



**Department of Children and Families  
Family Safety**

**CHILD and FAMILY SERVICES  
ANNUAL PROGRESS and SERVICES REPORT**

**June 2010**

Service Period  
October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009

**George H. Sheldon, Secretary**

**Charlie Crist, Governor**

**Florida's Child and Family Services  
Annual Progress & Services Report  
Federal Fiscal Year October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009**

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## Introduction

The mission of the Department is to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency. The Department's mission, vision, goals, and performance objectives drive and influence its Strategic and Business Plans and its daily work on behalf of its customers.

The Department's vision is that every child in Florida lives in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. The current Five-Year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and annual updates reflect this vision and are supported by the Department of Children and Families Strategic Plan 2010-2014 and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to the Child and Families Services Review (CFSR).

The Department's *Strategic Plan 2010-2014* maps out priorities and direction, while redefining and fine tuning its role. The Department's focus has been to streamline its processes and embrace a sense of urgency for its customers. The Department is responsible for providing services within child welfare, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, homelessness, and other areas. Integration of services, policies and practice is critical to truly affect positive change in the lives of Florida's citizens, but this is especially true if the Department is to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Federal funding and state monies will need to be applied even more widely to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. This requires a high level of collaboration and coordination, both within the agency and when working with other state and federal agencies and Florida's very diverse communities.

In the past two years, the Department has strived to re-engineer child welfare services to ensure that well-being, safety and permanency are primary goals for every child, while preserving families by providing early support and services. The IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project has made much of the innovative work possible.

The enclosed report follows the federal program instructions to the Child and Family Services Annual Progress and Services Report outlining specific topics and financial information covering October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. This report also serves as an application for FFY 2011 funds awarded under Title IV-B, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), (Child and Family Services Court Improvement Act (CFCIP) and Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) programs.

Florida's Annual Progress and Services Report includes:

- a description of the program types and achievements, services and support, stakeholder involvement, and performance improvement strategies; and
- plans for program or service changes during the 2010 federal fiscal year including revisions to the program goals, population to be served, or service delivery enhancements.



# Chapter 1

## Service Description Updates

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In this first chapter of Florida's Annual Progress and Services Report, the services described reflect the primary components of Florida's child welfare system, including the case management information system. Also, in order for the information in the entire report to be read in the context of Florida's current state legal requirements, Chapter 1 begins with an overview of changes in state law and administrative code.

### Revisions to Florida Administrative Code and State Statutes (F.S.)

#### FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE (F.A.C.)

The Department amended the following rules relating to child protection during the time period October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009:

- **Chapter 65C-16, F.A.C.** – The Department revised Chapter 65C-16, F.A. C., relating to Adoptions. The purpose of the rule revisions was to align the rule with recent statutory and policy changes in Chapters 409 and 63 of Florida Statutes. Substantive changes to the rule included clarification of adoption benefits to state employees, post-adoption services available and the required background checks for prospective adoptive parents. This rule became effective November 30, 2008.
- **Chapter 65C-24, F.A.C.** – The Department repealed Chapter 65C-24, F.A. C., relating to the Relative Caregiver Program, in October 2008 to eliminate redundancy. The Relative Caregiver Program rules were revised and moved to the out-of-home-care rules, Chapter 65C-28, F.A.C. in 2006.
- **Chapter 65C-33, F.A.C.** - Pursuant to ss. 402.40 and 402.731 F.S., the Department initiated the promulgation of an administrative rule, Chapter 65C-33, F.A.C., to develop minimum standards for a certification process that ensured participants (case managers and child protective investigators) have successfully attained the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to competently carry out their work responsibilities, and developed minimum standards for trainer qualifications which was required of training academies in the offering of the training curricula. The Department anticipates filing the rule for adoption in early summer 2010.

- **Chapter 65C-35, F.A.C.** – On September 25, 2009, the Department filed a Notice of Rule Development to create Chapter 65C-35, Florida Administrative Code. This new administrative rule clarified and enhanced requirements relating to the prescription of psychotropic medications to children in out-of-home care. This rule will become effective sometime in the Spring of 2010.

## **FLORIDA 2009 LEGISLATION**

In Spring 2009, the Florida Legislature successfully passed three pieces of legislation that support the protection and rights of children. The first is the “Zahid Jones, Jr., Give Grandparents and Other Relatives a Voice Act.” This legislation contained specific requirements regarding notification to and contact with relatives during child protective investigations and at dependency court proceedings and hearings. It also required specific quality assurance reviews of screened out abuse reports reported by relatives and created liaison functions specific to relatives within available state, federal, and private funds.

A second piece of legislation provided current and former foster children access to child and adult protection records held by state and local agencies that serve them. The legislation requires all state and local agencies and programs that provide services to children or that are responsible for a child’s safety, must share otherwise confidential information with former and current foster children. The intended result is that individuals who are or have been in state care will have key information about their histories. At the same time, the privacy of these individuals is protected from public scrutiny.

Finally, legislation relating to Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) was successfully passed which removes many of the existing barriers to the timely placement of children across state lines.

