

POSITIVE PATHWAYS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



Dr. Steve J. Rios



Jasmine Moore

Pathways to CTE Success Partnership Aims to Increase Postsecondary Attainment at Career and Technical Colleges Run By Florida School Districts

The Florida Department of Education and the Florida Association of Career and Technical Education (FACTE) have partnered with Educate Tomorrow to establish Pathways to CTE Success. This new statewide initiative aims to increase the number of students who obtain certification and postsecondary workforce credentials using Florida's homeless tuition exemption and the DCF tuition and fee exemption.

Pathways to CTE Success aims to develop a statewide network of informed professionals to support students in school district CTE programs. The program will provide an annual virtual conference, campus visits and recruitment of CTE professionals into a statewide network like Positive Pathways.

"We are honored that the CTE Division chose our organization to administer this exciting new program, especially since the Florida Legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis has placed so much attention on CTE programs," Dr. Rios said. Dr. Rios was referring to the Open Door Grant Program, which the Florida Legislature passed in 2021 and for which the governor has proposed funding, once again at \$35 million, to support students attending CTE programs.

The Pathways to CTE Success initiative is funded by a Perkins Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, and was conceived and spearheaded by Bruce Harrington, director of Federal and State Initiatives Section in the Florida Department of Education's Division of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. The project will be led for Educate Tomorrow by Dr. Steve J. Rios, head of foster care and homeless services, and Jasmine Moore, senior director of the Positive Pathways Program. FACTE's Executive Director Marsan Carr will provide fiscal and administrative oversight.

FSU Associate Professor Lisa Schelbe to Keynote



Dr. Lisa Schelbe

Dr. Lisa Schelbe, associate professor at the Florida State University College of Social Work, will keynote the Positive Pathways Program conference in April. A leading national researcher in child welfare, Dr. Schelbe's insights promise to be a highlight of this year's event. She will speak on *Some Kind of Way: Aging Out of Foster Care*, her recently published book.

In her book, Dr. Schelbe explores the major challenges young people face as they age out of foster care and how agencies and service providers can best help them transition into successful young adult lives. Based on more than 90 interviews and almost 1,000 hours of observations of youth aging out and service providers, the book presents real stories and relevant research and theories.

Following her keynote, Dr. Schelbe will be available for a book signing, providing attendees with a chance to interact with her personally and gain deeper insights into her groundbreaking work.

Florida's Open Door Grant Program Offers Funding for Students Pursuing CTE Credentials

Governor Ron DeSantis has once again included \$35 million for Florida's groundbreaking Open Door Grant Program. During the 2021 Florida Legislative Session, House Bill 1507 created section (s.) 1009.895, Florida Statutes (F.S.), to establish the program to support student completion of short-term, high-demand credit and non-credit career and technical education (CTE) programs at career centers and Florida College System (FCS) institutions. For eligible recipients, funds may be used to cover up to of the cost of attendance, as well as the cost of tuition, fees, examination, books, materials and other unmet needs. Students must first apply for FAFSA and all potential other funding sources. After a student is enrolled in an eligible program, the department shall award the grant to the institution for the amount of unmet need for the eligible student. The Florida Department of Education will provide grants to agencies on a first-come, first-serve basis, with no single agency receiving more than one-quarter of funds.



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NEXT WEBINAR

FAFSA and Open Door Grant Program: [REGISTER](#)

Positive Pathways Relaunches In-person and Virtual Regional Forums

Positive Pathways hosted three regional community forums to foster communication and collaboration among professionals that support students using the DCF and homeless tuition waivers. The first meeting was held at Palm Beach State College, where college leadership, community based care agencies, and other key stakeholders discussed financial aid and state benefits available to students.

The second regional forum was held at Florida State College at Jacksonville. This in-person meeting had over 30 people in attendance to discuss key issues, such as DCF resources, financial aid changes, and strategies for collaboration between K-12 partners and post secondary institutions. The third regional forum was co-hosted by Seminole State College. We had the opportunity to connect with several community organizations, as well as learn about the services provided by the college to support the success of students using the DCF and homeless tuition exemptions.



2024-2025 FAFSA is Now Available

Pedro Hernandez, Director of Outreach Services for the Florida Department of Education, presented at our December 2023 Positive Pathways Meeting and provided valuable information to help our members prepare for the release of the FAFSA, which includes several changes implemented by the **FAFSA Simplification Act**. The 2024-2025 FAFSA was released on December 31, 2023, and students can now login to submit their application for the upcoming year. Several resources can be found at <https://studentaid.gov/resources>.



Positive Pathways Conference Planning Committee

The 2024 Positive Pathways Conference will mark the return to an in-person conference for our network. The event, a highlight of our work each year, will take place on April 25 & 25th, at Sante Fe College, in Gainesville, FL. Pathways Senior Director Jasmine Moore is the conference chair. Dr. Rios is co-chair. Dr. Bea Awoniyi, assistant vice president of student affair at Sante Fe, will host the conference. The conference planning committee consists of active Pathways members, including: JR Minter and Janessa Colline of the Selfless Love Foundation, John Watson, of the DCF Office of Continuing Care, Shay-anne Razaire, of the Alan Madden Foundation, Lisa Padula, of Embrace Families, and Dr. Althea K. Blake, of Financial Beginnings. We are grateful to the fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that these dedicated professionals already have brought to the planning process. To sign up for the conference, click [HERE](#)

"The strength of Positive Pathways always has been its members, many of whom have worked tirelessly in this field for years," Mrs. Moore said. "I am grateful to have the support and ideas of such a distinguished group of professionals."



Dr. Althea K. Blake



John Watson



JR Minter



Shay Razaire



Lisa Padula



Dr. Bea Awoniyi



Janessa Collins

join
**Positive Pathways,
YOUR Network
for Success!**



Positive Pathways is open to anyone who is interested in the success of young people from foster care and experiencing housing insecurity. To join the program, click [HERE](#).

The Florida Department of Children and Families Positive Pathways, part of the DCF Office of Continuing Care (OCC), is funded by DCF and Educate Tomorrow, which has administered the program since 2016. The Program is comprised of more than 350 members located throughout Florida. The individuals, located at public universities, colleges, K-12 districts, and technical colleges, are knowledgeable, accessible and compassionate professionals who provide consistent support to young adults from foster care and homeless backgrounds as they pursue their postsecondary educational and life goals.

Positive Pathways is led by Senior Director Jasmine Moore, a nationally-recognized higher education student services professional. The program is supervised by Dr. Steve J. Rios, head of foster care and homeless services with Educate Tomorrow. Eric Wetzel, DCF youth and young adult transition specialist, serves as the subject matter expert.

For more information, email us at Pathways@educatetomorrow.org