

DCF Secretary to Address Members During Positive Pathways Virtual Conference



Chad Poppell

The 2020 Positive Pathways Conference is going virtual! Despite not being able to connect and unite in person this year, we invite you to join us for our first-ever virtual conference, **Connect, Unite, Act! Unexpected Pathways to Their Future**. Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Chad Poppell will be a featured speaker at the conference. The Florida DCF created Positive Pathways in 2017, one of the few programs of its kind in the nation, to support former foster youth striving to obtain high-quality postsecondary credentials like college degrees or technical certificates.

The conference is scheduled for Monday, May 11, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time). The event is free and open to the public and will be held live using Zoom webinar software.

Each year, the Positive Pathways conference attracts more than 100 campus coaches and foster care liaisons, students, leaders of philanthropic organizations and child welfare professionals from throughout Florida. This year, the



mostly 30-minute-long sessions will include: Florida’s generous benefits for college students from foster care; college and university-efforts to keep students on track academically during and after the Covid-19 crisis; and the results of a Covid-19 focused statewide survey of college students from foster care. To register, visit the Program’s website, at www.PositivePathwaysFlorida.org or click [HERE](#).

Webinar Focuses on Serving Students and Staff During the Covid-19 Crisis

Face-to-face interaction, even via the internet, is important for students dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. That message was one of several takeaways delivered to more than 50 Positive Pathways members during the Program’s quarterly webinar, presented in early April. As foster care liaisons, independent living workers



and students throughout the state were just beginning to grasp the impact of the crisis, the Pathways Program asked South Florida members to share about how they were serving Florida foster care alumni studying at Florida International University, Miami Dade College, and other parts of the state.



Varzi Jean-Baptiste

Varzi Jean-Baptiste, who directs the AOK Scholars at Educate Tomorrow Program, told attendees about “Zoom at Noon” online meetings she and campus-based college coaches began to host, for an average of 10 to 12 students. Besides basic needs such as food and housing, students are dealing with anxiety, uncertainty and loss of work, said Jean-Baptiste.

“We are literally meeting students where they are—in their homes,” said Jean-Baptiste. “We usually go over the scheduled two hours because students like to stay and chat. It’s a great opportunity for students to have a face-to-face interaction while still being safe.” In addition to hearing practical ways to

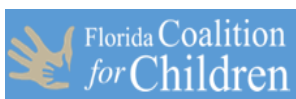
Cal Walton, III, J.D., Succeeds Brandie McCabe Over DCF Positive Pathways



Cal Walton, III, J.D.



Brandie McCabe



Cal Walton, III, J.D., formerly the Youth Services Manager with Embrace Families, the Community-based Care lead agency in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, has been appointed to serve as the new Youth and Young Adult Transition Services Specialist for the Florida Department of Children and Families. A native of Jacksonville, Florida, Walton graduated from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) with a bachelor's in criminal justice and a Minor in English Literature. He then received his Juris Doctor from FAMU College of Law.

Walton has been in the child welfare system since 2010 where he has served as a Dependency Case Manager with Children's Home Society, and Family Case Manager Supervisor with One Hope United in Orlando, Florida. He has served as a mentor with the Florida Youth Leadership Academy (FYLA) since 2017. Walton and his wife Valerie are active in their church and community and have a daughter, Bennett.

Walton succeeds Brandie McCabe, who oversaw Positive Pathways for DCF since the program was created in 2017. McCabe now serves as Director of Policy & Youth Engagement at Florida Coalition for Children (FCC), a professional association of community-based care agencies throughout Florida. At FCC, McCabe coordinates One Voice IMPAACT (OVI), a statewide youth initiative. Among other duties, Brandie helps FCC develop quality standards for the delivery of youth and young adult transition services.

Positive Pathways welcomes Cal, and thanks Brandie for her years of support and guidance.

Webinar: Serving Students and Staff During the COVID-19 Crisis

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help students, webinar participants also learned ways to support staff who work with students in college. A key aspect of staff support is consistent and encouraging information and empathetic communication, said Dr. Amy Rubinson, Care Coordination Manager at Educate Tomorrow. Rubinson's daily messages, which she calls "The New Norm," are emailed to students, staff and now even community partners. They include links to resources, COVID-19 related updates, advice about working from home and how to be productive yet balanced. In one recent message, for instance, Rubinson told readers that




Amy Rubinson, PhD.

although they may not have experienced the physical loss of a relative, people can feel grief over the loss of social connections, patterns and regular habits. They also may have experienced loss of their trust in systems, the government, or just the way things work.

