2011
Year in Review
Transformation of an Agency

Florida Department of Children and Families
Table of Contents

3 Message from the Secretary
4 Snapshot of Florida
5 Strategic Vision
6 Empower Frontline Staff
10 Effect Program Improvements
14 Enable Family Accountability
18 Engage Communities
22 Looking Ahead

Rick Scott, Governor, State of Florida
David E. Wilkins, Secretary, Florida Department of Children and Families

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Dear Friends,

Serving as Secretary of the Department of Children and Families this past year has been a tremendous honor. I have had the privilege to work with dedicated, exceptional staff to implement successful business concepts into the critical work we do every day to help Floridians.

When Governor Rick Scott expressed his desire to bring private sector experience to government, I immediately felt a specific call to public service. I had recently retired from a rewarding consulting career but knew that a larger calling was eminent. For many years, Tanya and I have invited foster children into our home and we saw how an investment of time and energy could make a huge difference in their lives. Those children also made an impact in our lives and I wanted to do more.

From day one of my administration, we mapped out a plan and a vision that we believe will make the Department a truly world-class organization. Our strategic vision focuses on four key areas: 1) Empower frontline staff by giving them the tools and resources they need to do their jobs well; 2) Effect program improvements that will enable us to operate at maximum efficiency; 3) Enable family accountability by guiding Florida’s families toward self-sufficiency; and 4) Engage communities by seeking partnerships that serve to strengthen communities. We made remarkable progress in 2011 and laid the groundwork for many more accomplishments in the next year.

Every day, we are helping to improve children’s lives, providing food, shelter and medical care to those who need it most, and keeping vulnerable adults safe. This is only a bit of what we do, and I know that we will build upon the successes of 2011 and continue to devote our passion to helping make this state better — one family at a time!

The following pages tell the story of our success over the past year and how we are reaching out to touch the lives of so many children, adults and families. I hope you will join me in celebrating these accomplishments on behalf of all Floridians and our great state. I know I can count on your support for the work that remains ahead of us.

Best Regards,

David E. Wilkins
Florida Population: 18,801,301
Unemployment Rate: 9.9%
Floridians Below Poverty Level: 15%
Homeless: 58,000
Child Investigations: 192,730
Floridians Age 0-17: 4,002,091
Floridians Age 18-64: 11,539,617
Floridians Age 65+: 3,259,602
Floridians on Food Stamps: 4,500,792
Floridians on Medicaid: 3,501,275
Children In Out-Of-Home Foster Care: 19,538

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Children and Families 2010 - 2011
Under the leadership of Secretary David Wilkins, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is moving in a bold, new direction that will transform the way the Department operates and delivers services. The Department's Strategic Vision focuses on four key areas for reform and modernization. This strategic approach will identify proven best practices across the state and implement those that improve business processes, drive efficient delivery of service, and ultimately deliver better outcomes for Florida’s children and families.

By focusing on key areas over the next three years, DCF will work together with our valued partners at the state and local levels to improve the way we do business and improve the future of Florida. These achievements will be shaped by the following goals:

**Empower Frontline Staff**

Our first responders to families in crisis need to be empowered to respond in a timely and informed manner, free from bureaucratic policies that stand in the way of quality work. We must provide proper support systems and tools so they are able to achieve world-class standards of excellence in service.

**Effect Program Improvements**

Citizens of Florida demand and deserve a state government that operates in the most efficient manner possible. This will be accomplished through reduction and consolidation of administrative functions that occur both in regional offices and at headquarters. Upgrading technology, implementing a shared services model, and eliminating unnecessary reviews and management structures will lead to more efficient delivery of services.

**Enable Family Accountability**

Florida families should have every opportunity to prosper and to raise their children in a responsible manner. Our social service responses need to be planned out in advance and delivered in a manner that addresses the true needs of our families and allows them to achieve independence from government assistance when possible so that they can achieve the American Dream.

**Engage Communities**

Our communities have the knowledge and advantage in identifying local needs and should develop the first solution to help our challenged families without interference from bureaucratic responses. Working together with communities is essential to the success of creating a future that better serves the public- and more importantly - is faithful to our shared commitment to the power of public-private partnerships.
First responders to families in crisis must be trained and capable of responding in a timely and informed manner—free from bureaucratic policies that stand in the way of quality work.

