

**THE INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**



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## **Executive Summary**

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council (hereafter the Council) was formed in 2005 to improve interagency policy and service coordination to better support older eligible foster youth in the successful transition to adulthood. Florida has designed an array of services, as required by Section 409.1451 (7), Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Section 39.6251, F.S., to support older foster youth and former foster youth to help them become independent self-supporting young adults. These services are funded through a web of federal grants, general state revenue, and community private funds. These services are broadly defined in statute but are implemented differently throughout the state through many Community-Based Care lead agencies (CBCs).

Florida Statute allows the Council the "purpose of reviewing and making recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the independent living services." The Council brings together political, senior executive, and career staff from local, state, and federal agencies across multiple systems to collaborate on recommendations related to services for older foster youth. The Department of Children and Families (the department) has designated the Council as one of Florida's citizen review panels for the Federal Fiscal Year 2020, in support of the requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

The culmination of the Council's analysis each year are the recommendations in this report to the Florida Legislature and the department on the status of the services being provided, including successes and barriers to these services.

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## **2019 Department Response: Review and Discussion**

The Council had the opportunity to review the 2019 Department Response to the 2019 ILSAC Annual Report surrounding clarifying the definition of "allowance" provided to Extended Foster Care (EFC) young adults, as well as establishing a standard allowance amount of \$100 per month, regardless of the young adult's county of residence.

The department's response noted that "if the purpose is to provide equitable distribution of an allowance amount to young adults in EFC that is not based on a cost of care needs assessment, more feedback from stakeholders is required. Any proposed amount will need to go through appropriate department policy review channels, ensuring the solicitation of stakeholder's comments."

In order to support this, the Council will explore the allowance recommendation further in calendar year 2021 and acquire feedback from stakeholders to include, but not limited to, current and former youth in EFC and CBCs.

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## **2020 Council Presentations**

When the Council kicked off the 2020 year, a presentation was conducted on [Sociocracy](#) to enhance Council member participation and ensure all voices are heard and represented in meetings. The Council agreed to using Sociocratic principles during our meetings. Sociocracy upholds two fundamental principles: organizational effectiveness (i.e. ensuring the Council’s aim and purpose is effective and efficient) and the equality of all Council members (i.e. ensuring everyone’s voice is heard and represented). More specifically, the Council employs Sociocratic principles in practice by speaking in rounds to ensure all voices are heard and by using consent decision-making.

Additionally, the Council has met monthly to discuss various topics within Independent Living including EFC, Post-Secondary Education Services and Support (PESS), and Aftercare Services. Presentations related to services and supports available to eligible former foster youth were provided to the Council, including:

### Transition Services for Florida’s Foster Youth

This presentation informed the Council about transition service outcome areas, which focus on increasing financial self-sufficiency, improving educational (academic or vocational) attainment, increasing connections with supportive adults, reducing homelessness, reducing high-risk behavior, and improving access to health insurance. The Council received information about the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and the need for consistent data collection.

### CareerSource Florida

CareerSource Florida is the statewide workforce policy and investment board of business and government leaders charged with guiding workforce development for the state of Florida. Florida’s 24 local workforce development boards and their 100 career centers provides program specific services for adults, dislocated workers and youth. This presentation focused on Florida’s transitioning youth and through a dedicated CareerSource Specialist, the youth can receive guidance towards independence through career and educational exploration tools, career pathways, job search tools, assessments, and online skill training. The CareerSource Florida network connects employers with qualified and skilled employees and career development opportunities for people to achieve economic prosperity.

### HOPE Court: Restorative Practices and the Child Welfare System

This presentation focused on HOPE Court (Helping Older Teens Powerfully Engage), which is a new and restorative approach to the dependency system for teens who are “aging-out” of the foster

care system without an intact family. HOPE Court is a pilot project initiated in Broward County that works closely with the CBC's and community providers. This restorative practices-based approach to the dependency legal system places an emphasis on building relationships, social capital, and community.

#### Youth Peer Support Services

This presentation focused on youth peer support services, specifically for young adults in EFC, PESS, or Aftercare services. This program offers young adults with foster care experience in the dependency system with training and support to be an advocate for young adults who encounter similar experiences. The youth peer shares knowledge of natural community support resources, establishes an equitable relationship, and focuses on recovery strengths to overcome challenges. The program also helps the young adult become certified as a Recovery Peer Specialist with a Youth Designation as a Certified Recovery Peer Specialist with the youth designation.