"The virus has changed how we do everything," she said. "Sharing these feeling with our community helps us navigate them." To receive Dr. Rubinson's daily message, email her at Rubinson@EducateTomorrow.org.

Jean-Baptiste and Rubinson's presentation is available at www.PositivePathwaysFlorida.org or by using this [LINK](#).



2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

UNEXPECTED PATHWAYS TO THEIR FUTURE

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2020

9:00 a.m.	Welcome and Conference Overview	Brett McNaught, Educate Tomorrow / Racquell Perry, Esq., Positive Pathways
9:15 a.m.	Five Positive Years: Unexpected Pathways	Special Presentation
9:30 a.m.	An Interview with DCF Secretary Chad Poppell	Steve J. Rios, Ed.D., Positive Pathways
10:00 a.m.	Programs and Opportunities for Florida's Transitioning Young Adults	Cal Walton, Florida Department of Children and Families
10:45 a.m.	Reaching and Supporting Students During and After the Covid-19 Crisis	Joe Murray, Florida Atlantic University / Wendy Joseph, Miami Dade College - FIU, FAU, FGCU, UCF, FSU, UF, Broward College, Miami Dade College
Noon	Lunch Break – Student Spotlights	Students / Monty Shelton, Music Solutions Lab / Guitars Over Guns
12:30 p.m.	The Needs of the Many: Results of Student Surveys Regarding Covid-19	Amy Rubinson, PhD., Educate Tomorrow
1:30 p.m.	Built for Crisis: A Practice Model to Serve College Students from Foster Care	Paul G. Perrault, PhD., Helios Education Foundation / Brett McNaught, Educate Tomorrow
2:15 p.m.	Next Steps Forward: A Vision for Our Collective Future	Jack Levine, 4 Generations Institute / Florida Leaders - Guardian ad Litem, Daytona State College, DCF, Florida Coalition for Children
2:45 p.m.	Closing Comments – Feedback - Survey	Steve J. Rios, Ed.D., Positive Pathways

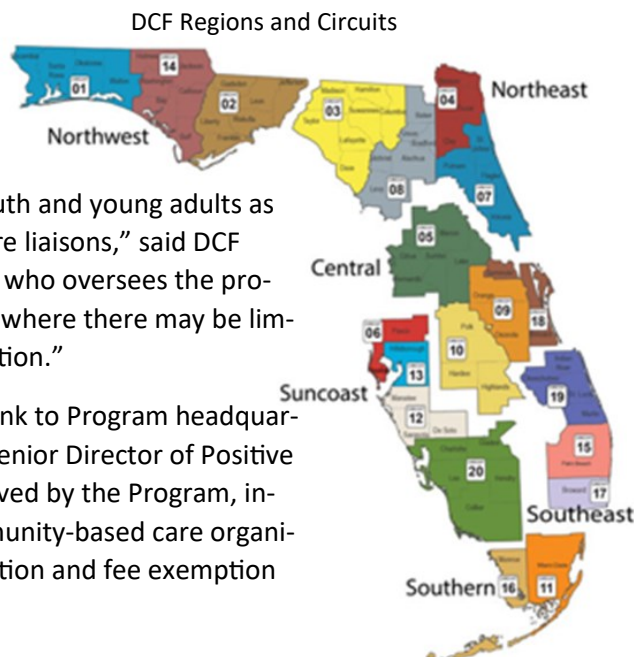
Positive Pathways Appoints Regional Points of Contact to Help Students

The Positive Pathways program leadership has asked 10 members of the network to serve as Regional Points of Contact (RPOC) to provide additional connections for students using the tuition and fee exemptions statewide.

“These strategically placed professionals will help connect youth and young adults as well as community-based agencies with campus-based foster care liaisons,” said DCF Youth and Young Adult Transition Services Specialist Cal Walton, who oversees the program at the state level. “These individuals are especially needed where there may be limited campus-based support for students using the tuition exemption.”

The group will meet quarterly and will provide an important link to Program headquarters about what is happening in the field, said Dr. Steve J. Rios, Senior Director of Positive Pathways. The members represent a variety of organizations served by the Program, including colleges, universities, non-profit organizations and community-based care organizations that consistently interact with students using the DCF tuition and fee exemption (aka waive) to pursue postsecondary credentials.

The RPOC list can be found on the Program website or by using this [link](#).



Positive Pathways is funded by the Florida Department of Children and Families and Educate Tomorrow, which administers the program. Our mission is to support student service professionals who help youth from foster care transition to and through college. www.PositivePathwaysFlorida.org. Pathways@EducateTomorrow.org, (786) 223-7541 or (786) 223-6884.