Those who are closest to the customer should be entrusted with the authority to exercise discretion and decision-making within the parameters of safety, integrity and fiscal considerations. In 2011, Secretary Wilkins established initiatives to empower frontline staff through the redesign of several programs:

◊ Food and cash assistance processes
◊ Central abuse registry call center
◊ Child protective investigations
◊ Case management services

**Transform Child Protection Investigations and Service Delivery Practice**

In early 2011, serious questions about the quality of child protection investigations and community-based service delivery were raised in the wake of several child death tragedies. Secretary Wilkins, just weeks on the job, took prompt action through:

◊ Hiring additional protective investigators to reduce worker case load
◊ Updating all local law enforcement agreements to ensure immediate coordination on investigations
◊ Placing a contracted local community-based care agency on a corrective action plan
◊ Tracking the health care and education of all foster children
◊ Deploying new requirements for hotline management and operations
◊ Providing additional training for more than 1,100 child protection investigators
◊ Launching a redesign project to permanently improve the total system of care model

Under the leadership of Governor Rick Scott and Secretary David Wilkins and with support from the Legislature, DCF has embarked upon a multi-year transformation project for child protection and community-based care services. The vision is to transform the role of the Hotline, investigations and community-based services so that each component of the system works in a highly integrated way equipped to gather, understand and efficiently convey more complete information at each phase of a case. This will be achieved through better engagement with families and robust teamwork with all professionals involved to achieve child safety and family independence.
Empower Frontline Staff

Community-based care agencies will be monitored to ensure they achieve performance standards that promote child safety and well-being. The information they receive and manage will be accurate, timely and present a more complete picture of the child and family needs that must be addressed. The end result will be enhanced and more efficient child safety, well-being and family stability.

Activities to date include:
◊ Modernizing the way DCF’s child protective investigators operate using input from a variety of staff and partner organizations
◊ Creating a new approach that emphasizes closer collaboration with partners, engaging families, spending more time in the field to best assess child safety and establishing standardized protocols for transferring a family from investigations to service delivery
◊ Planning a phased rollout that begins in March 2012 of a redesign that will achieve safer outcomes for children and bring family accountability to a renewed level of expectation
◊ Establishing a Child Protection Transformation Advisory Board composed exclusively of external experts to review and provide feedback on practice redesign
◊ Launching the first ever community-base care agency scorecard

Conversion From Abuse Hotline to Command Center

The Abuse Hotline is transforming into an integrated Hotline Command Center with a new process for handling incoming calls. This results in faster access to information and improved assessment protocols. This exciting improvement in the way DCF operates will ensure effective integration and delivery of information required by both adult and child protective investigators. The redesign, funded by the 2010-11 Florida Legislature, includes:
◊ Improved quality of “case handoff” to the adult or child protective investigators, giving them more comprehensive background information so they are better informed when they arrive at a location for an investigation
◊ Upgrades to call center technology to enhance quality improvement and performance management processes and to increase efficiencies
◊ Replacement of the current web-based reporting tool to encourage use by mandatory reporters, to improve customer service to those reporters and to improve consistency of practice
◊ Improved human resource functions to include recruitment, hiring, pre-service and in-service training, management development and performance management
ACCESS Customer Service Enhancements

ACCESS Florida is the service delivery model for public assistance eligibility determination and ongoing case management of food assistance, temporary cash assistance and Medicaid. It is based on streamlined workflows, policy simplification and technology innovations. ACCESS Florida provides enhanced access to services through a combination of Department staff and community providers.

Recognized as a national model, this service delivery system offers eligible clients a self-directed path to economic services seven days a week, 24 hours a day through a web application and an integrated voice response system. This system makes it easier and faster for clients and potential clients to apply and access information about their accounts. DCF was recognized in 2009 for excellence in service to those facing economic crisis. In 2011, we refined processes and communication with clients through:

◊ A more user-friendly version of the online application which targets questions by program and adds options for special Medicaid programs for pregnant women, payment of Medicaid premiums and KidCare
◊ Improved responsiveness of our toll-free number so that customers can check on the status of their benefits without having to talk to a customer call agent
◊ Customers can apply for benefits or recertify on www.myflorida.com/accessflorida, an electronic online interactive source of all their account information, including receipt of notices, status, recertification and benefit updates
◊ Internet availability to www.myflorida.com/accessflorida is provided through the expansion of our more than 3,000 ACCESS partner sites
◊ Automatic text, voice or email alerts within the Electronic Benefit Transfer system notify cardholders when a deposit is made to their account
◊ Required verification documents can now be uploaded directly into customer accounts indexed by individual, saving time for the eligibility staff

The improvements will continue with a comprehensive redesign under way including the following major initiatives:

◊ Development of a new eligibility system to replace the aging FLORIDA system with a projected $90 million return on investment over five years
◊ Procurement of a new Electronic Benefit Transfer service with improved customer service and fraud prevention capacities
◊ Automated processing of changes and denials
◊ Automated data transfer between the web application and eligibility system
◊ Savings in benefit payments due to reduced fraud and administrative error
◊ Development of a more efficient document handling and indexing process for electronic and other mail using current technology such as optical character recognition or barcoding
◊ Acquisition and implementation of an Asset Verification Process to obtain financial data on deposit accounts to deter and detect Medicaid fraud
◊ Enhancing the interactive capacity of the online www.myflorida.com/accessflorida to notify customers in real time by text or email when new documents have been received or actions taken affecting their eligibility
Empower Frontline Staff

“I like the idea of empowering front line staff and the combination of enabling family accountability with partnerships in local communities by utilizing resources that promote programs designed to strengthen families.”

DCF Employee

Professionals Empowered to Make the Best Decisions for Children

Child protective investigator Holly Cummings showed amazing passion and dedication recently with a five-month-old infant. After working tirelessly and trying numerous avenues to maintain the baby safely in the home, Holly was forced to remove him from his family due to serious medical neglect. He needed to be life-flighted to Shands for heart surgery.

For many, the arrival of the life-flight helicopter would signal relief at the end of a very long day at work. But not for Holly. As the medical professionals wheeled the baby to the helicopter, Holly asked them if she could ride along. She then asked permission of her supervisor, Kelly Faircloth, who had been by her side all day for support. Holly’s request - without a change of clothes, toiletries, or plan for where she would go once the baby was safely at the hospital - led to her supervisor saying “yes!”

For Holly, this selfless act showed more than just the good work of an investigator, it showed true dedication to this baby, passion for the work she is tasked with each day, and heart for thinking of this child before herself. Her reward was when the medical professionals looked into her eyes upon arrival and told her she saved the infant’s life.

We congratulate both of these professionals who felt empowered to reasonably exceed the duties required of an investigator to ensure the health, safety and welfare of this child.
The citizens of Florida demand and deserve a state government that operates in the most efficient manner possible utilizing the resources provided.

DCF is meeting this challenge through consolidation of administrative functions that occur both in regional offices and at headquarters. Improved use of technology, elimination of management layers and consolidation of functions have also been implemented to reduce costs and save time while focusing resources on frontline first responders to families in crisis.

**Shared Services Approach Implemented for Administrative Processes**

In early 2011, Secretary Wilkins’ Strategic Vision challenged DCF’s administrative sections of human resources, budget, and information technology to significantly improve operational processes and practices in order to meet the objectives of empowering frontline staff and effecting program improvements. This resulted in the development of strategies focusing on consolidating administrative resources under a shared services model and standardizing core processes and practices. The timing of the project has been critical as the state continues to examine opportunities to be more fiscally responsible and reduce administrative costs.

Three principles guide the shared services effort:

◊ Increase the cost effectiveness of delivering administrative services and eliminate redundancies
◊ Standardize processes and practices
◊ Enhance organizational performance through implementation of world-class financial, technology, and human resource management systems

Financial, accounting and budgeting staffs have already converted to a shared services model with human resources to follow. The consolidation of financial services generated a reduction of 25 positions. In addition, the initial steps to consolidate human resources yielded a reduction of 14 positions in July 2011 with eight more to be reduced in 2012 resulting in a net reduction of human resources staff by 25 percent.
Effect Program Improvements

Child Welfare Lead Agency Competitive Procurement

DCF routinely uses the formal competitive procurement process to award Lead Agency contracts to community-based organizations. Through the competitive process, we have increased services and improved outcomes as well as reduced administrative costs. During the past two years, the majority of new contracts were awarded to a successful incumbent; in two circumstances awards were made to a new Lead Agency. The ability to routinely introduce a competitive environment into the outsourcing model allows our agency to maximize excellent services and results for children and families while keeping overhead costs moderate.

In FY 2010/2011, DCF solicited competitive bids for the community-based care lead agency serving Circuit 9, Orange and Osceola Counties. The CBC of Central Florida was awarded the contract and transition from the Family Services of Metro Orlando was effective April 1, 2011. Additionally, the contracts for four CBC agencies were continued from the previous year. These Lead Agencies were: Kids Central for Circuit 5, effective July 1, 2011; Big Bend Community Based Care for Circuits 2 and 14, effective July 1, 2011; Community Partnership for Children for Circuit 7, effective July 1, 2011; and, Sarasota Family YMCA, Inc. for Circuit 12, effective July 1, 2011.

In FY 2011/2012, DCF solicited competitive bids for the community-based care lead agency serving Circuit 13. Eckerd Community Alternatives was awarded the contract and is transitioning services from Hillsborough Kids, Inc. effective July 1, 2012. DCF also renewed a contract with the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida for Circuit 20, effective July 1, 2012.