#### SailFuture

SailFuture is a comprehensive continuum of care designed to serve the state's highest-risk teens in foster care located in the Tampa area. This presentation showed that youth can receive mental health and job training services, as well as attend a technical high school and participate in multi-month sailing journeys throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Youth participating in this program also receive Independent Living and EFC services to include Independent housing, case management, crisis management, Individual group therapy, GED group and testing, career development and management, mentoring, transportation assistance, and bus cards. Combining these services provides a positive influence over the key social determinants that drive successful life outcomes for teenagers in foster care.

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### **Councils' Recommendations**

The Council has selected to compose recommendations focused on developing an Independent Living Competency Training Program, evaluating the effectiveness of Daniel Kids' I.L. Resource Center, developing a Permanent Connections Pact for youth in care, improving transition planning for young adults enrolled in PESS, and enhancing the My Pathways to Success Plan Form.

#### **Develop an Independent Living (IL) Competency Training Program**<sup>1</sup>

Based on the information gleaned from the presentations, IL skills, requirements, and timelines are not widely understood for child welfare professionals working with youth ages 13 to 17, prior to aging out of foster care. This lack of a competency training program leaves the professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Please reference the addendum at the end of this report for a job aide example.

inadequately prepared for the complexities of preparing older youth for life as an adult. This leaves many of Florida's youth not prepared for adulthood and creates confusion around the IL opportunities afforded to them. An IL competency training program for our child welfare professionals would provide older youth the opportunity for greater success as they enter adulthood.

**Recommendation:**

1. Develop an IL Standardized Competency Training Program with a certification process (parallel to the Adoption Competency Training)

A required IL competency training would include a certification process, with an annual refresher course to stay abreast of the continual changing and progressive improvements in the IL field. The certification would be required for child welfare professionals, licensing staff, Guardian ad Litem (GAL), licensed caregivers and group home staff, mentors, and day supervision providers. It is recommended that mental health professionals and Attorney ad Litem also take this training.

Elements of the training program could include Judicial Reviews (JR) and required documentation filings for 13 to 17 year olds, conducting teen staffings, youth case plan development, transition plan development, familiarity of National Youth Transition Database (NYTD), and training on relevant Florida Statutes, CFOP, and code requirements that impact youth.

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**Evaluate the Effectiveness of Daniel Kids' I.L. Resource Center**

Through a contract with the department, Daniel Kids hosts an I.L. Resource Center. According to their [website](#), "Florida's Independent Living Resource Center opened in 2016. It was created to serve as an information clearinghouse to address all areas of independent living in Florida. As a free service, the I.L. Resource Center provides information and referral services to youth, adoptive parents, former foster youth, teachers, mentors and social services professionals. The center also provides annual statewide training opportunities for Independent Living professionals."

In discussion about the marketability of Florida's transition services, the Council determined the need for a warm line and a more standardized approach to reaching young people to educate them on the services and supports available. Many community partners may be unaware of the existence of the information phone line and may not be clear regarding what kind of information they can obtain by calling. Some community partners and youth have communicated that they were unclear about the "referral services to youth," expecting to get specific resources, but instead were referred to lead and provider agency contacts.

To ensure that Florida’s I.L. Resource Center is effectively meeting the needs of transitioning youth and foster care alumnus, the Council recommends a more thorough evaluation of the information phone line, website, and marketing materials.

**Recommendation:**

1. Evaluate Daniel Kids’ I.L. Resource Center’s information phone line, website, and marketing materials to ensure Florida’s transitioning youth, foster care alumnus, and other key stakeholders receive relevant information on services and supports available.
- 