The Compact was developed by the Council of State Governments (CSG) to enable member states to uniformly address the interstate placement of children. The Compact will take effect when it is adopted by 35 states. The new ICPC created an interstate commission that can set uniform rules to process ICPC requests the same way in every state, and provided a forum for review of decisions by states, and a mechanism for enforcement of ICPC provisions. With the passage of this bill, Florida became one of ten states that have adopted this Compact.

## **Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)**

Ongoing implementation of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) strengthened Florida's ability to track critical information about the child welfare system. Florida's SACWIS, named Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), provided opportunities to identify child welfare outcomes and practices and ensure a complete record of each child's current and historical child welfare information.

### 2008-2009 Update

Leading up to 2009, the Department completed two major releases of FSFN. These two releases automated functions to support the state's centralized abuse hotline, protective investigation, and provider case management. With the implementation of these functional components, the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Goal # 1, Benchmark: Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 1 was completed.

During 2009, the Department also focused on the design, acceptance, and pilot testing of remaining components of FSFN, including automated eligibility determination and financial processing.

### Accomplishments

In August 2009 a major release of the system which included the automation of eligibility determination through and interface with the state's public assistance and eligibility determination system of record was implemented. This implementation was followed by additional acceptance and pilot testing of financial functions and a major eligibility upgrade which was implemented in December 2009.

### Collaboration

The Department continued to collaborate with its contracted child welfare service providers to complete the full transition to FSFN with financial processing as the last implementation step.

## Program Support

FSFN supported the state's quality management system and continuous quality improvement efforts. Florida's Quality Assurance (QA) Unit in the Department at the state level and the local Quality Assurance staff across the state used specific case data to conduct regularly scheduled and special quality assurance reviews. FSFN also provided a broad spectrum of information from a system-wide view down to specific unit or worker case reviews. Analysis of FSFN data allowed state and local operations to identify opportunities for improvement related to safety, permanency, and well-being as well as, practice trends that required root cause analysis and plan-do-check-act initiatives to improve service delivery overall. (CFSP Plan Goal # 1: Benchmark: QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A).

## Future Plans

Pilot testing of financial processing and related functional components of the system are scheduled to continue through March 2010.

# **Program Services and Supports**

## **PREVENTION**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Florida Department of Children and Families (Department) took its role seriously in ensuring Florida's continuum of prevention services and resources as is reflected in the Department's mission: *"Protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency."*

Through various funding streams, the Department administered statewide prevention and family preservation programs to address child abuse and neglect. A variety of family-focused programs and services enhanced the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The allocated 2007 funds supported continuation of prevention programs through training, network administration, and educational materials.

The Department contracted with a set of core programs for services to complement the existing network of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs.

## Accomplishments

More than 3900 families and children received preventive services through direct client services. Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grants funded child abuse prevention programs that reached more than 4,000 families through an Information and Referral indirect client service where more than 4,600 calls were answered.

Since implementation of the Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver in October 2006, numerous initiatives have been implemented throughout the state affecting permanency, safety, and well-being. The Department and its partners, Sheriffs' offices and community-based care providers (CBCs), continued to increase the array of services that could be used to address the unique needs of each child and family earlier and more effectively.

During April 2009, Prevent Child Abuse Florida (PCA Florida) implemented a comprehensive statewide public awareness and education campaign recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month. The theme of the campaign, *Winds of Change*, continued to highlight how parenting has changed over the years as a result of social, cultural, and demographic trends in families. The campaign stressed a shift away from providing a "safety net" for families toward creating a community-wide commitment to support all parents and children.

To draw attention to and encourage involvement in these efforts, communities throughout Florida displayed pinwheels representing newborns in the community and opportunities to support a new family from the very beginning.

While the 2009 *Winds of Change* campaign focused on turning choices into change, the campaign materials were designed to appeal to children, families, legislators, funders, and advocates and were easily adaptable for use in a wide variety of mediums. More than 35,000 resource packets were distributed statewide. *Winds of Change* was intended to provide the public with opportunities to get involved, take action, and make a difference in the life of a child.

## Collaboration

Florida's efforts in the prevention of child abuse and neglect continued to be guided by the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection. The Office of Adoption and Child Protection has an established Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council comprised of representatives from each state agency and appropriate local agencies and organizations to serve as the research arm of the office.

The Advisory Council assisted in the development of an action plan for better coordination and integration of the goals, activities, and funding pertaining to the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The Department has two seats on the Advisory Council. Please refer to the following website for information regarding the interim 18-month prevention and permanency statewide plan: <http://www.flgov.com/pdfs/ChildAdvocacy/flplcapp122008.pdf>

### Program Support

The CBCAP and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grant specialist was an active partner in the various workgroups and research teams.

Florida had a myriad of programs that either directly or indirectly contributed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, such as the Parenting with Love and Limits, The Nurturing Parenting Program, and those included in Chapter 4.

### Future Plans

The CBCAP programs will continue to identify and address community and family needs by creating new partnerships, assessing parent education programs, participating in the Program Self-Assessment and Peer Review Process, increasing parent participation on various advisory councils and by surveying participants and partnering agencies for their ideas and suggestions. Programs will also continue to document lessons learned and new strategies employed based on the needs of the target population as part of their final reports, which are submitted annually.