To be a world-class organization, we’ve got to have a business process that’s very sound with minimal redundancy, and a management structure that supports and drives what our people are trying to do. That’s our obligation to make them successful.

David E. Wilkins, Secretary

Administrative Integration of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

The year 2011 saw significant and meaningful reforms including the integration of the Substance Abuse program office and the Mental Health program office at the headquarters level. Additional efficiencies were achieved by reducing duplicative administrative overhead functions compatible with reductions in regional offices.

Additionally, during 2011 the State Mental Health treatment facilities took several key steps to improve cost efficiencies:

◊ Streamlining and efficiencies were achieved by consolidating revenue management functions for Florida State Hospital and Northeast Florida State Hospital. This is expected to improve the fee collections and revenue management processes while maximizing use of financial services staff at these two facilities.
Effect Program Improvements

Florida Department of Children and Families

Florida State Hospital initiated plans to outsource environmental services and maintenance operations, and Food Services. These projects will result in significant savings to the state and will not affect critical services. The proposed contract was awarded and is ready for signatures upon approval from the 2012 Legislature. It will be effective July 1, 2012, generating a savings of $1.6 million.

Reduction of Administrative Costs for Substance Abuse and Mental Health While Expanding Care

During Fiscal Year 2010-11, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) program began developing and implementing system performance and quality improvement standards through the expansion and use of evidence-based practices, as well as the development of the managing entity standards for the networks of care. The overall approach is to establish and monitor standards regularly for ongoing system of care improvement. One major aspect is the development and implementation of Substance Abuse and Mental Health managing entities.

DCF continues to expand the “lead agency” managing entity approach for substance abuse and mental health services across the state. Managing entities consolidate all the substance abuse and mental health programs in an area of the state into one integrated system of care under the direction of a local not-for-profit board of community leaders and stakeholders. Under the board, the managing entities are responsible for a broad range of services including planning, system of care development, utilization management, network/subcontract management, data management and reporting, and financial management for all substance abuse and mental health services. This approach provides greater access to care at a lower administrative cost to the taxpayer.

Presently, there are three managing entities in operation in the Suncoast, Southern and Northwest regions. Those in the Northeast, Central and Southeast regions are expected to be operational by the end of June 2012. This significant undertaking will eliminate the contract management of as many as 535 community provider contracts in place in 2010.

Mental Health Institutions Reductions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Operational Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>Per Resident</td>
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</table>

Adult Protective Services Emphasizes Protection of Residents in Assisted Living Facilities

In the wake of a Miami Herald exposé on appalling conditions in some of Florida’s Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs), DCF’s Adult Protective Services greatly improved how we communicate reports of abuse and neglect within the facilities to the Agency for HealthCare Administration (AHCA). AHCA is responsible for the licensing and regulation of nearly 3,000 ALFs which provide beds for almost 84,000 elderly and disabled Florida residents. Upon report of abuse, neglect or exploitation in a licensed facility, an electronic notification is immediately sent to AHCA to instantly alert them of each claim. This information allows AHCA to determine where patterns or problems may exist.

In 2012, Adult Protective Services will continue to aggressively investigate and refer cases of abuse and will diligently pursue solutions to improve communication and efficiency between partners.
Focus on Fraud Prevention through the Office of Public Benefit Integrity

The Office of Public Benefit Integrity was established to enhance DCF’s efforts to prevent, detect and recover public assistance and Medicaid fraud. Technological advancements within the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program are significant but need further improvements and enhancements.

Since its creation in January 2011, the Office of Public Benefit Integrity has shown steady improvement in the prevention of public assistance fraud and collection of benefit overpayments. In addition, existing technology has been optimized to better detect fraud risk factors, such as identity theft. In one example, the identities of individuals currently incarcerated were being used to receive public assistance benefits.

The Office of Public Benefit Integrity is currently pursuing the development of identity verification technology within the eligibility determination process to further prevent fraud. The results to date have been tangible, with the dollar value of fraud prevented increasing by 10 percent since the beginning of 2011, while recoveries have increased by 16 percent over last year.

Refugee Services Streamlining

The Refugee Services program helps newly arrived refugees become self-sufficient and contributing members of Florida’s communities. The program is 100 percent federally funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement. Services are provided to assist individuals to obtain employment, learn English, acquire job skills and overcome legal or medical difficulties. Mentoring, tutoring and school support services are also provided to refugee youth.

