

Florida Reach Holds Symposium to Improve Educational and Career Outcomes for Vulnerable Youth and Young Adults



Marissa Leichter, FFCR Citizen Review Panel Program Manager, with Steve Rios, Co-founder of Florida Reach

On June 9th and 10th, [Florida Reach](#) held its 3rd Annual Symposium, targeted to help attendees learn and share about effective programs to assist youth and young adults emerging from foster care. Florida Reach – a virtual network of child welfare, K-12 and higher education professionals working with youth and young adults, as well as with youth advocates – seeks to improve post-secondary outcomes and career transitions for youth in and recently out of foster care. The network provides support, resources and networking so that members have a collective impact.

The first morning included a presentation by members of [Florida Youth SHINE](#), a youth-driven, peer-driven organization that works to empower current and former foster youth to become leaders and advocates in their communities. FFCR Citizen Review Panel Program Manager Marissa Leichter co-mentors the Miami chapter of Florida Youth SHINE and attended their presentation.

“One of the Florida Youth SHINE panel members, Janice Goldsberry, sang a beautiful original song that had the audience captivated and in tears,” Marissa reported. “Panel members also talked about challenges they faced in their educational pursuits and the obstacles they encountered on campus,” added Marissa.

The panel went on to cover issues like the tuition fee waiver, scholarships, financial aid, housing on and off campus, lack of sufficient support on campus for youth coming from foster care and more. Other topics covered by the symposium included K-12 education issues that can derail foster children’s academic success, nutrition and health issues (including mental health), legal issues and community partnerships.

FFCR was glad to be able to learn and share during the meeting, and is grateful to Florida Reach, [Educate Tomorrow](#), Florida Youth SHINE and other community partners who contributed to and made the program possible.