## **INTERVENTION\INVESTIGATION**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Department focused on refining the Intake (investigations) area of FSFN to improve assessment and provision of services to families. Significant changes (explained in greater detail below) included the design of a safety plan instrument and template for statewide use, expansion of data extraction/analysis capabilities for managers, and calls made regarding youth in foster care and in the juvenile justice system that did not meet the statutory criteria for abuse and neglect.

## Accomplishments

Release 2a of FSFN provided a new standardized safety plan for use by child protective investigators across the state. The safety plan documents response time, timely decision-making, specific safety actions taken, and the involvement of the family in safety planning when imminent harm to a child is identified. The template provided a concise electronic format for documenting safety considerations and safety actions that were jointly developed and signed by the worker and family (CFSP Goal # 2; Benchmark 1: QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Item 4 and QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 1). A number of training workshops and resources were developed to support the implementation of the FSFN – Safety Plan practice and related system template.

The Department also designed a "Second Party Reviewer" certification process for managers with the responsibility for approving cases containing certain risk indicators (e.g., a child 4 years old or younger, etc.) in FSFN. The certification requires prior work experience and training prescribed by the Department (CFSP Goal # 1: Benchmark: QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 2). Both web-based and field-based training was made available on the Second Party Reviewer process and certification.

One strategic area of the casework process that was changed during this period concerned the documenting of foster care referrals to the Abuse Hotline. Any calls regarding foster parents that rise to the standard of abuse and neglect are taken by the Hotline and investigated. However, "foster care referrals" do not contain allegations of abuse or neglect but generally deal with licensing issues or special concerns involving foster care children. Effective with the changes in FSFN, licensing staff can now be assigned as the primary worker (instead of investigative staff) and may directly access and enter casework activity and assessment outcomes involving these referrals.

## Collaboration

In May 2009, the Department became one of the first states in the country to include Human Trafficking as a maltreatment condition to be investigated by child welfare staff. To support implementation, the Department developed and disseminated a statewide operating procedure, a human trafficking indicator tool, and a Florida Abuse Hotline job aid for use in screening human trafficking reports. Additionally, the Department arranged for statewide training for child protective investigators and case management staff responsible for intervening with trafficked children. This training effort received statewide recognition in 2009 when it received a "Prudential – Davis Productivity Award."

In January 2009, the Florida Abuse Hotline implemented a “Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Referral” process for calls from DJJ facilities that did not rise to the level of an abuse or neglect report. DJJ worked closely with the Florida Abuse Hotline to develop screening criteria for this process.

### Program Support

In February 2009, the Department coordinated with the Center for Advancement of Child Welfare Practice (the Center) to create an on-line resource page addressing the needs of children of color in the child welfare system. During the same month, the Department developed a data report which was updated monthly and used locally to identify gaps in culturally competent services and supports and to develop local solutions for children of color in the system. Creating culturally competent intake staff will result in more thoughtful decisions regarding child well-being and child/family safety.

In May 2009, the Department, working in conjunction with the Justice Research Center, identified both trends and patterns for youth involved in the dependency system who are either the victims or perpetrators in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse, as well as identification of evidence-based approaches for service provision. This work will be used to provide a foundation for a sub-committee of the Secretary’s Task Force on Fostering Success which is now conducting a more focused review of this issue.

“Child Protective Investigative Trend Reports” were created and made available to the public through the Center’s webpage to facilitate quality improvement efforts. Commonly referred to as “Spinner Reports,” these data provided program staff and stakeholders with access to investigation related data trends (up to 24 months) on a state, region, or circuit level. Charts included, for example, the percent of investigations containing a specific type of maltreatment (burns, medical neglect, etc.) or type of finding (verified or no indications, etc.) (CFSP Goal # 1: Benchmark: QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A).

### Future plans

The Department will move forward on the following:

- consideration of expanding use of differential response to protective investigations in Florida;
- release of a revised Allegation Matrix which provides clearer definitions of maltreatment types, examples of assessment factors, and types of evidence and documentation required to substantiate abuse and neglect;
- revision of investigative closure types (i.e., verified, some indication, no indications);



- updating operating procedure outlining criminal background screening for placement and releases;
- development of training for child protective investigators related to work with pregnant, incarcerated women and their families;
- devise training for child protective investigators and Children's Legal Services' (CLS) attorneys on documenting reasonable efforts through use of the in-home child safety assessment instrument; and
- review child-on-child sexual abuse through a workgroup established by the Task Force on Fostering Success.

The Department will continue to work closely with the Community-Based Care lead agencies to identify children and families who may benefit from diversion and early intervention services.

Diversion services will be clearly defined and expanded to children and families whether or not judicial intervention has occurred. Services and supports will be provided to ensure child safety by seeking to alleviate family stressors and strengthen the life and child-rearing competencies of the parent(s)/caregivers, while striving to use a family centered approach.

Prevention Services will be more clearly defined to achieve the goal of social services and other supportive and rehabilitative services that will promote the child's physical, mental, and emotional health and a safe, stable, living environment, to promote family autonomy, and to strengthen family life, whenever possible.

## **FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT RECRUITMENT**

### 2008-2009 Update

Foster parent recruitment activities were driven by the Quality Parenting Initiative. This work, led by the Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation, evolved over the reporting period. The goal was to develop and implement strategies built on the community-based system of care in Florida. Rather than focus on a uniform statewide initiative, the approach was individualized so that technical assistance was provided at the lead agency level and throughout the system of care at the local level.