In order to streamline the intake and assessment process, Secretary Wilkins called for the implementation of a pilot project that enables providers to tailor services to the specific needs of individual families. This pilot in Orange County enabled the program to operate more efficiently through the reduction of procurement and contract functions, which resulted in consolidating seven contracts for services into one contract.
Every Florida family should have the opportunity to prosper and raise their children in a safe and nurturing environment. Sometimes, this requires a fundamental shift in family behavior or lifestyle to be successful.

DCF’s goal is to address the true needs of its customers and position them to achieve independence from government assistance or oversight whenever possible. Integrating and streamlining government programs and local community services alike is the key ingredient to reducing dependence on government and helping citizens become self-sufficient.

We should demand family accountability from our citizens who need aid and from those who receive intervention services – from food assistance to Medicaid and adult or child protection. These themes for increased accountability are found in the Child Protection Transformation initiative, which will require a new partnership from parents and other agency clients to create action plans that lead to independence.

We must strongly support that same accountability for youth and young adults who are in the care of the state. For the sake of our young adults, we cannot allow them to “age out” of foster care with few incentives and insufficient support to master the daily financial, social, educational and employment requirements that lead to productivity and pride in personal accomplishment.

Help Foster Children Graduate From High School

Educational achievement is the key to the future of foster children. Just like their peers, children in foster care do best when they receive support at home, at school and in the community to reach their educational goals. In an effort to improve the educational outcomes of children in foster care, DCF has focused on a multi-faceted approach engaging caregivers, community-based care lead agencies, the courts and other partners.

Areas of emphasis include:

◊ Implementing the federal Fostering Connections Act promoting educational stability for children in foster care
◊ Partnering with Early Learning Coalitions to implement a coordinated system of school readiness programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foster Care vs. the General Population</th>
<th>Foster Care</th>
<th>General Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th graders who graduate with a standard diploma</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with Disabilities</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who drop out of school</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change schools</td>
<td>61% (avg. moves = 2)</td>
<td>22% (avg. moves = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enable Family Accountability

◊ Measuring the success of children departing foster care and receiving Independent Living services who achieve a high school diploma or GED, and spotlighting those community-based care agencies with the most success
◊ Focusing foster parents’ attention on supporting educational achievement through the Quality Parenting Initiative

Health Care a Priority for Children in Foster Care

Prior to 2011, DCF did not require community-based care providers to document health care services received by foster children in Florida Safe Families Network, the state’s child welfare data system. That all changed in 2011 when Secretary Wilkins began requiring this action for each foster child’s medical and dental records and making sure that each foster child receives regular medical exams based on required pediatric protocols. While all lead agencies have not achieved complete compliance, the results are very positive. To date, 99 percent of foster children have this medical record established and 85 percent of them had a documented medical examination in the past year. Dental health continues to be a challenge to the community-based care with only 55 percent of the foster children documented as receiving dental care in the last six months. The Department is tracking these results weekly and has shown improvement toward the goal of 100 percent.

Quality Parenting Initiative Makes Partners of Foster Parents

The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) is a cooperative effort of DCF, the Youth Law Center (a not-for-profit public interest law firm), the Eckerd Family Foundation and community-based care agencies statewide. The goal is to help nearly 20,000 foster children by empowering caregivers, case managers and foster parents to help children achieve educational goals and a stable life while rebranding foster care to recognize and support the skills and commitment of Florida’s foster families. An exciting component of this initiative is the efforts of many QPI foster parents to actively work as “reunification partners” with the children’s biological parents by providing a role model of safe, loving and stable parenting. QPI has developed a unique partnership with the University of South Florida to provide live, on-demand, online learning opportunities and a video training library available to foster parents across the state. More information is available at www.qpiflorida.com.

Promote Individual Accountability With Economic Self-Sufficiency

During 2011, the ACCESS staff provided public assistance services to more than 5.7 million Floridians through the Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and temporary cash assistance. This was accomplished while maintaining timeliness and accuracy performance that exceeded the national standards. In fact, the timeliness of food assistance applications processed for the first half of the calendar year (93.63 percent) was the best performance the state has ever achieved according to the Food & Nutrition Services’ federal report. Additionally, for the fourth
year in a row, Florida leads the nation with the best payment accuracy rate. These achievements were made possible through the innovation and continuous improvement cycles adopted by the eligibility staff throughout the state. While there have been many technological breakthroughs implemented this year, the priority has remained steadfast on customer service. Enhancing self-service options for the customer continues to be the most efficient and effective means for staff to handle the volume of public assistance applications received and to provide good stewardship on behalf of the Florida taxpayers.

“My ACCESS account has been a tremendous success throughout our Circuit 5 communities. More partners understand the value and how it saves the customers time and avoids inconveniences. They help customers register so that they can manage their own information online. The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.”

