Comparing Online Legal Content Formats

The Results of User Research

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Executive Summary

In May 2018, the Florida Justice Technology Center's FloridaLawHelp.org website conducted short user tests of the same legal content in four different formats with 26 Floridians, the majority of whom (over 80%) reported earning less than 250% of the federal poverty level. Legal information, covering eligibility criteria for Florida's Extended Foster Care program, was presented in flowchart, video, short narrative, and Frequently Asked Questions formats. We showed each participant one of the formats at random and asked questions about a specific hypothetical situation to gauge their understanding of the three key elements at play for the specific scenario. We then asked the participants how confident they were that their knowledge was accurate. We then showed them a second format, repeated the process, and asked them which of the two formats they preferred.

Key Findings

- There is no one "right" way to present information to maximize understanding, confidence, and the participants' preference.
- The formats that helped the participants understand the relevant information in this particular scenario were not the formats the participants said they preferred.
- The Flowchart format was quite successful—it had the highest level of participant understanding and confidence. However, it wasn't highly popular—58% preferred the other format they saw.
- The Video format showed a somewhat alarming set of findings. It was by far the most popular but was the worst of the four formats in helping participants to understand the content. After viewing the Video, the participants also felt quite confident that they understood the content— although they did not.
- The Narrative and FAQ were both more middle-of-the-road in terms of facilitating comprehension and user preference. The Narrative was somewhat better than the FAQ in both helping participants understand, and in helping them feel confident. The FAQ, however, was more popular.

These findings are limited to this very specific scenario and legal content. It is possible that findings might be different for a different or less complicated scenario and/or with a different audience (for instance, one that was less literate).

Methodology

We recruited 26 volunteer participants from a variety of community locations across five counties in Florida. We used the 2016 U.S. Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) to identify the counties with the following characteristics: highest overall number of people in poverty, highest percentage of people in poverty, high percentage of children in poverty, and lowest median household income.

The first four counties listed below met those criteria:

County	All Ages in Poverty Count	All Ages in Poverty Percent	Under Age 18 in Poverty Percent	Ages 5 to 17 in Families in Poverty Percent	Median Household Income in Dollars	Estimated Pop.
Miami-Dade	487,700	18.2	24.8	24	$45,886	2.7 Million
Madison	5,205	31.9	40	37.6	$33,721	19,000
DeSoto	9,323	28.6	42	40.1	$34,146	35,000
Levy	8,467	21.4	32.3	31.4	$33,092	40,000
Orange	209,800	16.3	22.2	21.2	$51,312	1.2 Million

Source: https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saipe/saipe.html?s_appName=saipe&map_yearSelector=2016&map_geoSelector=aa_c&s_state=12&menu=grid_proxy

While the four counties identified using census data were geographically diverse, varied in overall population and covered both rural/urban areas, there were no medium to large counties on the list. Therefore, we added Orange County because it is a larger, urban county, located in East-Central Florida and is home to the third highest overall population in poverty in Florida.

3

We reached out to legal and social service providers in each county to identify potential user testing sites. The sites were chosen based on the first agency which responded that was willing and able to host us. We conducted the user tests at the following locations:

- Miami County: Legal Services of Greater Miami in Miami
- Madison County: Madison County Public Library in Madison
- DeSoto County: Family Service Center in Arcadia
- Levy County: CareerSource Career Center in Chiefland
- Orange County: Goodwill East Job Readiness Center in Orlando

Prior to the scheduled day of user testing, we sent each location a flyer and sign-up sheet which they could post. In three locations, Miami, Levy and Orange, some participants signed up ahead of time. In Madison County, the user test event was published in the local newspaper with a call for volunteers. In all locations, on the day of the testing, we set up a table with a large bowl of candy and a flyer (See Appendix I) explaining what we were doing. In each location, except for the Family Service Center in Arcadia, we made an announcement to the patrons in the waiting room. We offered each participant a $10 gift card for providing their feedback on various ways of getting information online.

We spoke with a total of 29 individuals, 26 of whom completed the test. The remaining three participants were unable to evaluate the materials due to clear cognitive disabilities. See Appendix V for a summary of the participant demographics.