Significant progress was been made in improving the content and consistency of local recruitment and retention plans and particularly in the increased use of data to determine objectives and strategies.

Recruitment efforts included general informational booths at various community events to increase awareness about adoption and the waiting children in the area. There were also targeted efforts to recruit foster parents from specific life experiences and expertise, e.g., medical personnel, teaching staff, etc. Targeted recruitment also occurred within the faith based community. Commitment was obtained from many area churches to host and support foster homes within their congregation. Recruitment efforts included speaking engagements and presentations, as well as web-based inquiries to groups and their members through newsletters and postings on web sites.

Both general recruitment and targeted recruitment of foster homes for harder to place children, such as teens and children with a higher level of behavioral needs, continued throughout the state.

### Accomplishments

The Quality Parenting Initiative improved foster and adoptive recruitment activities. Program participants created an adoption/foster care telephone line for inquiries on becoming an adoptive/foster parent. Some program participants also employed Program and Recruitment Specialists who provided guidance and oversight as to recruitment, retention, and licensing. One lead agency's strategy was to move foster parent recruitment, licensing, and retention function in-house for quality improvement.

Three Lead Agencies (Hillsborough Kids, Community-Based Care of Seminole, Big Bend Community-Based Care) participated in the Quality Parenting Initiative from Fall 2008 through Summer 2009. During Fall 2009, four more lead agencies joined the effort. This included Child and Family Connections of Palm Beach, Eckerd Community Alternatives, Family Services Metro of Orlando, and Heartland for Children.

Examples of the accomplishments of the Quality Parenting Initiative included:

- Hiring foster parent mentors to provide support, education, and guidance to new foster families or foster families struggling with placement issues;
- Reorganizing lead agency recruitment, licensing, and placement functions based on feedback from families, youth, and staff collaboration;
- Increased emphasis on foster parent and youth leadership and participation in pre-service training; and
- Analysis of licensing and training processes to improve efficiencies and responsiveness.

## Collaboration

The Department collaborated with state and local partners to improve foster and adoptive recruitment activities. Some examples of collaboration were:

- A joint recruitment effort called “Fostering Florida’s Future” with the Junior League, Dependency Court, Children’s Legal Services, Guardian ad Litem office and Child Placing Agencies; and
- Weekly meetings with Foster Home Management staff were held to review the children in deep-end placements and children for whom it had been difficult to secure a placement. The reviews helped to ensure each child’s placement was with the most appropriate family or home to meet his/her needs.

Each of the Quality Parenting Initiative teams included representatives from local systems of care including foster parents, youth, adoptive parents, recruiters, licensing, case management, mental health, Guardian ad Litem, investigations, sheriff’s office, child care, etc. This broad participation helped the teams to develop individualized approaches to address problem solving issues in their specific support and retention needs.

## Future Plans

The Department will continue the Quality Parenting Initiative which is dedicated specifically to foster parent recruitment and continue its partnership with the Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation. Eckerd will continue to provide both financial and staff support to the project. This project will help the Department and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies explore new approaches to address the challenges of recruitment and retention. The initiative will:

- build the capacity to be effective in local efforts to meet the needs of the ethnic and racial diversity of the children served;
- increase the pool of existing families that reflect the communities of the children served in out-of-home care; and
- enhance permanency and placement stability outcomes and ensure they will remain Department priorities in the coming year.

## **FOSTER CARE AND ANOTHER PERMANENT PLANNED LIVING ARRANGEMENT**

### 2008-2009 Updates

The Department continued to build on its participation in the National Governors Association Policy Academy on Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care, through its 2012 Strategy. Former Secretary Robert A. Butterworth and Secretary George Sheldon led the Florida team through the academy process of analysis of data, policy, and practice to identify strategies for the successful and safe reduction of children in foster care. The 2012 Strategy will be accomplished as directed in the Secretary's Strategic Direction for 2009-2011. For a complete version, please refer to:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/opengov/docs/strategicIntent.pdf>.

The goal of this initiative was both simple and sweeping. To reduce the number of children in foster care safely, a wide range of changes and interventions were needed. The 2012 Strategy enabled in large part by the Title IV-E Demonstration Waiver, drove much of Florida's child welfare system change, from encouraging the belief of front-line workers that families can become nurturing and safe, to the commitment of state and federal resources in previously precluded ways.

Permanency was perhaps the most complicated outcome area, since it involved the largest number of considerations and many pathways for children and their families. The Department employed existing and new initiatives aimed at the general goals of rapidly achieving a permanent family setting that reflected the best interest of each child.

One broad initiative was the restructuring of Children's Legal Services (CLS) along the model of a statewide law firm focused on the needs of children in the dependency system. This restructuring strategically positioned the CLS function as a key partner for permanency, working cohesively with protective investigators and case managers at all stages of a child's case. The CLS attorneys act as legal advocates for the children, with a strong focus toward each child achieving timely permanency.

Another ongoing initiative was to provide case managers and other key staff with an ongoing forum for up-to-date technical assistance and information about new approaches to permanency and case planning. Periodic (primarily, monthly) statewide calls included technical assistance, sharing of information, and open discussions about how to reduce the time children spend in care waiting for a permanent home.

