



Series: 300: Child and Family Services

Policy Name: Road to Independence Requirements for Student Eligibility

Policy Number: 304

Origination Date: 11/30/09

Revision Date: 7/1/18

Regulation: FS 409

Policy: It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to administer the Road to Independence Program to help eligible students who are former foster children in Florida to receive the educational and vocational training needed to achieve independence, as outlined in Florida Statue 409.1451 and FLAC 65-C31.004.

Procedure:

1. The general eligibility requirements for the Road to Independence Program (RTI) consist of the following:
 - a. Be age 18, 19 or 20;
 - b. Have been a dependent child pursuant to Chapter 39;
 - c. Be or have been in the legal and/or physical custody of the Department of Children and Family Services at the time of his or her 18th birthday.
 - d. Have spent at least 6 months in licensed foster care before reaching his or her 18th birthday, which may include the time the youth spent in shelter status in state custody;
 - e. Be a resident of Florida per Section 1009.40, F.S.; and
 - f. Meet one of the following educational requirements:
 - 1) Earned a standard high school diploma or its equivalent as described in Sections 1003.43 or 1003.435, F.S., or earned a special diploma or special certificate of completion as described in Section 1003.438, F.S., and has been admitted for full-time enrollment in an eligible postsecondary education institution as defined in:
 - i. Section 1009.533, F.S., if the institution accepts the Florida Tuition and Fee Exemption provided in Section 1009.25, F.S. or
 - ii. Included in Florida's Eligible Training Providers list that is recognized by Agency for Workforce Innovation and Workforce Florida, Inc. and is located at <http://www.floridajobs.org/etpl/StateList.asp>, incorporated by reference.
 - 2) Is enrolled full time in an accredited high school, unless he or she has a documented disability and has provided documentation that part-time attendance is a necessary accommodation; or
 - 3) Is enrolled full time in an accredited adult education program designed to provide the student with a high school diploma or its equivalent, unless he or she has a documented disability and has provided documentation that part-time attendance is a necessary accommodation.



2. In order to determine a student's continued eligibility for the Road to Independence Program, eligibility will be evaluated at least quarterly and at the end of each term of the academic year for post-secondary students and students attending high school in a tradition setting. Students enrolled in a GED program or an alternative high school will be reviewed monthly. A student must meet the following requirements:
 - a. Post-Secondary (college) students (individuals attending educational institutions at the level that follows high school completion) shall:
 - 1) Have earned a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale; and
 - 2) Have earned either 12 credits, 360 hours, or the equivalent combination of units per academic term unless he or she has a documented disability and has provided documentation that part-time attendance is a necessary accommodation than has earned the amount of credits as determined.
 - b. Adult Education Program students (i.e., individuals attending GED programs) shall:
 - 1) Have completed an average of 20 hours per week; and
 - 2) Have provided TABE scores and the recommended prescriptions for remediation in the GED lab.
 - 3) Have provided documentation from his or her site facilitator that he or she is making appropriate progress and is actively participating in the educational program.
 - c. High school students shall
 - 1) Have earned a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale; and
 - 2) Have attended school full-time, as determined by the individual educational institution.
 - d. St. James Academy students shall:
 - 1) Have successfully completed coursework for grades 9-12 and earned their diploma within five (5) months; and
 - 2) Have provided monthly documentation of passing course grades.
3. RTI recipients will be placed on probationary status due to the following circumstances:
 - a. A student who earns the minimum number of credits/hours required for renewal, but who fails to meet the minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average (high school and postsecondary students) or make appropriate progress and actively participate (adult education students), may be placed on probationary status for 1 academic term and shall be required to earn a term or cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale (high school and postsecondary students) or provide proof of appropriate progress and active participation (adult education students) by the end of the probationary period in order to continue receiving their RTI scholarship award.
 - b. A student who fails to earn the minimum number of credits required for renewal may be placed on probationary status for 1 academic term and shall be required to earn the minimum number of credits/hours considered full-time by the end of the probationary period to be eligible for subsequent renewal. The student is also required to earn a term or cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale (high school and postsecondary students) or provide proof of appropriate progress and active



participation (adult education students) by the end of the probationary period in order to continue receiving their RTI scholarship award.