Prior to each user test, we explained what FloridaLawHelp.org was, that the Florida Justice Technology Center, a non-profit, managed the site, and that we were seeking feedback on how we could improve the way we presented legal content on the site. We stressed that the user tests were testing our materials and not the user. After the explanation, we asked each participant to pick out a gift card of their choice and let us know if they still wanted to participate. Each user was told that the gift card was theirs regardless of whether they participated further or not.

With each participant, we conducted a 15-to-25-minute conversation. We started by asking a few questions about their internet use, how they research issues online and where else they might go for help.

We then asked them to imagine that they had a young friend (Chris) who was having trouble with housing, and they wanted to find out if he was eligible for the extended foster care program. See Appendix II for the hypothetical. We showed them information about the program in one of four formats, on the facilitator's iPad or computer (see the full text of the written format and a link to the video in Appendix III):

- A four-minute video presentation
- Short narrative
- Flowchart
- Frequently asked questions format

We purposely designed a somewhat complex hypothetical to ensure that we could distinguish between more effective and less effective formats. There were three key eligibility criteria that the participants needed to identify and another set of factors that could impact Chris's eligibility. The answer was not a simple "Yes, Chris is eligible", or "No, he isn't" – there were key facts that, in real life, would need to be explored in more detail.

When the participants appeared to be done reading or watching, we asked them what advice they would give Chris about his situation. We noted whether the participants mentioned the specific eligibility criteria as well as if they mentioned any of the case-specific facts and probed for the details they were able to provide. After the conversations, we used a rubric to convert the notes into an "Understanding" score between 1 and 10.

After asking what advice they would give to Chris, we asked them how confident they were that this advice was accurate. Their response was translated subjectively to a score between 1 and 10. We asked about confidence as confidence level is often used in research as a proxy for whether someone would

act on the information. The reported confidence level may be indicative of whether the participant would in fact feel comfortable helping Chris or taking other action based on what they learned.

We then showed each participant the same information in a second format and repeated the process. After allowing them to take time to process the information, we asked them if their advice to Chris would change, gauged their understanding, and asked how confident they were.

At the end of the test, we asked the participants for basic demographic information about where they lived and their income. We noted gender and race based on observation. See Appendix IV for the interview guide.

The Results: Flowcharts

For this particular scenario, those who saw a Flowchart as the first format built a significantly better understanding (at a level of $p<0.05$) of the different factors that would affect whether Chris was eligible for extended foster care than those who saw a Video or a FAQ, as per Chart 1.

The participants' comments about the Flowchart echoed this data—five people (of the ten who saw it) mentioned that it was simple or self-explanatory. Two people, however, expected it to be interactive, and wanted to click on the boxes to see more explanation or definitions. Interestingly, the Flowchart was far from their favorite format—only 42% said they preferred this format to the other format they saw in their own test (meaning that the majority, 58%, preferred something else).


Degree of Understanding
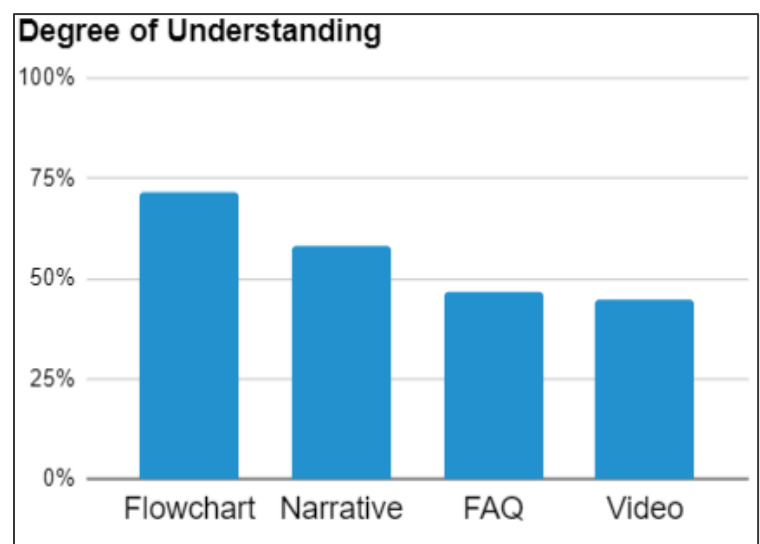
Those who saw a Flowchart also had the highest level of confidence about providing advice to Chris (the difference in user confidence between the Flowchart and the FAQ is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$).