Maintaining leadership involvement in support of permanency goals was an important factor. The Department's team of headquarters and operational leaders held monthly meetings at which performance on the federal permanency composite measures was a featured topic.

### Accomplishments

Accomplishments for permanency options:

- The Task Force on Fostering Success was convened under the leadership of former Department Secretary and Florida Attorney General Butterworth, and Department Secretary George Sheldon. Members included representatives from the Governor's Office, judiciary and legal/law enforcement, community stakeholders, Department managers, youth, adoptive parents, and national experts.
- The number of children in licensed out-of-home care continued to decline- from 12,270 children in out-of-home care in September 2007 to 10,318 as of September, 2009. Please see the section "Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver" later in this chapter for further results, as well as the Attachment Section of this report.
- Teens in foster care ages 13-17 are eligible for a comprehensive array of independent living services. This work supplements the case management and behavioral/support services provided to younger children in care. Youth engagement is a key component of the policy and practice guidance. The Independent Living Services Critical Checklist was administered to the vast majority of youth in care and their caseworkers. The youth survey portion of the checklist provided the youth perspective and helps to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the service delivery system. Normalcy is one example of improved performance that needs continued improvement. Since the middle part of this decade, youth in care have articulated that age appropriate activities or normalcy are one of their most important recommendations for system improvement. Based on the youth's survey responses in 2009, 66% of the youth indicated they had written plans as compared to 40% in 2008. The written plan helped foster parents and staff meet both the developmental needs and the expectations of teens. The desired result is greater satisfaction on the part of youth and greater competence in daily living activities.
- The Department focused on the reduction of young children in shift care (generally defined as a group care setting with employed staff changing every 8 hours or so) and in collaboration with community-based providers

decreased the number of children from 81 children in January 2009 to 38 in September 2009. A training session was delivered by Dr. Charles Zeanah in December 2008 to help staff and providers understand the negative effects of shift care on children. This event served as the kick-off of an on-going conversation about group care, particularly shift care, and the consequences for children in the foster care system. The training was video taped and is available at:

<http://cbcta.fmhi.usf.edu/flcwp/confvids/fostcareorlando/fs.html>

The Department's web site provides data about this collaborative effort with lead agencies and group care providers at:

[http://dashboard.dcf.state.fl.us/index.cfm?page=preview&purpose\\_id=sit&mcode=temp,M0760&fiscal=2009](http://dashboard.dcf.state.fl.us/index.cfm?page=preview&purpose_id=sit&mcode=temp,M0760&fiscal=2009)

- The Kinship Center at the University of South Florida continued to provide support services to kin/relatives of children in the dependency system as well as caregivers in the general population. The Department collaborated with the Kinship Center to apply for a Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator grant in the summer of 2009. Although the grant was not awarded, the grant application process helped to identify strengths and needs in the support of relative caregivers in the state of Florida and solidified relationships with the kin support community. Fortunately, Kids Central, Inc. (a Community-Based Care Lead Agency in Central Florida) was awarded a Kinship Navigator grant.
- Sibling separation continues to be a performance improvement goal in Florida. There was/is recognition that multiple strategies must be employed to address the concern. One strategy in Florida was "Camp Sib." In May 2009, approximately 100 children of various sized sibling groups were able to spend time together in a wilderness camp setting. Youth were presented with beautiful pictures of their brothers and/or sisters as keepsakes.
- In mid-June 2009, the Department sponsored the Myron Rolle Wellness and Leadership Academy for youth in foster care. Rhodes Scholar and Florida State University athlete worked with the Department and many volunteers to provide this confidence and esteem building camp for more than 100 youth in foster care. Go to the following link for more information:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/MyronRolle/>
- Florida successfully completed the second year of the Florida Youth Leadership Academy (FYLA). This program was designed as a leadership program for older children in foster care who had the

opportunity to work one-on-one with a mentor during the program. The youth participated as a group in skill-building sessions that focused on maintaining healthy relationships, employment, and education. Participants took these skills back to their community and took on the mentoring role and advocacy for foster youth in their communities.

- Foster teens and children with longer stays in foster care were the focus of adoption efforts during the reporting period. Efforts included implementation of the Homefinders model (case specific efforts, staffing across organizational lines); identifying and developing strategies to promote adoption for the “Longest Waiting Teens” and the “Longest Waiting Children in Out-of-home Care.”

### Program Support

The Department conducted conference calls, provided hard copy training materials, and published summary articles in the Family Safety Training Bulletin that explained revisions and practice implications for legislative changes to Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, relating to children in care. The calls evolved to discussions surrounding adoption, contract management, quality assurance and the FSFN project. Child welfare professionals from Regional Family Safety Program Offices and CBC Lead Agencies were represented on the calls.

As previously mentioned, The Center provided web-enabled information, facilitated training and technical assistance, and offered support to Florida’s child welfare professionals. The Center’s mission was to support and facilitate the identification, expansion, and transfer of expert knowledge and best practices in child welfare case practice, direct services, management, finances, policy, and organizational development.

