Presentation to Florida PTA
December 2020

Contact information:
Pathways@EducateTomorrow.org
(305) 374-3751
One Student’s Experience

Tracy Harris, who spent years in foster care, was a student at Miami Dade College who is studying microbiology at the University of Florida and plans to attend medical school. She works with the Voices for Children Foundation in Miami. She is a mother of two and caretaker to her four siblings, who attend public school in Miami.

She has been helped by a number of organizations that are part of the Positive Pathways Network, including the following....

(678) Educate Tomorrow Community - YouTube

EDUCATE TOMORROW

Miami Dade College

AOK SCHOLARS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Lawrence E. White Family Foundation
Program Highlights

- Unique state-level program aimed at increasing post-secondary educational success among college students who lived in foster care in Florida

- Created in 2015 and is funded by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), in response to a Florida law requiring collaboration between DCF and the Florida Department of Education

- Administered by Educate Tomorrow, a non-profit organization

- Maintains and expands a network of members

- Strong partnerships with Guardian ad Litem, Florida College Access Network, Florida College System, State University System
Our Mission
Positive Pathways supports campus-based and community-based child welfare and education professionals who work with students from foster care and homeless backgrounds.

Our Vision
That all students who have experienced foster care or homelessness will have the chance to reach their full potential through education and community support.
Growth in Number of Foster Youth Turning Age 18
2013-14 to 2017-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12% increase
2013-14 to 2017-18

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families
Students Using the DCF Tuition and Fee Exemption at Florida’s Public Post-Secondary Institutions 2015-16 to 2018-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Technical College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>4260</td>
<td>3272</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>4702</td>
<td>3620</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>5372</td>
<td>3886</td>
<td>1127</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>6151</td>
<td>4164</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of Public University Students that Graduated using Florida Department of Children and Families Tuition and Fee Exemptions

Fall to Fall, 2013-14 to 2018-19

Source: BOG ODA analysis of State University System Database (SUDS)
A Guiding Quote

“Foster youth need every advantage as they transition to adulthood. Because it has been well-established that postsecondary education and training are essential to economic mobility, providing supports and resources to encourage the completion of such programs is one strategy to facilitate entry into career-focused employment.”
Legislative Mandate for Our Work

- In 2014, the Florida Legislature directed DCF to work in collaboration with the State University System Board of Governors (SUS BOG), the Florida College System (FCS), and the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to help address the need for a comprehensive support structure in the academic arena to assist young adults who have been or remain in the foster care system” Chapter 409.1452

- Positive Pathways is the program DCF set up to accomplish that collaboration.
In 2014 the state passed legislation, (F.S. 409.1452):

*The State University System of Florida and the Florida College System shall provide postsecondary educational campus coaching positions* that will be integrated Florida College System institutions’ and university institutions general support services structure to provide current and former foster care children and young adults with dedicated, on campus support.

- This legislation resulted in on campus foster care liaisons or coaches being appointed.
- All 28 colleges and all 12 universities have a designated person.
- 7 colleges and universities have a dedicated staff person.
More students are attending college but the challenge to graduate remains.
With support, students can succeed!
Results of Recent Statewide Survey of Students Using Waiver

What are your plans regarding your education?

- Continue my Education, 78%
- Undecided, 7%
- Take a break from school, 5%
- It depends on how the situation develops, 9%
- Drop out until everything settles down, 2%

October, 2020
N = 98

**Key Takeaway:** A high percentage (78%) of the students indicate they plan to continue their education. However, a sizeable percent are not that sure. These results, combined with other information in this report, indicate students’ urgent ongoing need for support and guidance.
What are your highest priorities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My schooling</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying healthy physically and/or mentally</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working or finding a job</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting a family member’s (child, sibling, cousin, parent, etc.) education or well-being</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a place to live</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Takeaways: Nearly 100% of the students say that their schooling is an urgent of high priority. The urgency of students’ priorities has increased, specifically supporting a family member’s education or well-being, and finding housing.
Areas of need: financial, guidance, wrap around support, employment, housing, mental health (all trauma-informed)

**What has become easier or harder for you since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

**Easier**
- Paying Bills: April 61%, October 47%
- Finding Work: April 61%, October 43%
- Paying for Food: April 53%, October 33%
- Finding Household Supplies: April 46%, October 30%
- Life skills and life management: April 40%, October 34%

**Harder**
- Emotional Stability: April 53%, October 60%
- Family stresses: April 37%, October 43%
- Healthcare: April 24%, October 26%
- Parenting Support (distance learning): April 12%, October 18%

**Key Takeaways:** Students involved with Educate Tomorrow and the AOK Scholars Foundation are finding it easier to meet basic needs and more difficult to meet less tangible needs, such as dealing with their emotions, family stresses, and their health. Parenting youth are finding it more difficult to help their students with distance learning.
Programs and Opportunities for Florida Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

Youth and Young Adult Outcomes

- Increase financial self-sufficiency
- Improve educational (academic or vocational) attainment
- Increase connections with supportive adults
- Reduce homelessness
- Reduce high-risk behavior
- Improve access to health insurance
**Postsecondary Educational Services and Supports (PESS)**

**Eligibility Overview**

- 18 but not yet 23 years of age
- Living in legal custody of the Department on 18th birthday AND spent a total of 6 months in licensed care prior to aging out
- OR was at least 16 and was adopted or placed with court-approved dependency guardian after spending 6 months in licensed care within the 12 months immediately preceding such placement or adoption
  - AND earned a high school diploma or its equivalent
  - AND has been admitted for enrollment full-time (9 credit hours) in Florida Bright Futures eligible postsecondary educational institution
PESS Aims and Benefits