Taken together, these findings—that users had the highest degree of understanding and confidence—show promise for a Flowchart format, at least in this very limited scenario. However, given the finding that users are less likely to prefer the format, it may make users less likely to use them, spread the word about them, or take other useful actions.

The Results: Videos

Videos showed a somewhat dangerous trend in this study. As shown in Chart 1, those who saw a video for their first format showed the least understanding of the three Extended Foster Care eligibility criteria (the difference in user understanding between Videos and the FAQ is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$). However, they were highly confident that they could provide good advice to Chris, as per Chart 3-- more confident than those who read anything other than the flowchart.

**Percent who Preferred This Format to the Other They Saw**
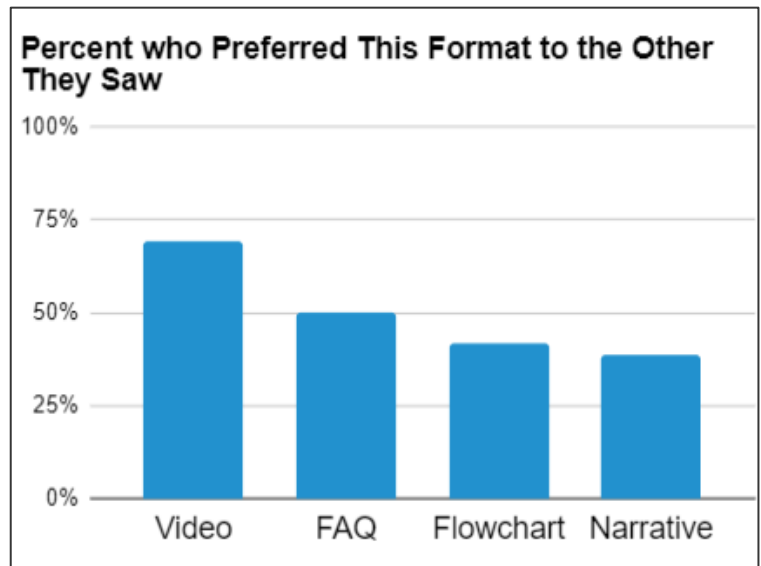
Videos were also by far the most popular of the formats with 69% of the participants preferring them to the second format they saw, per Chart 2. Their comments echoed this. Four mentioned that the video seemed more personal, more like a face-to-face conversation. Five mentioned that they prefer to listen than to read (although four mentioned the opposite, that they prefer to read information than to watch a video).

Taken together, these findings show that although the participants enjoyed the video the most, it was less effective in distributing knowledge than other formats. Although the participants were less likely to understand, they were more likely to feel that they did. It seems quite likely that findings might be different for a different scenario (for instance, one that was more straightforward) and/or a different audience (for instance, one that was less literate).