**Develop a Permanent Connection Agreement <sup>2</sup>**

Youth transitioning out of foster care are often unsure about who they can go to for support. Many relationships with adults are developed with child welfare professionals that often end once they transition out of care.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop a permanent connection agreement and signed pledge between the youth and supportive adult that outlines their rights and roles in this agreement.
  2. Develop a workgroup led by the department that includes youth with lived foster care experience, child welfare professionals, mentors, and GAL, to develop a process for creating and maintaining a permanent connection agreement. The workgroup should also ensure policies and procedures are updated to utilize and track this agreement, which may include:
    - Updating policy to ensure the child welfare professional assigned to the youth is checking in on a bi-annual basis with both individuals to ensure the relationship is maintained. If not, establish that another permanent connection is in place for the young adult.
  3. Incorporate into the FSFN IL Module “Permanent Connections” and capture on an ongoing basis who is the permanent connection. Typically, My Pathway to Success Plans track permanent connections, but if this information is entered into FSFN, child welfare professionals may be able to track it more effectively.
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**Improve Transition Planning for Young Adults Enrolled in PESS**

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<sup>2</sup> Please reference the addendum at the end of this report for an example of a permanent connection agreement.

PESS allows eligible foster youth to receive support while attending postsecondary education. Youth who turned 18 while in the legal custody of the department and who have spent a total of at least six months in licensed out-of-home care before turning 18, or youth who are at least 18 and were adopted after the age of 16 from foster care or placed with a court-approved dependency guardian after spending at least six months in licensed care within the 12 months immediately preceding such placement or adoption, are eligible. Moreover, the youth must have earned a standard high school diploma, or its equivalent, and attend a college or vocational school that is Florida Bright Futures eligible. PESS provides eligible youth with a monthly stipend to assist with housing, utilities, and other miscellaneous expenses associated with the cost of living while attending a postsecondary educational institution.

Youth are introduced to PESS during transition planning, which primarily takes place after the youth turns 17, as dictated by 39.6035, F.S. Moreover, CFOP 170-17, Chapter 2, of the Children and Families Operating Procedures outlines specific guidelines for transition planning when a minor transitions from licensed care into the EFC program. However, it does not provide guidelines for transition planning when a young adult transitions from EFC to PESS. Transitioning between these two programs can be challenging, as the young adult will face new responsibilities, environments, and independence. Unlike EFC, PESS does not require the same level of departmental and judicial oversight, which can be both exciting and daunting for a young adult.

The Council recommends that considering this, the CBCs and case management organizations develop specific guidelines for youth transitioning into PESS.

**Recommendations:**

1. Require transition plan staffings for young adults enrolled in PESS with their independent living specialist every six months and at critical junctures for the young adult, as assessed by the young adult and IL specialist, to ensure success in the program.
2. Create a universal form, similar to the Records and Resources Exchanged form used for minors entering EFC (CF-FSP 5426, available in DCF Forms), that must be filled out by the case worker *prior* to the young adult entering PESS, and then every six months thereafter, to ensure the young adult has the necessary information and resources to succeed in PESS.

At a *minimum*, the document shall list: whether the young adult has a permanent adult connection, a budget plan, career or educational plan, access to college advisor and resources within their institution, including mental health resources, employment resources and resume, access to public benefits, access to Medicaid, and ensuring the young adult understands PESS requirements.



The document must also ensure that the young adult has the number for their assigned child welfare professional, as well as general numbers for CBCs and their direct service providers, and that the young adult understands who to call for assistance should they have questions about their PESS eligibility, benefits, and other general inquiries.

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### **Enhance the My Pathways to Success Plan Form**

The Council recognizes that the success of young adults served through EFC, PESS, and Aftercare Services requires the fulfillment of actionable items identified in the department's mandated My Pathway to Success Plan form (the Plan). Council members discussed that greater follow up would be beneficial to ensure that critical tasks necessary for achieving goals established in the Plan are completed. Since the Plan was designed to be drafted and updated by the young adult, the Council recommends enhancing the document or relevant transition planning policies to ensure any follow up action items are addressed by the child welfare professionals.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Add a page to the Plan that details any pending follow up items. For example:
    - If a young adult states in the Employment section that he/she needs help developing a resume, there should be a page that includes the task "needs help with resume".
    - Upon completion, the page should reflect verifiable information like "young adult was linked to Career Source or young adult completed resume".
    - The action item / follow up may include "check boxes" or "yes / no" to guide both the youth and the transition facilitator in ensuring appropriate assistance was provided.
  2. Require CBCs to develop staffing forms that include follow up items as noted above.
- 

### **Addendum to the Recommendations**

This addendum to the Council recommendations serves to provide additional relevant information and details.

