 transition to independent living and self-sufficiency as adults.  
1081 To support opportunities for participation in age-appropriate  
1082 life skills activities, the department shall:

1083 (1) Identify important life skills that children in out-  
1084 of-home care should acquire.

1085 (2) Develop a list of age-appropriate activities and  
1086 responsibilities useful for the development of specific life  
1087 skills for use by children and their caregivers. The age-  
1088 appropriate activities must address specific topics tailored to  
1089 the needs of each child's developmental stage. For young adults,  
1090 the list of age-appropriate activities must include, but is not  
1091 limited to, informing the young adult of available independent  
1092 living services and community resources and how to apply for  
1093 such services.

1094 (3) Design and disseminate training for caregivers related  
1095 to building needed life skills. The training must include  
1096 components that address the challenges of children in foster  
1097 care in transitioning to adulthood and information on programs  
1098 for children who are aging out of care under ss. 414.56 and  
1099 409.1451, high school completion, applications for financial  
1100 assistance for higher education, vocational school

1101 opportunities, supporting education, and employment  
 1102 opportunities.

1103 (4) Beginning after the child's 13th birthday, regularly  
 1104 assess the degree of life skills acquisition by each child. The  
 1105 department shall share the results of the assessments with the  
 1106 caregiver and support the caregiver in creating, implementing,  
 1107 monitoring, and revising plans as necessary to address the  
 1108 child's life skills deficits, if any.

1109 (5) Provide opportunities for children in foster care to  
 1110 interact with qualified, trained mentors who are committed to  
 1111 engaging reliably with the child long-term.

1112 (6) Develop and implement procedures for children of  
 1113 sufficient age and understanding to directly access and manage  
 1114 the personal allowance they receive from the department.

1115 Section 12. Subsection (4) of section 409.1454, Florida  
 1116 Statutes, is amended to read:

1117 409.1454 Motor vehicle insurance and driver licenses for  
 1118 children in care.—

1119 (4) Payment shall be made to eligible recipients in the  
 1120 order of eligibility until available funds are exhausted. If a  
 1121 child determined to be eligible reaches permanency status or  
 1122 turns 18 years of age, the program may pay for that child to  
 1123 complete a driver education program and obtain a driver license  
 1124 for up to 6 months after the date the child reaches permanency  
 1125 status or 6 months after the date the child turns 18 years of

1126 | age. A child continuing in care under s. 39.6251, or who was in  
 1127 | licensed care when the child reached 18 years of age and is  
 1128 | currently receiving postsecondary education services and support  
 1129 | under s. 409.1451(2), may be eligible to have the costs of  
 1130 | licensure and costs incidental to licensure paid if the child  
 1131 | demonstrates that such costs are creating barriers for obtaining  
 1132 | employment or completing educational goals.

1133 | Section 13. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section  
 1134 | 409.988, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1135 | 409.988 Community-based care lead agency duties; general  
 1136 | provisions.—

1137 | (1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

1138 | (a) 1. Shall serve:

1139 | a. All children referred as a result of a report of abuse,  
 1140 | neglect, or abandonment to the department's central abuse  
 1141 | hotline, including, but not limited to, children who are the  
 1142 | subject of verified reports and children who are not the subject  
 1143 | of verified reports but who are at moderate to extremely high  
 1144 | risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, as determined using the  
 1145 | department's risk assessment instrument, regardless of the level  
 1146 | of funding allocated to the lead agency by the state if all  
 1147 | related funding is transferred.

1148 | b. Children who were adopted from the child welfare system  
 1149 | and whose families require post-adoption supports.

1150 | 2. ~~The lead agency~~ May also serve children who have not

1151 | been the subject of reports of abuse, neglect, or abandonment,  
1152 | but who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, to  
1153 | prevent their entry into the child protection and child welfare  
1154 | system.

1155 |       Section 14. Section 414.56, Florida Statutes, is created  
1156 | to read:

1157 |       414.56 Office of Continuing Care.—The department shall  
1158 | establish an Office of Continuing Care to ensure young adults  
1159 | who age out of the foster care system between 18 and 21 years of  
1160 | age, or 22 years of age with a documented disability, have a  
1161 | point of contact until the young adult reaches the age of 26 in  
1162 | order to receive ongoing support and care coordination needed to  
1163 | achieve self-sufficiency. Duties of the office include, but are  
1164 | not limited to:

1165 |       (1) Informing young adults who age out of the foster care  
1166 | system of the purpose of the office, the types of support the  
1167 | office provides, and how to contact the office.