The Results: Narrative

The Narrative performed second best on Understanding, after the flowchart (the difference between this format and any of the others, however, is not statistically significant). In general, the participants seemed to be engaged when reading it, although three mentioned that it could have used more examples and/or definitions, and two others found it to be too short.
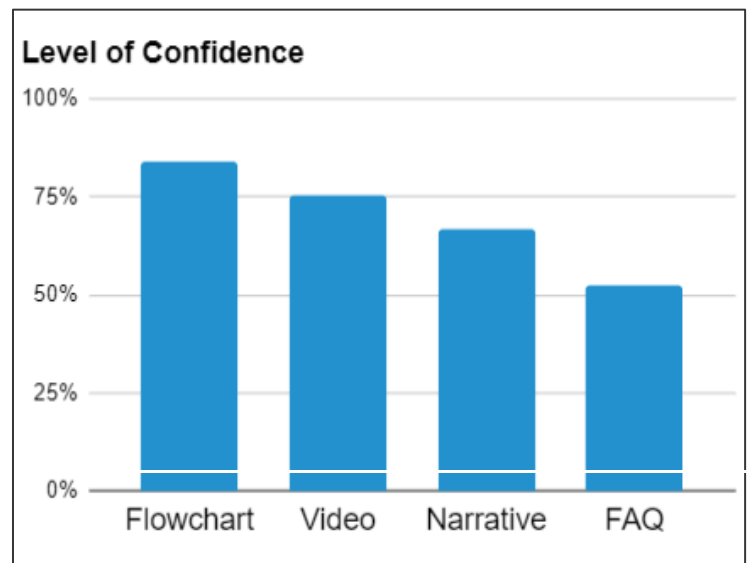
The participants had less confidence after reading this format than with any but the FAQ (the difference is not statistically significant, however). It was also the participants' least preferred method—only 38% preferred it to the other format they saw.

The Results: FAQs

Those who saw a FAQ as the first format had significantly less understanding (at a level of $p < 0.05$) than those who saw a Flowchart and it was approximately equivalent to the Video for level of understanding. They were also the least confident of any of the four methods (the difference in user confidences between FAQs and both Flowcharts and Videos is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$).

Exactly half of the participants preferred the FAQ to the other format they saw making it the second most preferred format, after the Video. Their comments were mixed—for instance, three felt that it provided a lot of good details, while two felt it wasn't detailed enough. One felt it was repetitive and another didn't like jumping from section to section to get the facts, but two felt it was well organized.

The Results: After Viewing A Second Format

The Understanding and Confidence data above is based solely on the first format that the participant saw. However, the metrics did not significantly change when the participants saw a second format. None of the clients understood tremendously more -- in fact, on average their understanding was about the same as it was after viewing the first format. Only 7 participants (28%) increased in understanding; 3 (12%) decreased. This finding was not affected to a significant degree by which format the participants saw second.

Simply seeing a second format increased participants' confidence very slightly, by about 6%, but the format they saw as their second didn't make a huge impact on this trend

What Do These Results Mean?

This is a limited test which provides data solely about a single fact-specific scenario and related legal content. What conclusions can we draw from the results? Here at the Florida Justice Technology Center, we certainly don't think this is sufficient information to change sweeping strategies, but it's interesting directional information that can be used to fine-tune how we develop content. For instance:

- Flowcharts seem like a promising way to present information, but the FloridaLawHelp.org website does not easily support them. As such, we will pursue options to be able to create and post more flowcharts.
- We haven't invested a lot of resources in creating videos, and this data suggests that we should think carefully before we do. Videos might well be an effective solution to present specific

information to a specific audience, but we shouldn't assume they are simply "better" than written material.

- FAQs did not perform as well as we expected… and there is a lot of information on FloridaLawHelp.org in the form of FAQs. As we prioritize information to update, we will look for opportunities to move information from FAQs to other formats, especially flowcharts, or step-by-step narratives which function somewhat like flowcharts.

Regardless of format, the tests made it clear that the overall quality of the content is of paramount importance. Formats varied in effectiveness for the different participants, but all were looking for clear answers and easy-to-understand terms. Thus, whatever format we use, the Florida Justice Technology Center and FloridaLawHelp.org will continue to emphasize well-written information in plain language.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: User Testing Flyer & Sign Up Sheet

FloridaLawHelp.org

Let us know how we are doing!

We are looking for 5-7 volunteers who would like to participate in a 15-25 minute interview and give us feedback on how we can improve our website. You do not have to prepare in any way – just let us know what you think.

When: Friday, May 25, 2018
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Where: Madison Public Library
         378 N.W. College Loop
         Madison, FL 32340

Sign up for a slot at the Madison Public Library. Any questions? Please call Jessica at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Volunteers will receive a $10.00 gift card for their time

FloridaLawHelp.org is Florida's free legal information website, designed to provide Floridians with information about their legal rights along with the tools and resources they can use to protect those rights. Resources include self-help information and DIY forms as well as links to social service agencies and legal aid offices. FloridaLawHelp.org is run by the Florida Justice Technology Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established to increase access to justice through the innovative use of technology.

