

CHAPTER 2023-255

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 1190

An act relating to the Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program; creating s. 409.1455, F.S.; providing a short title; requiring the Department of Children and Families to establish the pilot program; specifying the purposes and components of the pilot program; requiring the department's Office of Continuing Care, in consultation with certain entities, to develop and administer the pilot program; authorizing the department to contract with certain entities to collaborate with the office on development and administration of the pilot program; requiring the independent living professionalism and workforce education component of the pilot program to culminate in a specified certificate; providing that completion of that component allows former foster youth to participate in the onsite workforce and training internship component; defining terms; providing requirements for the administration of the pilot program; requiring the office to initiate the respective components of the pilot program by specified dates; specifying the duties of the office related to the two components; requiring the components to address specified topics; providing requirements for organizations participating in the onsite workforce training internship component; specifying time limitations for former foster youth participating in the onsite workforce training internship component; requiring the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to adopt certain regulations and rules, respectively; specifying conditions for participation in the onsite workforce internship component; requiring the department to include a section on the pilot program in a specified annual report which must include specified information; requiring the department to adopt rules; amending s. 414.56, F.S.; conforming a provision to changes made by the act; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 409.1455, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

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

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “Step into Success Act.”

(2) CREATION.—The department shall establish the 3-year Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program to give eligible foster youth and former foster youth an opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and professional skills, to transition from the custody of the department to independent living, and to become better prepared for an independent and successful future. The pilot program must consist of an independent living professionalism and workforce education component

and, for youth who complete that component, an onsite workforce training internship component. In consultation with subject-matter experts and the community-based care lead agencies, the office shall develop and administer the pilot program for interested foster youth and former foster youth; however, the department may contract with entities that have demonstrable subject-matter expertise in the transition to adulthood for foster youth, workforce training and preparedness, professional skills, and related subjects to collaborate with the office in the development and administration of the pilot program. The independent living professionalism and workforce education component of the program must culminate in a certificate that allows a former foster youth to participate in the onsite workforce training internship.

(3) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the term:

(a) “Community-based care lead agency” has the same meaning as in s. 409.986(3).

(b) “Former foster youth” means an individual 18 years of age or older but younger than 26 years of age who is currently or was previously placed in licensed care, excluding Level I licensed placements pursuant to s. 409.175(5)(a)1., for at least 60 days within this state.

(c) “Foster youth” means an individual older than 16 years of age but younger than 18 years of age who is currently in licensed care, excluding Level I licensed placements pursuant to s. 409.175(5)(a)1.

(d) “Office” means the department’s Office of Continuing Care.

(e) “Participating organization” means a state agency, a corporation under chapter 607 or chapter 617, or another relevant entity that has agreed to collaborate with the office in the development and implementation of a trauma-informed onsite workforce training internship program pursuant to subsections (6) and (7).

(4) REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OFFICE.—The department shall establish and the office shall develop and administer the pilot program for eligible foster youth and former foster youth. The pilot program must be administered as part of an eligible foster youth’s regular transition planning under s. 39.6035 or as a post-transition service for eligible former foster youth. The office must begin the professionalism and workforce education component of the program on or before January 1, 2024, and the onsite workforce training internship component of the program on or before July 1, 2024.

(5) INDEPENDENT LIVING PROFESSIONALISM AND WORKFORCE EDUCATION COMPONENT REQUIREMENTS.—The office shall do all of the following in connection with the independent living professionalism and workforce education component for eligible foster youth and former foster youth:

(a) Designate and ensure that the number of qualified staff is sufficient to implement and administer the component, which may be part of a larger independent living or life skills training program if the larger program meets the requirements of this subsection.

(b) Develop all workshops, presentations, and curricula for the component, including, but not limited to, all written educational and training materials for foster youth and former foster youth. Resources may include, but are not limited to, workshops and materials to assist with preparing resumes, mock interviews, experiential training, and assistance with securing an internship or employment. The office must review and update these materials as necessary. The training materials must address, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Interview skills;
2. Professionalism;
3. Teamwork;
4. Leadership;
5. Problem solving; and
6. Conflict resolution in the workplace.

(c) Require that the training provided be in addition to any other life skills or employment training required by law. The training may be developed or administered by the department, community-based care lead agencies, or the lead agencies' subcontracted providers, or in collaboration with colleges or universities or other nonprofit organizations in the community with workforce education and training resources.

(d) Provide relevant written materials from the component and any relevant tools developed to ensure participants' successful transition to internships to all participating organizations that offer workforce training internship opportunities.

(e) Provide materials to inform eligible foster youth and former foster youth of the program, the requirements for participation, and contact information for enrollment. The community-based care lead agencies shall ensure that any subcontracted providers that directly serve youth receive this information.

(f) Advertise and promote the availability of the education and internship program to engage as many eligible foster youth and former foster youth as possible.

(g) Assess the career interests of each eligible foster youth and former foster youth who expresses interest in participating in the program and

determine the most appropriate internship and post-internship opportunities for that youth based on his or her expressed interests.

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

(a) Develop processes and procedures to implement a trauma-informed onsite workforce training internship component. The processes and procedures of the internship component must be designed so that they can be replicated and scaled to meet various organizational structures and sizes. The component must include:

1. Recruitment of agencies, corporations, and other entities to host interns as participating organizations;

2. Assisting participating organizations with mentor recruitment, training, and matching;

3. Mentor-led performance reviews, including a review of the intern's work product, professionalism, time management, communication style, and stress-management strategies;

4. Daily mentorship and coaching on topics such as:

a. Professionalism;

b. Teamwork;

c. Leadership;

d. Problem solving; and

e. Conflict resolution in the workplace;

5. Development of opportunities for interns to become employees of the participating organization; and

6. Reporting requirements specified in subsection (11).

(b) Develop a minimum of 1 hour of required trauma-informed training for mentors to teach the skills necessary to engage with participating eligible former foster youth.

