



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

DATE: April 26, 2007

TO: District/Region Administrators, Community-Based Care CEOs,
Sheriff's Offices

THROUGH: George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David Fairbanks, Acting Assistant Secretary for Programs

FROM: Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Action Plan for Improving Services to Youth and Young Adults

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to share some immediate action steps following the remarks made by Youth Shine representatives at the District Administrator meeting on April 16, 2007. The actions below are intended to begin the process of responding to the challenge issued by the Secretary: to translate what we have heard from young people who have experienced our child welfare system into action and improved services.

Action Required: Consult within your district, community-based care (CBC) and sheriff's office leadership to identify staff working in child protection/child welfare positions who were formerly in foster care and who are willing to serve in an advisory capacity to Department leadership. It is understood that some individuals formerly in foster care may not desire to participate; therefore please use your best judgment in making this determination. **Send the names and contact information to Joel Atkinson (Joel_Atkinson@dcf.state.fl.us), Independent Living Specialist, by May 9, 2007.**

Action Plan for Improving Services to Youth and Young Adults: The Family Safety Program Office is developing an action plan to address concerns identified by youth. On Monday, April 16, Youth Shine representatives helped to identify the most immediate actions. Two of those action steps are generally described below. More information will be shared as details become available.

Helping Youth Understand Their Rights and Responsibilities

The Family Safety Program Office will develop youth friendly written materials in collaboration with youth representatives and staff. The purpose of the documents is to provide a means for communicating expectations, rights and responsibilities to youth in and transitioning out of the foster care system. An example of the information needing to be communicated can be found in s. 39.4085, F. S.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

System of Care Assessment Technical Assistance Meeting June 2007

Youth formerly in foster care serving on the Youth Shine Group (youth advisory group) have made presentations to Governor Crist, Secretary Butterworth, Legislators, Department leadership and various stakeholders and policy makers in the last several weeks. These youth have identified concerns, needs for improvement, exemplars and best practices in our agencies providing child welfare services across the state. Some examples of the issues include: normalcy, permanency, youth engagement, life skills practice opportunities, foster parent and group home provider training. The message of Youth Shine is strong and powerful. This group of young people is willing and available to help us improve the overall child welfare system.

In partnership with Youth Shine representatives and stakeholders, the Family Safety Program Office staff will convene a meeting of Community-Based Care staff and Department staff in June 2007. The following is a description of the planning efforts underway:

- Youth formerly in foster care will serve with facilitators to provide training and technical assistance.
- The primary purpose of the meeting is to assess the local system of care's strengths and gaps in addressing the issues identified by youth.
- Community-Based Care staff will have the opportunity to send approximately five representatives per agency who perform the following functions: a youth representative, permanency planning, case management, licensing, adoptions, and independent living program/fiscal functions.
- A number of Department representatives from each zone/region will have the opportunity to attend as well.
- The Family Safety Program Office will provide funds to cover travel costs for this one day meeting.
- Independent Living coordinators will be given an additional day of training during this same event.

Contact Information: For additional information, please contact Gay Frizzell at Gay_Frizzell@dcf.state.fl.us, Family Safety Program Office, (850) 921-3005.

cc: Youth Shine Representatives
Andrea Moore, Florida's Children First, Inc. Executive Director
Jane Soltis, Independent Living Services Advisory Council Chair
Diane Zambito, Connected by 25 Executive Director