Robert Bradburn
Community Partner Liaison

**Responsible Use of Psychotropic Medications for Children**

Children in state care often suffer from the after-effects of abuse and neglect in ways that require mental health and behavioral intervention. About 13 percent of the children who live in foster homes suffer effects of their earlier abuse or physical condition that leads doctors to prescribe powerful medications called psychotropics to reduce the problems the children are experiencing. Because these drugs are very powerful, requirements have been put into place to prevent children from being needlessly medicated and to safeguard their health. No child is administered a psychotropic medication without either parental consent or a court order. Careful monitoring of these controls has been put into place, and cases of noncompliance are virtually non-existent.

**Child Welfare, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse & Mental Health Must Be One System, Not Three**

Families involved in child protection and child welfare services commonly have problems of substance abuse, mental illness and/or domestic violence. Therefore the child protection investigators, our partner agencies and the substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence providers must work as one integrated care system. To accomplish this, each circuit has developed a protocol to ensure that substance abuse Family Intervention Specialists are working directly with investigators and case managers and domestic violence providers as one team. Services and treatment succeed in keeping children safe and families together about 65 percent of the time. When they fail, the protocols require prompt action to protect the children. Court orders directing the family to comply with service requirements are often necessary. DCF has observed excellent results from Dependency Drug Courts in helping parents to recover, a good example being the excellent work of the Miami-Dade Court. We encourage the development of additional drug courts as important tools in empowering investigators and treatment providers.
Preparation Foster Children for Success is a Top Priority

Children who are removed from their families and live in a foster home deserve to have normal lives with the same opportunities as their peers and the same accountability. This philosophy guides the decisions and policies for their care, as well as DCF’s expectations for accountability when they receive stipends to attend college or vocational school. Like their peers, foster children should be able to participate in everyday life experiences, such as field trips, school sports, sleepovers, proms and social events. The Independent Living program and many of the partnerships promoted by our agency work to make these opportunities available to foster children so they can gain valuable skills and experiences that help them grow into contributing members of their communities. More than 3,900 young adults are served monthly through our Independent Living program.

Independence Village to Provide Stable Transitional Housing for Youth

In Northwest Florida, construction has begun on 24 affordable, safe housing units and Independent Living youth will have first priority in accessing these accommodations. The concept for the project was initiated in an effort to help alleviate the housing crisis facing young adults who are transitioning out of the foster care system. The project was selected as one of two special demonstration projects in the state and was awarded $1.6 million in funding by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation in August 2008.

“Independence Village will help provide a strong foundation for young adults to work and go to school and successfully transition into adulthood.”

Mike Watkins, CEO
Big Bend Community-Based Care
Engage Communities

Positioning local communities to be their own change agents is essential to the future success of social services. It also reflects our commitment to the power of public-private partnerships.

Many of the strong public-private partnerships flourishing in local communities today are optional, leaving gaps in the delivery of critical functions designed to achieve independence from government services. During this administration, concerted efforts will be made to identify and emulate models of creative, successful community programs serving those in need.

Partners for Promise Links Families and Businesses

Governor Rick Scott, Secretary David Wilkins and a group of Florida business leaders kicked off an exciting initiative in December 2011 that will strategically mobilize volunteer efforts to improve education and child safety, fight family poverty and help the elderly and disabled. The “Partners for Promise” campaign engages the business community to give their time, talent and resources to help build stronger, more productive communities.

The campaign focuses on five areas of promise:

◊ Academic Success-improving graduation rates and educational outcomes for foster children through mentoring, tutoring, and the supports necessary for success.
◊ Family Prosperity-coaching families out of poverty.
◊ Healthy Living-basic life needs that support healthy minds and bodies, such as fresh food, shelter, medical care, and other supports.
◊ Child Safety-building stability in families during times of crisis.
◊ Support for Seniors -providing basic essentials and supports to Florida’s vulnerable seniors.

In the weeks since its inception, businesses large and small across the state have stepped forward and made the pledge to help make a difference in their communities.

Learn more at www.FLPartnersForPromise.com
**Engage Communities**

“The Partners for Promise program really crystallizes the impact businesses have on every town, city and community in Florida. Investing in a business in Florida means investing in the future of your community.”

*Governor Rick Scott*

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**Everybody’s a Teacher Scores Wins for Foster Youth**

The Everybody’s a Teacher initiative encourages individuals and communities to become involved in the education of children and youth in foster care and to address issues that stand in the way of their academic success. When a child performs well in school, it leads to more stable placements and family reunification or permanency is easier to achieve. Overall, the child’s future is brighter. Formal action plans have been developed and early wins include trauma-informed care training for school guidance staff and a focus on the early education needs of children in out-of-home care. Partnerships with school districts are yielding exceptional results.