4. A student placed on probation and who fails to meet the conditions for renewal by the end of his or her probationary period shall have his or her scholarship payments terminated.
5. The RTS program will evaluate a student for scholarship renewal annually during the 90-day period before the young adult's birthday.
6. Monthly stipend payments may be terminated at any time if the RTS program determines that a scholarship recipient is no longer enrolled in an educational institution or is no longer a Florida state resident.
7. A student may apply for RTI reinstatement only one time, and the application must be made before the young adult reaches 23 years of age.
8. It is the responsibility of the student to provide the necessary documentation to the Road to Success program in order to verify continued eligibility. If the documentation is not received by the Road to Success program within the following guidelines, the subsequent month's scholarship payment will not be released to the scholarship until the documentation is received and the student's eligibility is verified by the Road to Success program. Failure to provide the required documentation may result in the termination of the student's RTI funds.

Documentation due dates

1. Young adults who are enrolled full-time in an accredited adult education program designed to provide the young adult with a high school diploma or its equivalent must submit documentation of their enrollment status (log of hours) to the RTS office on a monthly basis. RTI stipends are distributed in the beginning of the month based on eligibility from the previous month,
 - a. Any young adult required to submit hours on a monthly basis that has not will not receive a stipend until all necessary documentation is received by the RTS office.
 - b. Any young adult who has not submitted documentation and received an RTI stipend via direct depot or has otherwise not received it either via mail or pick-up because it is being held by the RTS office pending their submission of hours, will not have a stipend disbursed for the following month.
 - c. Once the young adult has produced evidence of their hours, a manual check will be requested by the RTS Specialist and disbursed to them.
 - d. If the young adult fails to provide the required documentation for the subsequent month it may then be necessary to discharge them from RTI.
2. Young adults who are enrolled full-time in high-school are required to submit proof of their enrollment at the beginning of each academic semester. Report cards are due immediately upon the conclusion of each term, as soon as available to the student.
3. Young adults attending eligible post-secondary institutions are required to submit proof of their continued enrollment and academic progress to the RTS Office. Young adults must submit most recent enrollment forms or a letter from the academic institution that clearly shows enrollment for at least 12 credit hours. Young adult are responsible for providing the RTS office with their report card showing classes registered for previously as well as documentation showing full-time enrollment for the following semester.



- a. Proof of enrollment/registration is due no later than the school's deadline for course registration. Proof of enrollment/registration may be due earlier, as requested by the RTS program.
 - b. Proof of progress/grades is due immediately upon the conclusion of each semester.
4. St. James Academy students:
 - a. Grades for the prior month's work are due on the first day of each month.
 - b. Successful completion of grades 9-12 (as evidenced by the receipt of diploma) is due five (5) months from the date of course initiation.
5. Students who receive Road to Independence scholarship funds and subsequently fail to meet the academic progress requirements due to verifiable illness or other emergencies may be granted an exception from the academic requirements. Students must inform the Road to Success office immediately of such circumstances. Additionally, such students shall make a written appeal to the Road to Success Program of Devereux Community Based Care of Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast. The appeal shall include a description and written verification of the circumstances. Verification of illness or other emergencies may include but not be limited to a written physician's statement or written statement of a college or other school official. The Road to Success Program will make the decision to accept or deny the appeal for exception within 10 days of receipt of the written verification of illness or emergency. A short absence from school for any reason (including accident, hospitalization, or death of a close family member) should not affect RTI eligibility as long as the student remains enrolled in school and maintains satisfactory progress during the school year.
 - If a student has an accident or must miss school for medical reasons, or if the student suffers injuries that are serious enough to qualify as temporary disability, it is the responsibility of the student to ask their doctor to write a letter that will allow them to maintain RTI eligibility if they miss class.
 - If a student becomes pregnant it is their responsibility to speak with their RTS Specialist and teachers to plan how they will make up school work, if school is missed due to pregnancy or child birth. If student is in high school. School board policy will allow students to take 20 day's maternity leave. If student is in college or a vocational program, students may take a reasonable amount of time off without losing their full-time status. It is the student's responsibility to speak to school administrators to find out the school's policy. If the student feels like they cannot physically attend school during their pregnancy they should consider enrolling full-time in an online educational program.
 - If a student experience serious pain or illness during their pregnancy, or if a doctor says the student should not carry on normal activities, then the student's pregnancy may qualify as a temporary disability. In that case, the student can maintain eligibility for RTI by going to school part-time. The student must provide the appropriate documentation to the RTS Office evidencing their documented disability by a qualified professional. If the student is in high school, they should look into enrolling in the hospital home-bound instructional program. If the student is in a post-secondary program, they should consider enrolling in an online educational program.
2. If a student wishes to change educational programs and because of reasonable causes cannot wait until the end of the school term/semester, the student must withdraw and enroll in their preferred educational program and provide evidence of enrollment and registration to



the RTS program within 14 days so as not to risk losing their RTI scholarship.

Approved: Carol Deloach
Carol Deloach, CEO
April 1, 2015 7-7-18