1168 |       (2) Serving as a direct contact to the young adult in  
1169 | order to provide information on how to access services to  
1170 | support the young adult's self-sufficiency, including, but not  
1171 | limited to, food assistance, behavioral health services,  
1172 | housing, Medicaid, and educational services.

1173 |       (3) Assisting in accessing services and supports for the  
1174 | young adult to attain self-sufficiency, including, but not  
1175 | limited to, completing documentation required to apply for

1176 services.

1177 (4) Collaborating with community-based care lead agencies  
1178 to identify local resources that can provide support to young  
1179 adults served by the office.

1180 (5) Remaining in contact with young adults who age out of  
1181 the foster care system until the young adult reaches the age of  
1182 26 in order to assist them in accessing the supports needed to  
1183 be self-sufficient.

1184 Section 15. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare  
1185 established under s. 1004.615 shall:

1186 (1) (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's efforts  
1187 to assist young adults in foster care in developing independent  
1188 living skills. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall  
1189 consult with the Institute for Food and Agricultural Services  
1190 Extension Program at the University of Florida in conducting its  
1191 evaluation.

1192 (b) The evaluation shall, at a minimum:

1193 1. Describe current requirements for caregivers to assist  
1194 young adults in acquiring independent living skills, the  
1195 information and available supports provided to caregivers for  
1196 doing so, and the actual level of engagement in these efforts by  
1197 caregivers.

1198 2. Specify methods and measures used to determine if young  
1199 adults have acquired or developed adequate independent living  
1200 skills and how that information is used to support independent-

1201 living skill development for individual young adults.

1202 3. Describe outcomes on a statewide basis, as well as by  
1203 individual community-based care lead agency, and describe how  
1204 this information is currently being used to improve performance.

1205 4. Identify best practices for helping young adults in  
1206 foster care develop independent living skills and compare the  
1207 state's current approach to the best practices.

1208 5. Specify any barriers that may prevent young adults from  
1209 becoming self-sufficient.

1210 6. Evaluate whether the state's current approach to  
1211 developing independent living skills for young adults in foster  
1212 care is adequate, and recommend any changes to enhance the  
1213 effectiveness of the state's approach to prepare young adults  
1214 for self-sufficiency. Any recommendations must prioritize  
1215 maintaining the state's current approach of primarily relying on  
1216 caregivers to assist young adults in developing life skills, and  
1217 recommend that such efforts be part of everyday life experiences  
1218 to the extent possible.

1219 7. Include the input of young adults who are currently in  
1220 foster care and young adults who were previously in foster care.  
1221 The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall attempt to  
1222 interview young adults who are currently in foster care and  
1223 young adults who were previously in foster care on their  
1224 experiences with the state's approach to preparing them for  
1225 adulthood, whether the independent living skills provided were

1226 age appropriate or helpful, and what recommendations they have  
1227 to improve the state's approach in preparing young adults in  
1228 foster care for adulthood.

1229 (c) The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall submit  
1230 its evaluation by November 1, 2022, to the Governor, the  
1231 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of  
1232 Representatives.

1233 (2) (a) Analyze permanency outcomes in the state. The  
1234 analysis shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:

1235 1. The frequency of permanency outcomes, both long-term  
1236 and within 2 years of entering foster care, and the differences  
1237 observed when data are disaggregated by the child's age at entry  
1238 into foster care.

1239 2. The length of time before parental rights are  
1240 terminated, disaggregated by the child's age at entry into  
1241 foster care.

1242 3. The frequency of permanency outcomes for children whose  
1243 parents have had their parental rights terminated, the length of  
1244 time before permanency is achieved, and the differences in the  
1245 type of permanency and length of time it took to achieve  
1246 permanency, disaggregated by age of the child when parental  
1247 rights were terminated.

1248 4. The patterns, indicated by the analysis, regarding the  
1249 length of time it took to achieve permanency, the types of  
1250 permanency outcomes experienced by children entering foster care

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1251 at different ages, and how the types of permanency vary based on  
1252 the status of the rights of the parents' of the children.

1253 (b) The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall submit  
1254 its report by October 1, 2022, to the Governor, the President of  
1255 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

1256 Section 16. This act shall take effect October 1, 2021.