

FOR CONSIDERATION By the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to child welfare; amending s. 39.01,
3 F.S.; revising the definition of the term "visitor";
4 amending s. 409.1455, F.S.; renaming the Step into
5 Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot
6 Program as the Step into Success Workforce Education
7 and Internship Program; deleting a provision limiting
8 the duration of the program; requiring the
9 department's Office of Continuing Care to develop
10 certain cohorts within specified regions, collaborate
11 with certain organizations and recruit mentors and
12 organizations, and provide eligible former foster
13 youth with internship placement opportunities;
14 deleting a provision requiring that the program be
15 administered in a certain manner; deleting obsolete
16 language; requiring the Office of Continuing Care to
17 develop trauma-informed training for mentors of
18 certain former foster youth which meets certain
19 requirements; authorizing the office to provide
20 certain additional trainings on mentorship of special
21 populations; revising the amount of monthly financial
22 assistance that the office shall provide to
23 participating former foster youth; requiring the
24 office to assign experienced staff to serve as program
25 liaisons for a specified purpose; revising
26 qualifications to serve as a mentor; authorizing the
27 department to offer certain training to mentors in
28 subsequent years; authorizing an employee who serves
29 as a mentor to participate in certain additional

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30 trainings; deleting a provision authorizing the offset
31 of a reduction in or loss of certain benefits due to
32 receipt of a Step into Success stipend by an
33 additional stipend payment; amending s. 1004.615,
34 F.S.; requiring the Florida Institute for Child
35 Welfare, in collaboration with the department's Office
36 of Quality and Office of Child and Family Well-being,
37 to establish a certain best practices program;
38 providing an effective date.

39
40 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

41
42 Section 1. Subsection (91) of section 39.01, Florida
43 Statutes, is amended to read:

44 39.01 Definitions.—When used in this chapter, unless the
45 context otherwise requires:

46 (91) "Visitor" means a person who:

47 (a) Provides care or supervision to a child in the home,
48 other than a contracted service provider screened pursuant to
49 chapter 435; or

50 (b) Is 12 years of age or older, other than a child in
51 care, and who will be in the child's home at least:

- 52 1. Ten ~~Five~~ consecutive days; or
53 2. Fourteen ~~Seven~~ days or more in 1 month.

54 Section 2. Subsections (2) and (4), paragraphs (b) and (e)
55 of subsection (6), paragraph (b) of subsection (7), paragraph
56 (d) of subsection (10), and subsection (11) of section 409.1455,
57 Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (i) is added to
58 subsection (6) of that section, to read:

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59 409.1455 Step into Success Workforce Education and
60 Internship ~~Pilot~~ Program for foster youth and former foster
61 youth.—

62 (2) CREATION.—The department shall establish the ~~3-year~~
63 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship ~~Pilot~~
64 Program to give eligible foster youth and former foster youth an
65 opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and
66 professional skills, to transition from the custody of the
67 department to independent living, and to become better prepared
68 for an independent and successful future. The ~~pilot~~ program must
69 consist of an independent living professionalism and workforce
70 education component and, for youth who complete that component,
71 an onsite workforce training internship component. In
72 consultation with subject-matter experts and the community-based
73 care lead agencies, the office shall develop and administer the
74 ~~pilot~~ program for interested foster youth and former foster
75 youth; however, the department may contract with entities that
76 have demonstrable subject-matter expertise in the transition to
77 adulthood for foster youth, workforce training and preparedness,
78 professional skills, and related subjects to collaborate with
79 the office in the development and administration of the ~~pilot~~
80 program. The independent living professionalism and workforce
81 education component of the program must culminate in a
82 certificate that allows a former foster youth to participate in
83 the onsite workforce training internship.

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

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

90 (b) Collaborate with local chambers of commerce and recruit
91 mentors and organizations within the department's regions,
92 emphasizing recruitment of mentors and organizations in the
93 following counties:

- 94 1. Duval.
- 95 2. Escambia.
- 96 3. Hillsborough.
- 97 4. Palm Beach.
- 98 5. Polk.

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

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

115 (b) ~~Develop a minimum of 1 hour of~~ required trauma-informed
116 training for mentors to satisfy the requirements provided in

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117 sub-subparagraph (7) (b) 1.e. Such training must include
118 interactive or experiential components, such as role-playing,
119 scenario discussion, or case studies. The office may provide at
120 least 4 additional 1-hour trainings on mentorship of special
121 populations as optional training opportunities, which must be
122 asynchronous and accessible to mentors online at their
123 convenience, and shall inform participating organizations of
124 these optional training opportunities ~~teach the skills necessary~~
125 ~~to engage with participating eligible former foster youth.~~

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

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

135 (7) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS.—Each
136 organization participating in the onsite workforce training
137 internship component shall:

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

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

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

143 b. Have experience relevant to the job and task
144 responsibilities of the intern;

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

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

150 e. Complete ~~a minimum of 1 hour of~~ trauma-informed training
151 to gain and maintain skills critical for successfully engaging
152 former foster youth. The employee must complete a 1-hour
153 training before being matched with a former foster youth which
154 covers core topics, including, but not limited to:

155 (I) Understanding trauma and its impacts.

156 (II) Recognizing and responding to trauma-related
157 behaviors.

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

159 (IV) Boundaries and mentor self-care.

160 (V) Communication skills.

161
162 The department may offer a 1-hour training to review topics
163 covered by the training required under this sub-subparagraph
164 every subsequent year that the employee chooses to serve as a
165 mentor.

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

171 3. An employee may serve as a mentor for a maximum of three
172 interns at one time and may not receive more than \$3,600 in
173 compensation per fiscal year for serving as a mentor. Any time
174 spent serving as a mentor to an intern under this section counts

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175 toward the minimum service required for eligibility for payments
176 pursuant to subparagraph 2. and this subparagraph.

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

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

182 (d) Stipend money earned pursuant to the internship
183 component may not be considered earned income for purposes of
184 computing eligibility for federal or state benefits, including,
185 but not limited to, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
186 Program, a housing choice assistance voucher program, the
187 Temporary Cash Assistance Program, the Medicaid program, or the
188 school readiness program. ~~Notwithstanding this paragraph, any~~
189 ~~reduction in the amount of benefits or loss of benefits due to~~
190 ~~receipt of the Step into Success stipend may be offset by an~~
191 ~~additional stipend payment equal to the value of the maximum~~
192 ~~benefit amount for a single person allowed under the~~
193 ~~Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.~~

194 (11) REPORT.—The department shall include a section on the
195 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship ~~Pilot~~
196 Program in the independent living annual report prepared
197 pursuant to s. 409.1451(6) which includes, but is not limited
198 to, all of the following:

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

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

203 (c) A summary of recruitment efforts to increase the number

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204 of participating organizations.

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

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

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

217 Section 3. Present subsections (9), (10), and (11) of
218 section 1004.615, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as
219 subsections (10), (11), and (12), respectively, and a new
220 subsection (9) is added to that section, to read:

221 1004.615 Florida Institute for Child Welfare.—

222 (9) The institute, in collaboration with the Department of
223 Children and Families' Office of Quality and Office of Child and
224 Family Well-being, shall establish a program to identify,
225 describe, and catalogue best practices within the community-
226 based care model. Such best practices may include, but need not
227 be limited to, management practices, administrative structure,
228 internal and external communication, quality assurance, contract
229 management, program development and creation, and child and
230 family outcome monitoring.

231 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.