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**Camps for Champions Builds Strong Bodies and Minds**

Governor Rick Scott, First Lady Ann Scott, Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll, Secretary David Wilkins and many others welcomed foster youth to Camps for Champions events across the state in 2011. These camps offered a wide variety of personal achievement opportunities for youth served through our community-based care agencies. DCF enlisted the talent of superstar athletes who were eager to give back to their communities through mentoring and wellness camps. Myron Rolle, Dwight Howard, Corey Simon, Derrick Brooks and Shannon Miller were among the top athletes who signed on to develop camps that provided leadership training, personal responsibility coaching, team-building and spiritual development for foster youth. In 2012, DCF plans to expand its invitation to “rock stars” in many areas of professional achievement, including the corporate, academic and cultural arts worlds. Hundreds of teens in foster care or living at home and receiving services participated in sports-related, leadership and motivational activities, and had fun while building self-esteem and character.

“I think every kid needs the opportunity to be able to go and have summer camp. They just were dealt different circumstances and it’s our job to help mold and shape those young people so that they can be in this room one day and leading a camp such as this or doing even better things.”

*Corey Simon*
Engage Communities

National Adoption Day Spotlights “Forever Families”

For children who cannot return to their own families, adoption can offer a chance at a new future. DCF and our partners recruit loving, permanent homes for more than 3,000 foster children every year. Most of the adoptive families come from the ranks of the dedicated foster families who come to love their children as they foster their growth and development. Each November, Florida celebrates National Adoption Month in courtrooms throughout the state, where foster children are united with adoptive families and together forge lifelong bonds. November 2011 saw a total of 473 children adopted. During the 2011 calendar year, more than 3,000 children were adopted and another 2,763 found permanent homes with guardians.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement and FDLE Finds Missing Children

Florida has a model program for finding children who are runaways or have absconded from the child welfare system. DCF and our lead agencies have designated criminal justice/missing children coordinators who work with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and local police and sheriff’s agencies to identify missing children and promptly track and find them using “Amber Alerts” when needed. The success of this program has dramatically reduced the number of missing children.

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Strengthens Leadership Role

During the past six months, the transfer of many administrative responsibilities from our agency to the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence saved more than $1 million in administrative funding that was converted to direct services. This funding allowed the creation of two new service programs for domestic violence survivors - mental health services and services for stalking victims. The mental health project is based on a partnership model between domestic violence centers and local mental health agencies. Stalking is another issue that has been minimally
addressed in service delivery and there is now the opportunity to create an intervention model that is successful in addressing this crime which is frequently an antecedent to domestic violence homicide. Both projects will be fully implemented by the end of the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

Homeless Receive Help through Local Partnerships

In 2011, DCF along with our community partners helped 6,427 households with short-term financial aid to remain in their homes or to secure a place of their own to live. As a result, 20,887 men, women and children were able to escape the threat of becoming homeless. With the critical assistance of community partners, new federal investments were received to address the needs of persons who have become homeless. Local homeless coalitions, leading the assistance planning in their communities, received more than $77 million in grants to support 346 rental housing projects statewide, which can house 27,476 homeless persons and families.

In addition, local public housing authorities in Florida secured $4.2 million in rental assistance grants to place 625 homeless veterans and their families in permanent rental housing. As a result of partnerships with local service providers, the number of homeless has dropped slightly, in spite of the difficult economic conditions in the state. Based on the one day counts performed statewide in 2011, there was a 1.35 percent drop in the number of homeless persons, 56,771, compared to the 2010 daily count of persons living in shelters or on our streets.

Florida Department of Children and Families Hosts Community Call to Action

When Orlando mother-of-four Nelda Evan became homeless, the community rallied around her family in a big way. For Christmas, DCF community partners, the Orlando Magic, private citizens and a local foundation provided gifts and help to this grateful family. They were showered with clothing, gift cards, games, toiletries, books, blankets, and even small appliances for an upcoming move into a new apartment. A local photographer also donated time to take new family portraits of the family, as they lost all their family photographs. Nelda and her children were featured at the Central Region’s Call to Action in Orlando which brought more than 200 community partners together to discuss battling homelessness. Nelda’s story was an excellent example of how the community can work together to successfully lift up their vulnerable neighbors, one family at a time.
Over the past year DCF has made great strides toward transforming the way we serve Floridians. Many challenges lie ahead, but we have taken important steps to become the world-class organization that the people of Florida deserve. The commitment and passion of our employees are second to none. The improvements made have been very powerful for the people we serve.

