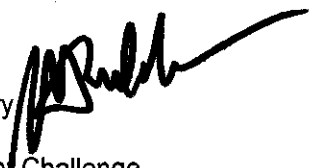




**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Charlie Crist
Governor

George H. Sheldon
Secretary

DATE: February 25, 2009
 TO: Regional Directors
 Circuit Administrators
 FROM: George Sheldon, Secretary 
 SUBJECT: Operation Full Employment Challenge

Purpose:

When former Secretary Bob Butterworth kicked off Operation Full Employment one year ago, he challenged us to hire at least 100 young people transitioning from foster care into DCF jobs. Please join me as we re-affirm my commitment to this program, provide you with up-to-date information on our progress, challenge all of us to move to the next level with this initiative, and outline support that is available as we prepare our young people for employment and reach out to potential employers.

In 2008, we had a lot of success with Operation Full Employment (OFE):

- In January 2008, a letter from former Secretary Bob Butterworth initiated the challenge to the DCF's leadership and CBC CEO's to begin Operation Full Employment and to offer employment opportunities to young adults transitioning from the foster care system.
- Since then, we have worked closely with the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC), Florida Youth SHINE, Connected by 25, and others to ensure that we take advantage of various well-informed views, as well as the youth's voice and involvement. We have established an OFE workgroup with representatives from these groups to guide our efforts.
- Since January 2008, the Department and CBCs have hired 137 youth into full and part-time jobs. Presently, there are 83 young adults working in DCF or CBC jobs:

Region	North West	North East	Central	Suncoast	South East	Southern	HQ	TOTAL
Ever Employed	15	14	24	22	23	36	3	137
Currently Working	9	7	19	13	13	19	3	83

In 2009, we expect even more:

Tough economic times make it harder for young adults to break into the workforce. We must be more committed than ever to making a difference in their lives by offering them a foundation for future success. DCF, CBC, and community jobs can open the door to independence and better opportunities. Our managers and supervisors can be powerful mentors and role models. Together with our community partners, we can offer a training ground that prepares young adults for positions in the public and private sectors.

- Operation Full Employment is a key Department initiative in both the *Strategic Direction 2009-2011* and the CFSR Quality Improvement Plan.

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

- The OFE workgroup has emphasized that employment preparation for teens ages 13+ is as important as, and should happen concurrently with, other independent living and housing services. Gaining and sustaining employment for older youth is an indicator of our success in meeting these IL goals.
- At our next face-to-face Regional District/Circuit Administrator's meeting, we will conduct a workshop on tools and techniques for improving employment opportunities for young adults.
- Surveys will soon be sent to employed youth and their supervisors. These surveys will assess the satisfaction, training and quality of OFE support and outcomes, and help us plan to improve and expand the program.

The Challenge:

- Bring young IL adults into your planning process. Take advantage of their insight and suggestions (starting at 13 years of age). This will prepare, engage, and prevent future issues as they move toward independence, and empower them in their own lives.
- Engage DCF, CBC, School Boards, Work Force Boards, stakeholders, and businesses to collaborate and forge partnerships.
- Collaborate with Department resource people identified in the "Resources" attachment to this memo to develop strategies and provide technical assistance and support that will enhance and expand transitional services for foster youth.

Each of you should assess your readiness to move ahead on this initiative and work with our state and region-level experts as you do so. The attachment which follows identifies these experts and the skills sets they can provide as you move ahead. They will focus first on the "low hanging fruit," areas in which the environment is conducive to success for all. Circuits that have not yet created the necessary relationships or identified the resources to do so should begin creating a climate where these efforts can begin.

Please identify an Operation Full Employment liaison for each circuit. These leaders will be your point people for local collaboration, resource development, and interagency coordination. Please send their name and contact information to Tammy Workman, whose contact information is provided below.

Tammy Workman, our Department's Senior Policy Advisor for Transitioning Youth Programs, will be your primary link to accessing these resources. Feel free to call her to brainstorm, discuss your plans or assess your readiness. Tammy can be reached at (850) 443-4091 or via email at Tammy_Workman@dcf.state.fl.us.

Attachments: Resources to Help You Get Started...
 Operation Full Employment Data as of 1-28-09
 Operation Full Employment Workgroup Members

Cc: Executive Leadership Team
 OFE Workgroup members
 Program Directors
 CBC Chief Executive Officers
 CBC Contract Managers
 Tammy Workman
 Clarence McKee
 Lillian Lima

ATTACHMENT 1

Resources to Help You Get Started or Increase Your Success

We believe that the efforts and resources summarized below will allow us to develop a model which can be structured to meet particular needs and circumstances in each Circuit and Region to assist our youth transitioning from foster care. A recent Miami Herald "Speak up Forum" contributor stated that, "Approximately one-third of the young men and women in Miami-Dade County who 'age out' of foster care are, within one year, homeless or incarcerated". Too many fall through the cracks and we are all committed to doing everything that we can to assist them in their pursuit of meaningful and productive lives. As we state in our 2009-2011 Strategic Direction: "We need to be innovative, and we have to focus on results."