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When: Friday, May 25, 2018
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Where: Madison Public Library
         378 N.W. College Loop
         Madison, FL 32340

Please sign up in a time-slot below to volunteer

9:30 A.M. -10:00 A.M.   _____

10:00 A.M. -10:30 A.M.   _____

10:30 A.M.-11:00 A.M.   _____

11:00 A.M. -11:30 A.M.   _____

11:30 A.M.-12:00 P.M.   _____

12:00 P.M.-12:30 P.M.   _____

12:30 P.M.-1:00 P.M.   _____

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Appendix II: Hypothetical Scenario

You recently met Chris, a young adult aged 19. Chris tells you that he has been homeless for almost a year. He was in foster care for most of his life, but right before he turned 18, his girlfriend's family said he could come stay with them. His caseworker and the court said it was okay for him to go on a visit.
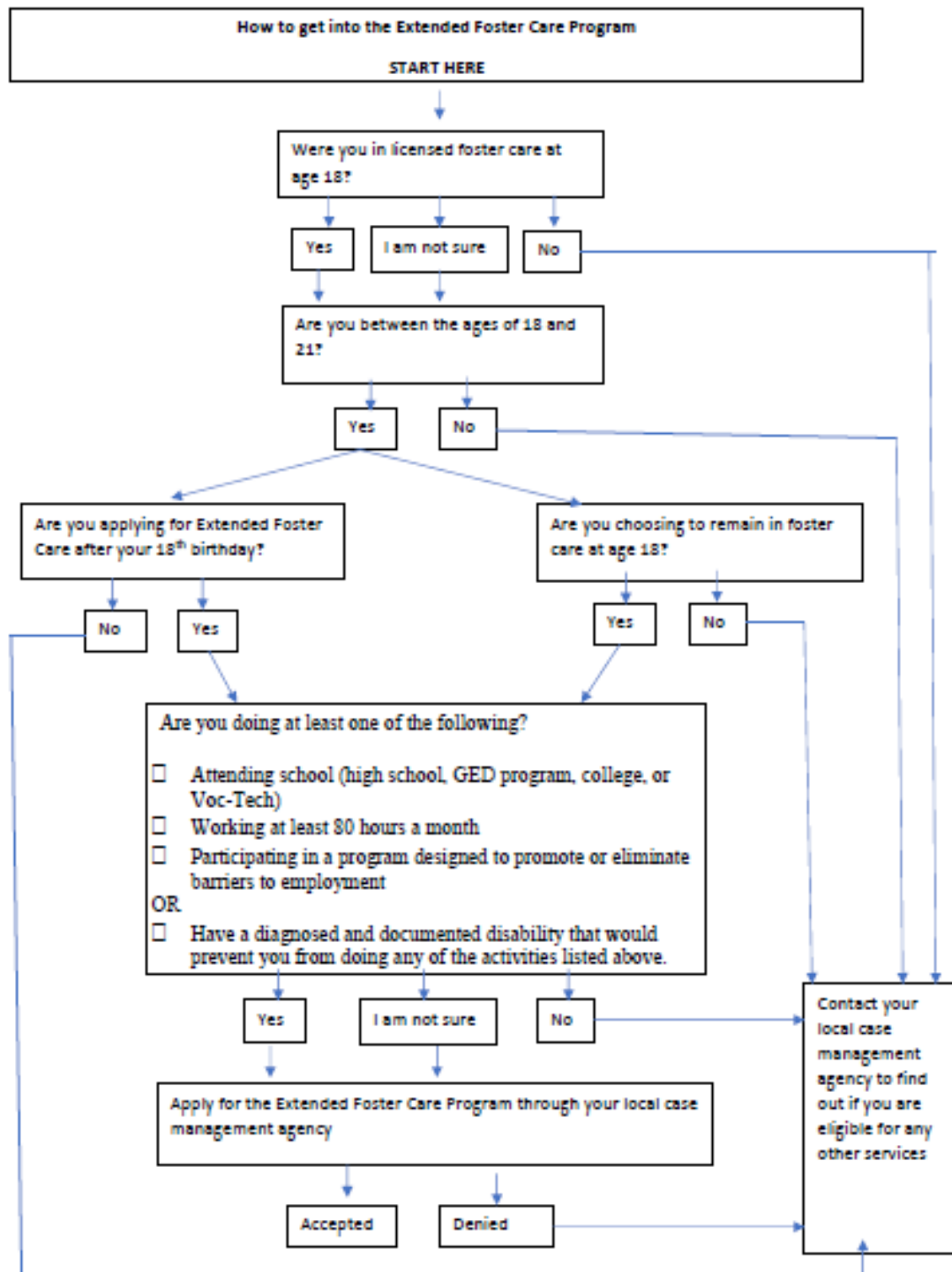
His girlfriend's family let him stay with them for about 6 months, but when he and his girlfriend broke-up, Chris was kicked out. He has been spending his nights with friends, on couches, at shelters and sometimes on the street.