#### **IL Competency Training Program**

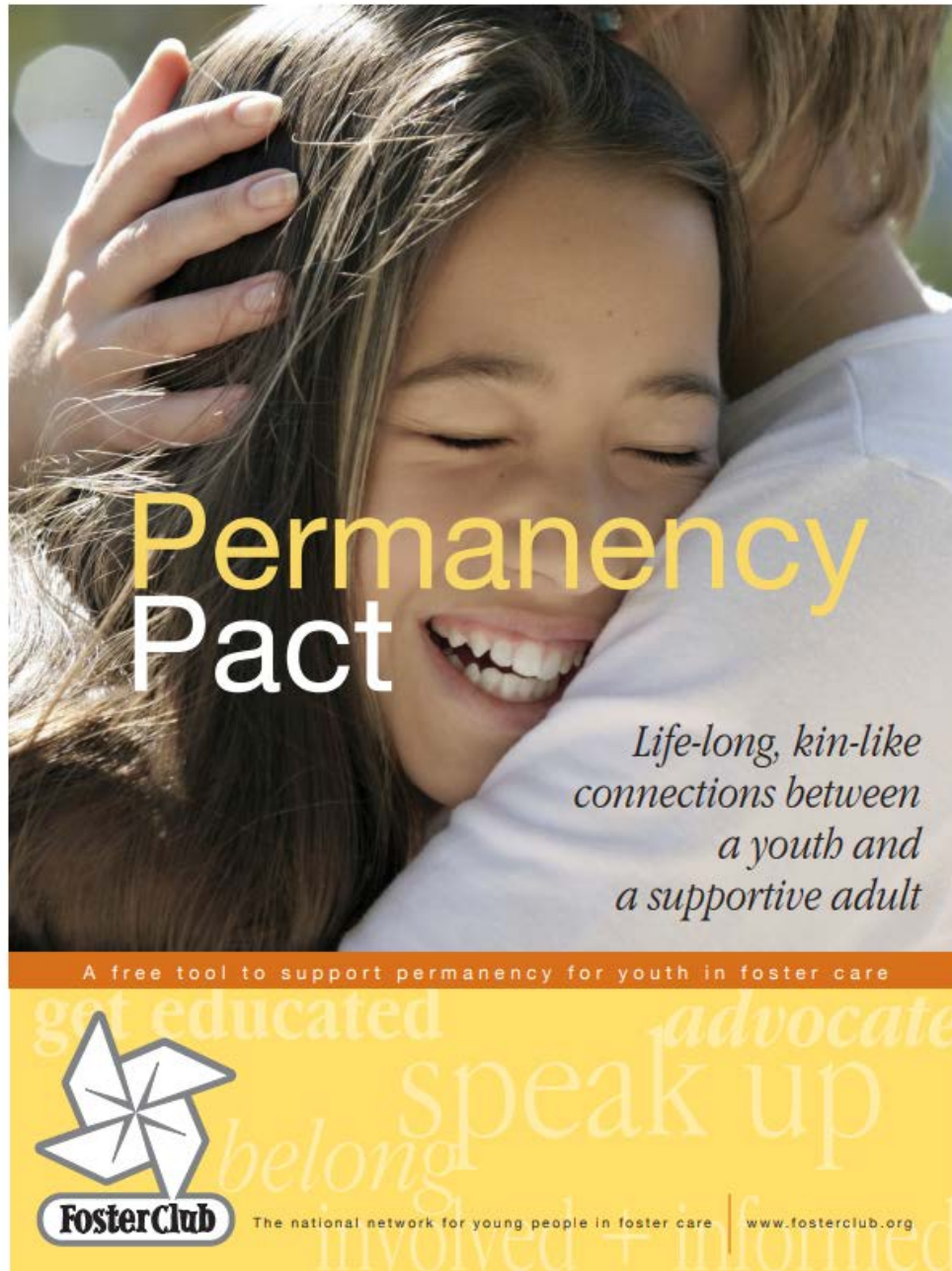
The Council recognizes that the development of an IL competency training program takes time to cultivate. While that process is underway, at a minimum, it is recommended that job aides be utilized and enhanced to ensure key information and documents are filed timely with the court. Job aides could include the below example. The JR job aide breakdown chart should be utilized as

a job aide for child welfare professionals, GALs, licensed caregivers and group home staff, mentors, and day supervision providers. These job aides, when completed, support our transitioning youth, with demonstrated evidence of efforts to help prepare them for adulthood.