Department staff provided support to the statewide Independent Living Services Advisory Council and to the Task force on Fostering Success, as well as, participating in activities and projects of the Quality Parenting Initiative. Information to these groups, such as budget information, performance data and results were also provided.

### Collaboration

The Department continued to engage youth, young adults, caregivers, foster parents, adoptive parents and a wide variety of advocates in child welfare to improve its performance in foster care and other living arrangements. Various external and internal groups shared and discussed best practices and provided technical assistance through conference calls, monitoring reports, and meetings with Florida’s child welfare professionals.

## Future Plans

In 2011 the Department plans to:

- implement a statewide unified home study incorporated through FSFN;
- develop training for mental health professionals in the area of adoption;
- develop resources and supports for post-adoption families.
- develop and implement Florida's family-centered practice framework in three innovation sites;
- continue the "Longest Waiting Teens" adoption project;.
- clarify release of child records for children in foster care;
- implement a project aimed at permanency for youth with the goal of Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA);
- continue to build on the work of the National Governors Association Policy Academy on Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care;
- expand the initiative to effectively train, recruit and retain foster parents; and
- establish outcome measures in local provider contracts related to young adult and youth receiving independent living services.

## **MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT DATA AND STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

In May 2006, the Department promulgated administrative rules that established requirements and standards for conducting quality and timely home visits. The Department revised the minimum requirements for caseworker contacts with children so that a face-to-face contact with the child occurred no less than once every 30 days.

### 2008-2009 Update

The Department received additional funds under Title IV-B, subpart 2 to support caseworker visits with children who were in foster care. The state used the additional funds to further enhance the quality and frequency of the visits with children. The funds provided the opportunity to contact a child more often in a setting that was most favorable for the child, allowed the caseworker to focus on pertinent decisions, and allowed the child to become involved in decisions. It also afforded the flexibility for multiple staff and service providers involved with the child and family to make visits with the child and family, as appropriate or delegated in the case plan.

Community-Based Care agencies (CBCs) submitted their local training plans for existing staff and new hire training. An analysis of these training plans indicated



that interviewing, quality visiting and other engagement strategies are a frequent area targeted for staff development. The new hire training curriculum is in every staff development plan and the topic of visitation and engagement is a large part of this curriculum.

The federal 90 percent target for monthly visitation must be achieved by October 1, 2011. To meet the federal target and deadline, Florida established the following target timeframes:

- 2008 - 80% each month until September 30, 2008
- 2009 - 82% each month until September 30, 2009
- 2010 - 85% each month until September 30, 2010
- 2011 - 90% as of September 30, 2011

### Accomplishments

As reported in October 2009, the percentage of children seen each month in FFY 2009 was 92% (up from 90% in 2008), with 97% (unchanged) of those being seen in their home. The data on caseworker visits was obtained using the federal methodology.

### Collaboration

The Department negotiated strict contract performance requirements with the CBC Lead Agencies and challenged each one to develop local improvement plans. To assist Lead Agencies in meeting their goals, the Department created management reports for caseworkers, supervisors, and leadership that were posted on the Department's internet site and helped the Lead Agencies to gauge their performance.

In addition, the Department in conjunction with community partners and stakeholders:

- monitored and shared federal measure performance data and made it available on the Department's website at: <http://dcfdashboard.dcf.state.fl.us/>;
- emphasized through the pre-service curriculum the importance of the worker's relationship with the family, and of frequent and quality contact for positive outcomes;  
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/trcurriculum/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
- offered web-based and classroom in-service training session regarding quality visits with children using materials available through the national resource centers; provided in-service regional training events

on family centered practice also continued to address quality visits; (CFSP QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 2)

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/resource/trainer.aspx>

- revised the contract performance measures with the lead agencies; a second measure on percent of children under supervision who were required to be seen every 30 days, who were seen every 30 days, added to the contract template;
- continued implementation and revision of the redesigned quality assurance (QA) system; redesign of the QA system ensured uniform performance standards that measured the quality of service delivery in the local systems of care; QA standards on visitation focused on frequency and quality of visits; quarterly QA reviews provided timely and meaningful information for business management and local areas to develop improvement actions based upon the findings.

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/qa/default.aspx>

- reviewed QA case review data on a periodic basis to determine ongoing quality performance and provided information to Regional staff for practice improvements; posted QA reports and data on the QA web site within the Center's web portal;

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/qa/default.aspx>

- conducted monthly senior management meetings at which various performance and process topics were reviewed and discussed; guidance from these meetings played a significant role in driving improvement; and
- conducted on-site performance reviews with each of the Regions on a regular basis specific to caseworker visits.

### Program Support

The Department shared best practices and technical assistance through conference calls, training bulletins, monitoring reports, and meetings and made on-site technical assistance available, as requested (CFSP, Goal # 2: Objective 5: QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 19).

The Department redesigned its child welfare QA system. The redesigned case management standards included frequency of visits and the quality of the visits between the caseworker and children in care.

The August 2008 Release 2 of FSFN contained the case management module that collected information on child visits by identifying when visits were conducted

or when they were due and overdue. These data are being used for performance management.