In 2012, DCF will continue to seek efficiencies and address the gaps and shortcomings in our processes. We will seize opportunities to make improvements that have a direct and lasting impact in the lives of Florida’s children and families.

We will focus on the priorities outlined below:

**Child Protection Transformation Project**
Child Protection Transformation Project will be a multi-year transformation project to advance the Hotline, protective investigators, and case management processes to world-class levels. The goal will be to improve the outcomes for child safety and child welfare. We will streamline our procedures and reduce caseloads to ensure investigators have enough time to focus on the most critical cases. Our abuse Hotline will be transformed into a Command Center so the information received is transmitted immediately to those working in the field so that we can help children and families more quickly. These changes will reduce turnover among our staff and provide better services to those in need.

**ACCESS Redesign**
Changes in our ACCESS call center and online program have increased our customer service capabilities last year. This year, our agency wants to begin redesigning our computerized system in order to further reduce backlog of cases and improve our processing rates. Although Florida has received several federal awards for having the lowest error rates in the nation, we plan to reduce errors across all benefit programs and continue our fraud prevention efforts so that we can assure Floridians that only those who qualify and truly need these federal benefits are receiving them.

**Community-Based Care Accountability/Transparency**
In January, DCF unveiled a new “Scorecard” that will improve the tracking of critical measures of the safety and well-being of children under state care. These measurements will help keep children safe, healthy and ensure their educational and medical needs are being met. The Scorecard will also help share best practices among community-based care agencies so that successful programs can be implemented statewide.

**Partners for Promise**
Gov. Rick Scott helped DCF launch Partners for Promise, our newest initiative to help children, families and seniors across Florida. Partner for Promise helps local businesses connect with those who need extra support, from after-school tutoring to job training to helping build handicap-accessible ramps for disabled adults. We plan to have more than 500 partners this year; anyone in our state who is interested can lend a helping hand to their neighbor.

**Foster Care Education/Normalcy**
Our foster children must have their educational needs met, especially during times of transition and stress in their lives. We want all foster children to be enrolled and attending school throughout the year. We are working diligently with our community partners to improve the high school graduation rate and help these young adults go to college. Our “Everybody’s a Teacher” program keeps the focus on the education and well-being of foster children, while our Quality Parenting Initiative engages foster parents and relatives to support the educational needs of these children.
Looking Ahead

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Managing Entity Deployment

Managing Entities, one organization that connects with local substance abuse and mental health programs in a community, will continue to be rolled out across the state. This will help our agency consolidate more than 500 separate contracts, lower administrative costs and improve the programs available to those who need these services. To maximize efficiencies, a scorecard will be developed to compare the work of these managing entities and share best practices throughout the state.

Human Resources Strategy/Shared Services Deployment

DCF is committed to continue reducing administrative costs and be accountable to taxpayers for their dollars. We will create more efficient and standardized processes for human resources and other administrative duties by centralizing these functions and better tracking their quality.

Contractor/Vendor Efficiency

By centralizing procurements and developing an overall strategy for our contracting functions, we can reduce costs by millions of dollars. We will also increase competitive bidding and decrease our purchase order costs.

Fraud Prevention

Our fraud prevention programs have already save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. DCF will be the first state in the country to have immediate identity verification of those applying for federal benefit assistance. We are partnering with many other state agencies as part of the Florida Medicaid and Public Assistance Fraud Strike Force to ensure that taxpayers’ money is not going to those who do not deserve the assistance.

Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness

Prescription drug abuse is at a critical level in the state of Florida. We will establish measures to review prescription drug abuse prevention efforts and track the effectiveness of those programs. DCF will work closely with industry and community leaders to develop a public information campaign to encouraging Floridians to use prescription drugs as prescribed, and to take adequate precautions to store and dispose of unused medications.

Human Trafficking Awareness

DCF wants to bring more public awareness to the dangers of human trafficking so that people will recognize the signs of human trafficking and report this to the abuse hotline or local law enforcement. Hundreds of children are trafficked for prostitution in Florida, and our agency will be on the front line fighting for victims of this terrible crime. We are working with the Department of Juvenile Justice to develop programs to intervene and provide help to children who are victims of human trafficking and working with law enforcement across the state to develop public awareness campaigns.
What happens when Businesses engage in the Community?

Families Prosper

5 Promises for Florida
- Academic Success
- Family Prosperity
- Healthy Living
- Supporting Our Seniors
- Child Safety

Get Involved
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Life Skills
- Job Coaching
- Summer Camps
- Safe Shelters
- Adoption
- Possibilities are endless!

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