Documents to be filed with Judicial Reviews	DJJ	13	14	15	15 1/2	16	16 1/2	17	17 1/2	17 3/4	18	18 1/2	19	Hand Off to ILS CBC
AT 1st JR - updated case plan with specific information related to the ILS that the child has acquired since the 13th birthday or since the date of shelter, whichever came first (FS 39.701 (3)b)								√						√
Credit Check Reports (3 agencies) (F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (2))			√	√		√		√		√				17 3/4 only
CF-FSP-9425 Pathways to Success Form (completed by youth) (Ch. 02, 2-3.e)		√	√	√		√		√						5
Casey Life Skills Assessment (youth self-disclosure) (CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 01, 1-5.c(1)))		√	√	√		√		√	√					6
Teen Staffing Dates Held (Ekerd Policy OG-xx) (CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 01, 1-6.b))			√	√		√		√						4
CF-FSP 5444 Life Skills Progress Doc Log (completed by caregivers) (F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (1)) (CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 01, 1-5.a))				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			8
CF-FSP 5444 Life Skills Progress Doc Log (completed by CMO for youth with no permanent placement, in daytime supervision & runaways) (see above)				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			8
A signed acknowledgment by the youth having received the Youth Rights document (PUBLIC LAW 113-183 LIST OF RIGHTS.—Section 475A)			√	√		√		√						√
Youth Case Plan (collaboratively with the youth) (FS 39.6035(1) (Public Law 183 (a)) (Section 475(1)(B) (42 U.S.C. 675(1)(B))) (F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (3))(CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 01, 1-6) - Goals to acquiring ILS deficiency - activities, steps, or demonstrated behaviors to achieve goals - available resources / providers of ILS deficiencies			√	√		√		√	√	√				17 3/4 only
17 year old Transition Plan MUST be submitted & approved by the court and must be attached to the case plan. It must be started at age 16. (FS 39.6035(4) (F.A.C. 65C-28.009 (6))								√		√	√	√	√	Camelot
CF-FSP-5426 Records & Resources Exchanged Form (CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 02))								√						√
Drivers License / Learners Permit Efforts / K21 Certificate (FS 39.701 (3)a.4) (65C-28.009 (5))				√						√				√
Copies of all child's medical, immunization records, mental health, and educational records since last JR (FS 39.701 2.a.12) (FS 39.6012 (2))		√	√	√		√		√		√				limited scope
Master Trust - Full Accounting and information on how to access (FS 39.701 (3)a.3)								√						√
Written verification that the youth has their entire educational, medical, & mental health records (FS 39.701 (3)a.11-12))								√						√
CF-FSP-5220 Tuition Waiver Form (FS 1009.25(1)(c)-(d))											√			
Daniel Memorial Life Skills Assessments (Camelot - ILS) (CFOP 170-17 (Ch. 01, 1-5.c(1)))										√	√	√	√	√
<b>Attachments to be included with the JR's</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	

Permanent Connection Agreement

The Council suggests using Oklahoma's [Permanency Pact](#) tool as a template/example for Florida in creating its own permanent connection agreement. Below is part of Oklahoma's Permanency Pact.



*What's a Permanency Pact? A pledge by a supportive adult to provide specific supports to a young person in foster care with a goal of establishing a lifelong, kin-like relationship.*

## Permanency Pact

Youth transitioning from foster care are often unsure about who they can count on for ongoing support. Many of their significant relationships with adults have been based on professional connections which will terminate once the transition from care is completed. It is critical to the youth's success to identify those adults who will continue to provide various supports through and beyond the transition from care. Clarifying exactly what the various supports will include can help to avoid gaps in the youth's safety net and misunderstandings between the youth and the supportive adult.

### A Permanency Pact provides:

- structure and a safety net for the youth
- a defined and verbalized commitment by both parties to a long term supportive relationship
- clarity regarding the expectations of the relationship

A Permanency Pact creates a formalized, facilitated process to connect youth in foster care with a supportive adult. The process of bringing the supportive adult together with youth and developing a pledge or "Permanency Pact" has proven successful in clarifying the relationship and identifying mutual expectations. A committed, caring adult may provide a lifeline for a youth, particularly those who are preparing to transition out of foster care to life on their own.