### Future Plans

The Department in conjunction with community partners and stakeholders plans to:

- conduct in-service training that emphasizes the importance of the worker's relationship and the frequency and quality of contacts with the family to create positive outcomes;
- monitor periodically and share performance data on federal measures, identify gaps, and develop improvement strategies as appropriate;
- purchase hand held devices to assist investigations/casework staff to more effectively meet the documentation requirements; and
- conduct statewide technical assistance conference calls with field staff.

## **TIMELY HOME STUDIES and REPORTING DATA (ICPC)**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children was developed by the Council of State Governments (CSG) to enable member states to uniformly address the interstate placement of children. The current Compact has been in effect since the early 1960's. A new ICPC to modernize the process and address uniformity, compliance, and other issues has been created and adopted by eleven states, including Florida. The new ICPC will take effect when it is adopted by 35 states. The new ICPC creates an interstate commission that can set uniform rules to process ICPC requests the same way in every state, provide a forum for review of decisions by states, and a mechanism for enforcement of ICPC provisions.

The Department conducted home studies requested by other states for the placement of children in Florida. The totals below represent this reporting period:

Incentive met: Of the 2210 home studies requested by another state, Florida completed 525 or 23.76% of the home studies within thirty days or less from receipt.

Completed Successfully: Of the 2210 home studies requested by another state, Florida completed 541 (24.48%) of the home studies in more than thirty days but less than sixty days of receipt.

Sanctions: Of the 2210 home studies requested by another state, Florida took longer than 60 days to complete 936 (43.35%) of them.

There is no record of any requests received during the first 45 days for an extension from 60 to 75 days as permitted under the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009. The ability to request an extension under the Act expired on September 30, 2008.

Withdrawn/Returned Requests: Of the 2210 home studies requested by another state, 206 (9.41%) were withdrawn or returned.

### Accomplishments

Interstate Compact modernization represented a significant proportion of Florida's permanency efforts, by streamlining processes through automation. The ICPC processing system within the State of Florida completed its conversion to electronic transmittal and web-based data transmission during this reporting period. The goal of the modernization project was to eliminate transmittal of paper ICPC files through the mail, reduce the number of persons who handle a file, and shorten the time spent in the approval process.

### Collaboration

The chief of the Department's ICPC Unit is the national president of the Association of Administrators of the ICPC. During his two year term (2009-2011), the work plan of the Association includes re-writing several of the Regulations adopted by the Compact Administrators that govern day to day ICPC processing, creation of a web based state page information system, passage of the new ICPC, and development and implementation of a uniform national ICPC data base. Toward that end, during the 2010 annual business meeting of the AAICPC, two regulations were passed as well as a resolution to seek a national electronic ICPC data base. The Deputy Compact Administrator for Florida is an at large member of the national executive board and has served on several of the standing committees of the association.

Florida has given presentations to the Inter-jurisdictional Adoptions Workgroup of the Children's Bureau, the Emory University College of Law, and the annual conference of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys on ICPC reform in addition to numerous presentations and webinars within the state.

## Program Support

The Department shared best practices and technical assistance through conference calls, webinar training, monitoring reports and meetings and made on-site technical assistance available as requested.

## Future plans

During the 2010-2011 year, Florida will continue to share its efforts with other states by providing technical assistance regarding modernizing and automating the ICPC process as well as continue to lead the national association through monthly executive committee calls, chairing and participating in committee work, seeking national support for an electronic ICPC data base, and running the annual business meeting.

## **LICENSING**

The Department and CBC licensing specialists continued to improve the quality of foster homes and the care provided in those homes. An example of new strategies is found in the implementation of the attestation model described below. This collaboration resulted in clarified roles for DCF and CBC staff in the re-licensing process and reduction of duplicative processes. There was great emphasis placed on foster parents and the vital role they play in the lives of the children served by the Department and Community-Based Care staff.

## Accomplishments

In July 2009, the Department offered the option to implement the Attestation Process for the re-licensing of family foster homes. This model alleviated duplication within the re-licensure process and reduced the amount of paperwork completed by foster parents. The major focus of the Attestation Process for Re-licensure was foster parent support and the quality of care provided in the foster home. Four of the six Regions in the state participated in the Attestation Process for Re-licensure.

## Collaboration

The licensing process improvements were explored by a host of child welfare professionals including both Department and community-based care staff and representatives from the Inspector General, Youth Law Center, Eckerd Family Foundation and the Senate Children and Families Committee. An anticipated

outcome is improved foster parent satisfaction. The model was designed to reduce re-work for staff and also foster families.

### Program Support

On May 12-13, 2009, the Department hosted a statewide meeting in Orlando, Florida to introduce the Attestation Process for Re-Licensure. There were 120 participants including Department staff Community-Based Care providers, foster parents, contract managers and other stakeholders who attended this meeting. This meeting provided a forum for training on this issue as well as other pertinent licensing issues.

The Department collaborated with the Statewide Foster Parent Association on the June 2009 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference. The focus of the conference was empowering Foster Parents through education. The speakers ranged from a private attorney who trained on the Rights of Foster Parents and Court-Appointed Custodians in Florida Dependency Proceedings to Navigating Education Systems for children in Foster Care. The Department made financial assistance available to foster parents to attend the conference by sponsoring 20 families.