(c) Provide assistance to eligible foster youth and former foster youth interested in participating in the internship component, including, but not limited to, identifying and monitoring internship opportunities, being knowledgeable of the training and skills needed to match eligible foster youth and former foster youth with appropriate internships, and assisting eligible foster youth and former foster youth with applying for post-internship employment opportunities.

(d) Publicize specific internship positions in an easily accessible manner and inform eligible foster youth and former foster youth of where to locate such information.

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

(f) Distribute funds appropriated for the compensation of mentors who are participating in the component as provided in paragraph (7)(b).

(g) By May 1, 2024, provide to the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education all relevant internship information necessary to support the award of postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for internship positions held by former foster youth participating in the onsite workforce training internship component.

(h) Develop and conduct follow-up surveys with:

1. Former foster youth within 3 months after their internship start date to ensure successful transition into the work environment and to gather feedback on how to improve the experience for future participants.

2. Mentors assigned to participating former foster youth. Such data must be collected by October 1, 2024, and by October 1 annually thereafter, for inclusion in the independent living services annual report.

3. Any other persons the office deems relevant for purposes of continued improvement of the internship component.

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

(a) Collaborate with the office to implement a trauma-informed approach to mentoring and training former foster youth.

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

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

a. Have worked for the participating organization for at least 1 year;

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

c. Sign a monthly hour statement for the intern;

d. Allocate at least 1 hour per month to conduct mentor-led performance reviews, to include a review of the intern’s work product, professionalism,

time management, communication style, and stress-management strategies; and

e. Complete a minimum of 1 hour of trauma-informed training to gain skills critical for successfully engaging former foster youth.

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

3. An employee may serve as a mentor for a maximum of three interns at one time and may not receive more than \$3,600 in compensation per fiscal year for serving as a mentor. Any time spent serving as a mentor to an intern under this section counts toward the minimum service required for eligibility for payments pursuant to subparagraph 2. and this subparagraph.

(c) When necessary, have a discussion with an intern's assigned mentor, the participating organization's internship program liaison, and the office about the creation of a corrective action plan to address issues related to the intern's professionalism, work product, or performance and, if applicable, after giving the intern a reasonable opportunity to comply with the corrective action plan, document the intern's failure to do so before discharging him or her.

(d) Provide relevant feedback to the office at least annually for the office to comply with paragraph (6)(h).

(e) Collaborate with the department to provide any requested information necessary to prepare the annual report required under subsection (11).

(8) TIME LIMITATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—A former foster youth who obtains an internship with a participating organization may participate in the internship component for no more than 1 year, calculated as 12 monthly stipend periods. The year begins on his or her start date with a participating organization. A former foster youth may intern under the internship program with more than one participating organization, but may not intern with more than one participating organization at the same time. A participating organization may hire the intern as an employee, but the hiring of a former foster youth may not be for an internship under this section.

(9) AWARD OF POSTSECONDARY CREDIT.—The Board of Governors and the State Board of Education shall adopt regulations and rules, respectively, to award postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for eligible former foster youth participating in the internship component pursuant to subsection (4). The regulations and rules must include procedures for the award of postsecondary credit or career education clock hours, including, but not limited to, equivalency and alignment of the

internship component with appropriate postsecondary courses and course descriptions.

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

(a) To become a participant in the internship component of the program, the applicant must be a foster youth or a former foster youth as those terms are defined in subsection (3) at the time such youth applies for an internship position with a participating organization. A foster youth or former foster youth who has completed the training component with the department may apply for a position with a participating organization but may not begin an internship until attaining the age of 18 years.

(b) If offered an internship, a former foster youth must be classified as an intern and must work 80 hours per month to be eligible for the stipend payment.

(c) A former foster youth must spend any stipend funds specified for clothing on clothing that is in compliance with the dress code requirements of the participating organization with which the former foster youth is interning. Notwithstanding any limitation on funds provided to purchase clothing, the former foster youth must comply with any dress code requirements of the participating organization with which he or she is interning.

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

(e) A former foster youth may, at the discretion of a postsecondary educational institution within this state in which such youth is enrolled, earn postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for work performed as an intern under the internship component. Postsecondary credit and career education clock hours earned for work performed under the internship component may be in addition to any compensation earned for the same work performed under the internship component and may be awarded for completion of all or any part of the internship component. Participating organizations shall cooperate with postsecondary educational institutions to provide any information about internship positions which is necessary to enable the institutions to determine whether to grant the participating former foster youth postsecondary credit or career education clock hours toward his or her degree.

(f) A former foster youth who accepts an internship with a participating organization pursuant to this section may only be discharged from the internship component after the participating organization engages the intern's assigned mentor and the participating organization's internship program staff to assist the intern in performing the duties of the internship. Before discharging the former foster youth, the participating organization must also document the intern's failure to comply with a corrective action plan after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so.

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

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

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

(c) A summary of recruitment efforts to increase the number of participating organizations.

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

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

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

(12) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to implement this section.

Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 414.56, Florida Statutes, to read:

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

(5) Developing and administering the Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program for foster youth and former foster youth as required under s. 409.1455.

Section 3. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the sum of \$500,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Children and Families for the purpose of implementing this act.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

Approved by the Governor June 16, 2023.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 16, 2023.