* The young adult will gain skills, education and support to become self sufficient and have lifelong connections to supportive adults.
* The program provides the young adult monthly financial assistance while attending a Florida Bright Futures postsecondary educational institution.
* The monthly payment is determined by the minimal wage amount and is currently $1256.00.
* The monthly payment is to secure housing and utilities with the balance going directly to the young adult.
Other Benefits and Supports
Existing Campus-Based Programs

Educate Tomorrow@ Miami-Dade College Single Stop

TCC Fostering Academic Achievement Fellows

Educate Tomorrow @ Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University Fostering Panther Pride

Unconquered Scholars Program

University of Central Florida Knight Alliance Network

Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program
Newly Developed or Strengthened Initiatives
## Positive Pathways Regional Points of Contact

**DCF Regions**

Strategically placed professionals help connect youth and young adults as well as community-based agencies with campus-based foster care liaisons.

### Region / Circuit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region / Circuit</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northwest Region</strong></td>
<td>Christine Stillwell</td>
<td>Christine Stillwell Program Director AOK Scholars Foundation (321) 231-0587 <a href="mailto:christine@lewff.org">christine@lewff.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuits 1, 2, 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast Region</strong></td>
<td>James Minter</td>
<td>James Minter Transition Support Coordinator Family Services of North Florida (904) 418-5831 <a href="mailto:james.minter@fssnf.org">james.minter@fssnf.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuits 3, 4, 7, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Region</strong></td>
<td>Circuits 5, 9, 18 Dr. Cookie Schultz Education Manager, Youth Services Embrace Families (407) 716-9730 <a href="mailto:cookie.schultz@cbccfl.org">cookie.schultz@cbccfl.org</a></td>
<td>Circuit 10 Marquina Butts-Fisher Independent Living Coordinator Heartland for Children (863) 519-8900 x 238 <a href="mailto:Mbutts@HeartlandforChildren.org">Mbutts@HeartlandforChildren.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuits 5, 9, 10, 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Positive Pathways Regional Points of Contact

**Suncoast Region**  
**Circuits 6, 12, 13, 20**  
**Althea K. Blake, EdD.**  
Founder, Higher Agency  
(813) 580-7874  
akblake@higheragency.org  
**Jamie Bennett, LMSW, ACC**  
Co-founder, Cetera, Inc.  
(269) 271-1608  
jamie@jlbttraining.com

**Southeast Region**  
**Circuits 15, 17, 19**  
**Sabrina Scott**  
Director of Independent Living  
Vita Nova  
(561) 689-0035  
sscott@vitanovainc.org  
**Circuit 15**  
**Joe Murray**  
Assistant Dean  
Student Advising Services  
Florida Atlantic University  
MurrayJ@fau.edu  
**Circuit 17**  
**Tricia Cepeda**  
Educational Coordinator  
FLITE Center (Broward)  
(954) 625-5401  
Tricia@flitecenter.org

**Southern Region**  
**Circuits 11, 16**  
**Varzi Jean-Baptiste**  
Program Director and Care Coordinator  
Educate Tomorrow  
(786) 223-7541  
Varzi@educatetomorrow.org
The community-based care initiative negotiates and contracts with respected local, non-profit agencies to provide child welfare services in local communities for children who have been abused, neglected and/or abandoned.

### Community-Based Care Agencies by County

#### Lead Agencies and Contract Managers Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract</th>
<th>Region (Circuit)</th>
<th>Lead Agency</th>
<th>Contact Person For Lead Agency</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Lead Agency Phone Contact</th>
<th>DCF Contract Manager</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>DCF Telephone Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services Contract AJ485 SOC</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakeview Center, Families First Network</td>
<td>1211 West Avery St., Building B Pensacola, FL 32501-1836</td>
<td>(850) 453-7745</td>
<td>Lisa Carden</td>
<td>100 Governmental Center Suite 611 Pensacola, FL 32502</td>
<td>(850) 483-6676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Contract BJ101 SOC</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Big Bend Community Based Care, Inc.</td>
<td>525 North Martin Luther King Boulevard Tallahassee, FL 32301</td>
<td>(850) 410-1020</td>
<td>Charlton Bradley</td>
<td>2363 Phillips Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309</td>
<td>(850) 778-4082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Contract DJ838</td>
<td>4 Duval/Nassau</td>
<td></td>
<td>Family Support Services of North Florida Inc.</td>
<td>1300 Riverplace Blvd., Suite 700 Jacksonville, FL 32207</td>
<td>(904) 421-5600</td>
<td>Paul Johnson</td>
<td>5900 Arlington Expressway Jacksonville, FL 32211</td>
<td>(904) 485-9547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Call to Action

• If any of your members have an interest in working with Positive Pathways to increase the number of students in high school, from foster care, who go to college, reach out to us for potential partnerships.

• Consider reaching out to the local foster parent association in your area, they may have special projects like food drives or Holiday gift drives that you can help support.

• Help us reach the guardians or foster parents of students in high school in foster care so that they know college is possible and there are supports available.

• Connect counselors and school leadership to the Positive Pathways Program either through Pathways@EducateTomorrow.org or through regional point of contact in your area.

• Make sure your PTA knows about the special resources available for foster youth.
Partners

Potential Future Partner?

Florida
PTA

everychild. one voice.
Questions and Comments

How to Reach Us

Phone: (786) 223-6884 or (305) 374-3751
Email: pathways@educatetomorrow.org
Website: www.positivepathwaysflorida.org
https://twitter.com/FloridaReach
www.facebook.com/groups/floridareach