- We have contracted with Clarence McKee, who has extensive experience and relationships in Florida's private sector including 10 years as a Member of the Florida Council of 100; service on the Boards of Directors of numerous Florida based companies; a current Member of the Executive Advisory Board of Associated Industries of Florida and a current Trustee of the Collins Center for Public Policy.
- Mr. McKee has already been very active in selected parts of the state, facilitating connections among DCF, CBCs, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and industry partners interested in hiring foster youth. He is working with the Department experts, Tammy Workman and Lillian Lima, to open doors at the Senior Executive Levels of Florida business and develop a coordinated framework and structure in the CBC and Stakeholder communities to identify available youth, their skills, training needs, and career ideas so we can develop a pool of "Ready Youth" who can take advantage of private sector job opportunities. In this regard, OFE will be an important component and foundation for these efforts and provide a natural source and flow into private sector opportunities for not only the 137 youths already hired, but to the many who will follow. You can think of OFE as developing the "farm team;" private employers offer "big league" employment to our youth.
- The Department has hired Tammy Workman, who moved from Florida's Children First to DCF as the Statewide Senior Policy Advisor for Transitioning Youth Programs. Tammy works for the Assistant Secretary for Programs in coordination with the Family Safety Program Office. Because she is, herself, a former foster youth and has done social work for 8 years, Tammy brings a unique perspective and insights to this work. Clarence McKee and Tammy Workman have been meeting with CBC's and partners throughout the state and are delighted to find these various stakeholders are already giving ideas, feedback, and are eager for this extended mission of OFE to begin.
- Tammy will continue working with Regional Directors and Circuit Administrators, CBCs, Work Force Boards, Department of Juvenile Justice, and other stakeholders that are ready and willing to commit resources to employment initiatives.
- Ms. Lillian Lima is employed in the Suncoast Region. Over the past year, she has developed a model pilot program that is useful for other areas to consider. Lillian has developed promising practices that "connect all of the dots" by forging strong partnerships with local AWI partners, businesses and the CBCs to develop special pre-employment training programs and job placements for youth aging out of foster care. Her "on-the ground" experience is extensive and her success rate is impressive.
- Connected by 25, or "Cby25," provides support services to prepare youth for job training and develop effective employment skills. Cby25 also conducts career interest inventories, and uses a quality assurance system to collect data, measure outcomes, and ensure that case plans, career paths, life skills training and judicial reviews reflect a young adult's career goals.

- Eckerd Family Foundation and its representative, Jane Soltis, are directly involved with Operation Full Employment through Ms. Soltis' role on as the Chair of the Independent living Services Advisory Council, as well as her membership on the Operation Full Employment Workgroup. The Independent Living Services Advisory Council, founded in 2003, reports annually to the Florida Legislature regarding implementation of the Transitional Independent Living Services program, and makes recommendations to improve the program.
- Work Force Boards cannot be overlooked as a resource. These agencies have funds allocated specifically for youth training. Your strategy must include familiarizing yourself about these resources, and building a relationship. AWI is building a website to support employment of transitioning youth and we will alert you when this becomes available.
- The Department has contracted with Miff Mills, consultant and former vocational educator, to build a "tool kit" of on-line resources to assist in developing your plans and working with youth. This tool kit will be posted on the Florida Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice website.
- We will also be surveying young people who are currently employed to get their ideas and lessons learned about what best practices. All of this information will be shared with you as soon as it is available.
- We have created a data base for tracking our progress in employing young people, and have updated the Florida Safe Families Network and the Independent Living Survey, all of which will help us strengthen Operation Full Employment.
- The Operation Full Employment Workgroup is comprised of knowledgeable members with government and private sector expertise in transitioning youth and business linkages. Through Tammy Workman, Regions and Circuits can take advantage of this expertise. A listing of the membership is attached.

Experience has taught us:

- Every public – private partnership meeting to date has resulted in the same request: **“Please provide support and follow-up for the youth if issues arise after we hire them.”**
 - For OFE, the focus is Win-Win-Win:
 - Win for the youth (our customer)
 - Win for the private partner (our community)
 - Win for DCF/CBC
- Private partners are requesting and expecting to see results with outcome data in real time.
- Community partners, both public and private, expect meetings that are short, focused, and small so that productive work is accomplished.
- Private partners want acknowledgement for the potential risk they are taking, without publicity until it has proven successful.
- Once the employer/corporation is “burned” they take more energy to bring back, *if they are willing*. At statewide levels this could be a devastating loss for many job placements. For this reason, the youth must be “work ready” for the job, have a support system, and be taught how to hold themselves accountable.

OPERATION FULL EMPLOYMENT WORKGROUP

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Operation Full Employment
Current and Former Foster Youth Data Summary

Region	TOTALS BY REGION as of 12-05-08		Data Reported with Names Confirmed as of 01-27-09		Data Reported with Names Confirmed as of 01-27-09		TOTALS BY REGION as of 1-27-09	
	Ever Employed	Currently Working	Count of All Youth Ever Hired by DCF	Youth Currently Employed by DCF	Count of All Youth Ever Hired by CBC or Subcontractors	Youth Currently Employed by CBC or Subcontractors	Ever Employed	Currently Working
NW			14	8				
CBC					1	1		
TOTAL	13	9					15	9
NE			13	7				
CBC					1	0		
TOTAL	14	8					14	7
Central			8	7				
CBC					16	12		
TOTAL	22	18					24	19
Suncoast			21	12				
CBC					1	1		
TOTAL	22	15					22	13
South East			14	8				
CBC					9	5		
TOTAL	23	14					23	13
Southern			18	5				
CBC					18	14		
TOTAL	36	20					36	19
HQ	3	3	3	3	46	33	3	3
TOTAL	133	87	91	50	46	33	137	83