### Participants in a Permanency Pact

In addition to the two primary parties in a Permanency Pact (the youth and the supportive adult), it is recommended that a Facilitator assist in developing the Pact.

The *Facilitator* may be a Case Worker, Independent Living Provider or other adult who:

- is knowledgeable in facilitating Permanency Pacts\*
- is familiar with the youth, and
- can provide insight into the general needs of the youth transitioning from care

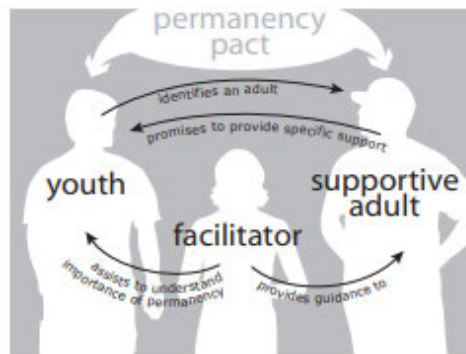
The *Supportive Adult* is an adult who:

- has been identified by the youth
- has a relationship with the youth
- is willing to commit to a life-long relationship with the youth
- is a positive role-model and
- is able to provide the youth with specific support on an on-going basis



Shawn from Michigan,  
FosterClub All-Star

"As I get older I am seeing the importance of family, community and peer support. Ever since I became engaged and active in my community my circle of support has expanded. My life has become so much more enriched now that I have accepted that I have a lot of people that care about me, I genuinely believe that family, peers, bio, foster, adoptive, in-laws are the most valuable thing a person can have in their life."



\*A Permanency Pact Toolkit will be available Summer, 2007 at [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org)



## Developing a Permanency Pact

The first step is to engage the youth to identify the supports they want or need as they prepare for the transition out of foster care, and beyond to adulthood. The following list of 45 Suggested Supports can help with this process. Together with the youth, the Facilitator can then begin to develop a list of adults who may be able to provide some of those supports. This list may include current relationships or adults with whom the youth has had a previous connection to which they wish to reestablish.

The Facilitator then:

- obtains necessary releases of information
- makes initial contact with the identified adult(s)
- updates them regarding the youth's current situation
- gauges their level of interest
- assists the adult in identifying possible supports they will provide, and
- schedules and facilitates the Permanency Pact meeting

Working with the Supportive Adult, the Facilitator can use the following list of 45 Suggested Supports to draft a list of supports that the adult wishes to offer the youth. The list is then presented to the youth who will acknowledge the offer and accept those supports that they feel would be most beneficial. Additional supports may be suggested by either the youth or the supportive adult.

The final list may then be hand written using the attached list or entered into the Pact template, available in Microsoft Word, Wordperfect, and PDF formats (available in the Permanency Pact toolkit, order through [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org) starting Summer 2007). The youth and Supportive Adult sign the Pact and the Facilitator provides a witness signature. Copies of the Permanency Pact are provided to the youth, the Supportive Adult and maintained in the case record as part of the youth's Transition Plan. It is recommended that a certificate be prepared which documents the Pact between the adult and youth (certificate templates available in the Permanency Pact toolkit). All other members of the youth's Transition Team, including foster parents, CASA, judge, etc. should also receive copies of the Permanency Pact.

Taking a step toward trusting a relationship is often a very great accomplishment for a youth with a background where relationships are broken, promises are often not kept, and disappointment in caretakers prevails. The gift that a Supportive Adult contributes by way of a life-long commitment to the relationship is heroic. The impact of the forged relationship may be profound to all parties. To symbolize the importance of the commitment, it is recommended that a Permanency Pact be held in conjunction with some sort of ceremony or celebration. The Supportive Adult may want to give the youth a token keepsake gift (a piece of jewelry, photo frame, watch, engraved item, a special note, photo album, etc.), a celebration meal can be enjoyed.

A Certificate has been provided in this packet which may be used to affirm the Permanency Pact made between a youth and supportive adult.

FosterClub member Caliguy94037,  
age 18, from California

"I consider permanency to be a life long connection with an adult and consider it very important. In my experiences, I have just met adults that seem to stay in my life and that connection with them helps me to succeed in life."