He wants to get his GED so that he can go to college, but he needs somewhere stable to live. He does have a part-time job and works between 15-25 hours a week (60 to 100 hours a month). He thinks he could go into the extended foster care program, but he is not sure.

Chris is a great kid and you want to help him. You have found out that there is some information about the extended foster care program on Floridalawhelp.org. You are going to try to figure out whether Chris is eligible for the program so that you can help him.

Appendix III: Content Formats as Tested

Flowchart

How to get into the Extended Foster Care Program

START HERE

Were you in licensed foster care at age 18?

| Yes | I am not sure | No |

Are you between the ages of 18 and 21?

| Yes | No |

Are you applying for Extended Foster Care after your 18th birthday?

| No | Yes |

Are you choosing to remain in foster care at age 18?

| Yes | No |

Are you doing at least one of the following?

☐ Attending school (high school, GED program, college, or Voc-Tech)
☐ Working at least 80 hours a month
☐ Participating in a program designed to promote or eliminate barriers to employment

OR

☐ Have a diagnosed and documented disability that would prevent you from doing any of the activities listed above.

| Yes | I am not sure | No |

Apply for the Extended Foster Care Program through your local case management agency

| Accepted | Denied |

Contact your local case management agency to find out if you are eligible for any other services

Florida Justice Technology Center

Narrative

Extended Foster Care for Florida Youth

Extended Foster Care

Extended foster care is a program for young adults who aged-out of foster care when they were 18 years old. Eligible young adults who meet the requirements can get housing assistance, support and case management until 21. Certain youth may be able to stay in the program until 22.

Requirements

The young person must have been living in licensed foster care when they turned 18 years old and be between the ages of 18 and 21 (or 22 with a disability).

AND

The young person must be:

- Attending high school or working on GED; or
- Enrolled in college or vocational education program; or
- Employed at least 80 hours per month; or
- Participating in a program designed to promote or eliminate barriers to employment.; or
- Have a diagnosed and documented disability that would prevent you from participating in any of the activities listed above.

Living Arrangement Options

There are a variety of choices for where a young person will live. The first choice is for the young person to remain in the foster home placement they had at age 18, but choices are:

- With a licensed foster parent.
- In a licensed group home.
- In a supervised living arrangement (i.e.: college dormitory, rental home or apartment).

Applying for Extended Foster Care

Contact your local indepedent living case management agency .

Source: http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/extended-foster-care

Video

Courtesy of Florida Crossroads for Children with Florida's Children First and the Community Law Program. Available at https://www.youtube.com/embed/XfXE90u5C7Y

Start time: 42.39

End time: 48.20.

FAQ

Extended Foster Care: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Extended Foster Care?

Extended Foster Care is program that provides case management, services and housing assistance for young adults who aged out of foster care at age 18.

2. Who is eligible for Extended Foster Care?

Young adults who were in the legal custody of the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families at age 18 are eligible to apply for Extended Foster Care.