Schylar From Montana,  
Fosterclub All-Star

"I have been through a lot in my life, and sometimes felt as if I were the only one alive in the world even when I was surrounded by lots of people. I am not always sure why I felt this way, maybe because I was a foster kid or maybe because I had always been told I was meant for nothing. But after a life of trials, I found someone that can almost make me forget a lot of the hurt and bad relationships. He is my 8th grade music teacher, my mentor, my savior through 11 placements, and now... my dad. I am 23, and am soon to be adopted your never too old to be adopted."

the national network for young people in foster care

FOSTERCLUB

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# PERMANENCY PACT

In an effort to substantiate and sustain  
an on-going connection between a youth and a supportive adult,

\_\_\_\_\_

SUPPORTIVE ADULT

pledges to provide specific support to, and has been accepted as a  
provider of such support by,

\_\_\_\_\_


YOUTH

confirmed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

DAY MONTH YEAR

as witnessed by \_\_\_\_\_

FACILITATOR



*FosterClub's Permanency Pact documents a  
life-long, kin-like commitment to a relationship  
between a youth and a supportive adult.*

**FosterClub** the national network for young people in foster care | [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org)

- A Home For The Holidays
- A Place To Do Laundry
- Emergency Place To Stay
- Food/Occasional Meals
- Care Packages At College
- Employment Opportunity
- Job Search Assistance
- Career Counseling
- Housing Hunt
- Recreational Activities
- Mentor
- Educational Assistance
- Relationship/Marriage/Parenting
- Transportation
- Assistance With Medical Appts
- Storage
- Motivation
- Someone To Talk To/Discuss Problems
- A Phone To Use
- A Computer To Use
- Clothing
- Spiritual Support
- Legal Troubles
- Cultural Experience
- Apartment Move-in
- Cooking Lessons/Assistance
- Regular Check-in
- Bills & Money Management Assistance
- Drug And Alcohol Addiction Help
- Mental Health Support
- Co-Signer
- Help Reading Forms, Complex Docs
- Mechanical /Building Projects
- Housekeeping
- Home Decorating
- Voting
- Volunteerism
- Finding Community Resources
- Safety And Personal Security
- Babysitting
- Emergency Cash
- Social Circle/Community Activities
- Advocacy
- Reference
- Adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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## **2020 Council Members**

Ashley Friend: QA Review Specialist, DCF

Brandie McCabe: Director of Youth Initiatives, Selfless Love Foundation

Dominic Watson: Executive Director, Neighbor to Family (ILSAC Chair)

Eva Mae Sugg, Esq.: Senior Best Interest Attorney, Guardian ad Litem

Ginger Rockey-Johnson: Child Advocate Manager, Guardian ad Litem

Hope Fuller: Young Adult

Iris Williams: School Social Work Consultant, DOE

Janelle King: Interagency Youth Engagement & Restorative Practices Specialist, DCF (ILSAC Co-Chair)

Kym Holcomb, Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives Supervisor, DEO

Meliza Frias, Esq: Advocacy Manager, Florida Foster Care Review

Nabilah “Naby” Baig: Program Manager, Sunshine Health (ILSAC Secretary)

Shauntraí Curry: Statewide Transition Coordinator, DJJ

Tara Thompson: Program Director, Camelot Community Care

Thomas Fair: Advocate

Warren Davis: Policy Analyst, Career Source Florida

Special thanks to Mr. Cal Walton, III, Youth & Young Adult Transition Services Specialist, DCF, for his ongoing and unwavering support during the 2020 Council Meetings.

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# **Department of Children and Families Response to the Independent Living Services Advisory Council 2020 Annual Report**

December 31, 2020

Chad Poppell  
Secretary



Ron DeSantis  
Governor

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the establishment of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC/the Council) in 2002, the Council has provided recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of independent living services as part of a comprehensive report to the Legislature. As required in s. 409.1451(7), Florida Statutes, the Department of Children and Families (the department) is submitting responses to the Council's recommendations as part of the Council's 2020 Annual Report.

## **ILSAC RECOMMENDATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING COMPETENCY TRAINING PROGRAM**

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSE**

The department supports the development of a competency training program for the independent living staff with a certification process. The department recently initiated the development of an independent living curriculum that will be available for onboarding of independent living staff. The department strives to ensure that professionals who are preparing youth and young adults for adulthood are equipped with the skills and tools necessary for success. The department intends to collaborate with and include feedback from stakeholders such as youth and young adults, community-based care agencies, guardian ad litem program, and other agencies as the curriculum is developed.

The department would need to review and work in collaboration with the various agencies to determine the most appropriate method to take on the requirement of stakeholders completing a department training curriculum and certification. In addition, the Florida Certification Board would need to be incorporated into the discussion.

The department supports the use of the recommended job aide as a supplemental guide on information related to independent living while the independent living competency curriculum is being developed. The department is not opposed to ensuring the document is circulated, but the department would ask the council for the following:

1. Provide clarification on the utilization and enhancement of the document that is mentioned in the response. Utilization and enhancement are very broad, and further information would provide the department with a clear understanding on the direction to which the council would like this document to be used.

2. Amend the supplemental document to clarify the meaning of each column.

## **ILSAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVALUATION ON DANIEL KIDS I.L. RESOURCE CENTER**

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSE**

The department began their partnership in 2016 with Daniel Kids to provide services and supports for the independent living population in Florida. The department supports the recommendation and will evaluate the existing contract with Daniel Kids to determine if

this program is still providing the best marketability, services, and supports for the independent living population.

## **ILSAC RECOMMENDATION FOR PERMANENT CONNECTION AGREEMENT**

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSE**

The department will consider the recommendation of a permanent connection agreement. A permanent connection is an important component of a young adult's transition into adulthood. Currently, the Independent Living Quality Standards Workgroup has been developing standards which includes efficient ways to ensure permanent connections are obtained for young adults as they transition into adulthood. The Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) has current functionality in the Family Functioning Assessment- Ongoing (FFA-O) that captures participants connected to a youth under the Family Support Network Participant category. Under this category, the participant's name and role can be documented to reflect those connections developed and maintained by the youth in a systematic format.

The department proposes the utilization of the FSFN functionality to include mentors, formal and informal supports, as well as the documentation of permanent connections in the Progress Updates as new relationships are developed.

The department adds that when a youth or young adult receives mentoring through a state agency (formal mentoring), it can be captured in FSFN under the Independent Living Category, Case Type "NYTD- Mentoring." This functionality is also available for programs that serve the post 18-year old population.

## **ILSAC RECOMMENDATION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES TRANSITION PLAN**

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSE**

The department recognizes that the Postsecondary Education Support Services (PESS) program was designed to provide supports to our young adults involved in post-secondary education with the flexibility to transition into adulthood based on their needs and desires. The department has created an Independent Living Quality Standards Workgroup which has been tasked with developing quality standards for this program to allow this population to receive quality skills and resources as they transition into adulthood.

The department agrees that there is a need for this population to have a plan to capture discussions held with the young adults as they transition into adulthood. The Independent Living Quality Standards workgroup has also discussed the development of a universal transition plan that can be utilized for all young adults being served in post-18-year old services, which would include those young adults enrolled in the PESS program. This universal transition plan will provide continuity to align with the plans already established in the department's Extended Foster Care and Aftercare Programs.

## **ILSAC RECOMMENDATION FOR MY PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS PLAN**

The department recognizes that the need for follow up discussion and interaction during transition planning as it is paramount for youth to become successful. The purpose of the My Pathways to Success Plan is for the youth and young adult to provide a detailed outline of the goals, choices, and decisions for obtaining or maintaining the services necessary to successfully transition to adulthood.

The department developed a Children and Families Operating Procedure (CFOP) on transition planning to provide additional details and guidance on the engagement and development of the plan. CFOP 170-17 Chapter 2, Transition Planning for Youth, outlines how information should be documented, specific areas that need to be addressed, and points out the importance of the form being youth driven to allow the youth and young adult to have a voice in the planning of their future.

The department proposes that if follow up tasks are needed after the transition staffing, that those tasks be documented under the meeting tab in FSFN, which is to be completed after every transition staffing with the youth and young adult. By documenting under this tab, it will provide accountability on the staff and allow the purpose of the meeting tab "Transition Meeting" in FSFN to be fully utilized.