3. How do I know if I was in the legal custody of the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families?

There are a couple of ways you can find out.

a. Check your last court order if you still have it.
b. Ask your lawyer or GAL if you had one.
c. Ask your former case manager
d. Think about where you were placed when you turned 18. If you were in a licensed foster care placement at 18, it is likely that you were in the State's custody. Licensed foster care placements include:
   i. Foster homes & treatment foster homes
   ii. Group homes & treatment group homes
   iii. Shelters
   iv. Residential treatment facilities

4. What if I was on the run or in a DJJ facility when I turned 18?

You may be eligible if the placement you were in before you ran or were placed in a DJJ facility was a "licensed foster care" placement.

5. What if I was visiting my parents, a relative or family friend on my 18th birthday?

You may still be eligible if your parents, relative or family friend did not have custody of you and you were still in the State's custody. See question 3 for ways to find out.

6. Are there any other requirements that I have to meet?

Yes. You must be doing one of the following:

a. Attending school (high school, GED program, college, or Voc-Tech)
b. Working at least 80 hours a month
c. Participating in a program designed to promote or eliminate barriers to employment

OR

Have a diagnosed and documented disability that would prevent you from doing any of the activities listed above.

7. Where will I be placed if I am in Extended Foster Care?

You could be placed in a supervised living arrangement which can include foster homes, group homes, dorms, shared housing, apartments and other housing arrangements. Both your case manager and you must agree to the placement.

8. How long can I stay in Extended Foster Care?

As long as you are following the rules, you can stay in extended foster care until 21. If you have a documented disability, you can stay in extended foster care until 22.

9. How do I apply?

You should contact your local case management agency and ask to be speak with the

Appendix IV: Interview Guide

FLH Content User Tests – May 2018

Hi, I'm _____! [get their name].

Intros	Thinking about different formats for info
Thank you!	Few questions, then a scenario, ask you to use
Gift card	my phone to look at things
Working on Florida Law Help	Not a test of their skills

<u>Context Questions</u>

1. Just to get started, can you tell me a little about how you use the internet, if you do? What do you use it for?

   Do you typically use it on a phone or desktop? Both?

   Do you use Facebook?

2. Can you think back to the last time you used the internet to look up possible solutions to a problem you were facing—was there a time? If so, what was the problem?

   What was the first thing you did to look for help?

   What sources of information were helpful? What made them helpful?

   Did anything make it more difficult than you would have liked to find information?

   Where else did you go (other than the internet) for that problem?

<u>Scenario - Now we get into the "role playing" portion!</u>

3. Based on that, do you think Chris is eligible? Can you tell me a little more why/why not?

How confident do you feel that's the right thing to do?

4. If you'll hand me back the phone for a second, I'm going to show you a second page, and I'd love for you to do exactly the same thing. [take back the phone, flip to the other resource, give it back to them]. Can you take a look at this, and use it to try to find the same information—would you give Chris the same advice?

5. [When they seem like they're ready] Based on that, do your thoughts about what you would say to Chris change?
   Do you feel any more or less confident?

6. Does this second format seem easier or harder to use than the first?

<u>Demographics</u>

I really appreciate your help! Do you mind answering a few demographic questions, just to wind up?

1. Do you live here in XXX [town]? [understand whether they live in urban/ suburban/ rural area]
2. Would you say your own personal income per year is under $20,00, $20K- $40K, or above $40? If you're willing to answer?

   That's it! Those are all the questions I have! Any questions for me before we wrap up?

Appendix V: Participant Demographics

Income Level	Number of Participants
Under $15K/ year	16
$15k-$30K/ year	5
More than $30K/ year	5
Total	**26**

Gender	Number of Participants
Female	19
Male	7
Total	**26**

Test Location	Number of Participants
Arcadia	4
Chiefland	3
Madison	8
Miami	6
Orlando	5
Total	**26**

Age	Number of Participants
20s	4
30s	6
40s	6
50s	4
60s	6
Total	**26**

Urban/ Surbaban/ Rura	Number of Participants
Rural	15
Suburban	4
Urban	7
Total	**26**

Race	Number of Participants
Black	10
Hispanic	1
Not Captured	1
White	14
Total	**26**

How Often They Use th	Number of Participants
Frequently	22
Sometimes	4
Total	**26**