The Department continued to provide technical assistance and address questions regarding policy implementation and interpretation through monthly conference calls with licensing staff. The licensing specialists were encouraged to set the agenda for the call, in order to specifically address their concerns.

### Future Plans

The Department's future plans include:

- rule revision for Florida Administrative Code 65C13, 14, and 15 governing licensure requirements for foster and group care facilities;
- creation of a policy council to ensure community involvement in rule revision process;
- continued monthly conference calls with the regional licensing staff;
- empowerment and inclusion of regional staff in the decision-making process;
- the availability of water safety training for licensing staff; and
- revision of the bilateral services agreement

## **ADOPTION**

### **The Executive Office of Adoption and Child Protection**

#### 2008-2009 Update

The Office of Adoption and Child Protection was established within the Executive Office of the Governor in July 2007. An Advisory Council of 32 members was established with members representing child service and advocacy agencies, parents and community stakeholders. In addition, twenty local planning teams were established, one in each judicial circuit, to assess the quality, quantity, and availability of community services related to promoting adoption of foster children and supporting adoptive families after adoptions are finalized. The Advisory Council developed a basic format for the local planning teams to use developing local plans of action to increase adoptions and improve support for adoptive families in each local community. The focus of both groups was to complete an 18-month plan.

#### Accomplishments

The 18-month plan on child abuse prevention and permanency was completed and provided to the Governor and Legislature on December 31, 2008. The following initiatives were accomplished during this reporting period:

- The “Explore Adoption” statewide recruitment campaign was developed and implemented; the campaign included media spots for television and radio; tool kits were developed for agencies to use for their own individualized recruitment efforts; an updated web page was developed to introduce Florida’s waiting children and has significantly increased the number of calls from prospective adoptive parents;
- A faith-based statewide workgroup was established to promote adoption and support adoptive families;
- A statewide Florida Heart Gallery workgroup was established with a goal to create a statewide Heart Gallery Association; and
- A customer service workgroup was established to develop a protocol to assist and retain adoptive parents; a 2-day conference was held to obtain input from many stakeholders regarding the protocol.

#### Collaboration

A workgroup of Community-Based Care Lead Agency staff collaborated with a contract provider hired by the Office of Adoption and Child Protection to develop a statewide adoption recruitment media campaign. Several focus groups of

adoptive parents were also conducted with the contract provider to obtain their input regarding recruitment efforts. The focus was on recruiting adoptive parents for teens, sibling groups, and medically challenged children in foster care. The statewide campaign was initiated during this reporting period. In addition, the Office of Adoption conducted a 2-day meeting with CBC Lead Agency staff, Department staff and adoptive parents to discuss concerns about the adoption process, especially regarding the adoptive parent home study process.

### Program Support

The Adoption Program Manager and Central Office data staff continued to be integral partners in providing adoption data, adoption research documents, and policies and best practices to the Office of Adoption and Child Protection, local planning teams, and the statewide advisory council. The Adoption Program Manager also served as a member on many of the workgroups.

### Future Plans

The 18-month plans created by the local planning teams are being used as an outline for these local planning teams to develop a Five-Year plan that addresses adoption and child protection issues. The Five-Year plans are currently being reviewed and a statewide 5-year plan is being finalized. The purpose of the plans is to establish a detailed outline for improving the promotion of adoptions and support of adoptive families. Each of the plans will include goals, actions steps, and timeframes to be completed over the next five years.

## **Adoption Incentives**

### 2008-09 Update

*Adoption Incentive Payments.* Florida was waiting for the final decision regarding Florida's Adoption Incentive Award amount which was based on the number of adoptions finalized in FFY 07-08. The Department exceeded the number of adoptions in its best previous year of FFY 03-04. Florida did not receive an Adoption Incentive Award during this reporting period.

*Adoption Assistance.* There was no change in adoption assistance during this reporting period.

*State Employee Adoption Benefit Program.* As an incentive for State agency employees and personnel in Florida's 67 school districts to adopt children in the foster care system, Section 409.1663, Florida Statutes, created the State Employee Adoption Benefit Program. The program was funded with state general



revenue funds and provided eligible applicants with a benefit of either \$10,000 for adopting a special needs child or \$5,000 for a non-special needs child.

### Accomplishments

*State Employee Adoption Benefit Program.* For the SFY 2008-2009, \$1.8 million was appropriated by the Legislature for the State Employee Adoption Benefit Program. Although more than 400 applications were received and determined qualified, 175 adoptive families received the benefit as listed below:

- 165 children were eligible for \$10,000
- 9 children were eligible for \$5,000
- 1 child was eligible for \$7,500 (parent was working less than full time)

### Collaboration

*State Employee Adoption Benefit Program.* The CBC staff, sub-contract providers conducting adoptive parent home studies, and Adoption Information Center staff collaborated with the Department's Adoption Program Manager to educate the adoptive parent community to ensure their awareness of this benefit for adoptive families.

### Program Support

*State Employee Adoption Benefit Program.* During the reporting period, the website for this program was updated to provide answers to the most common questions about the benefit. A conference call was held with the personnel offices of several school districts to respond to questions regarding the qualifications and processes of the program.

### Future Plans

*Adoption Incentive Payments.* Florida was awarded an Adoption Incentive Award in October 2009 in the amount of \$9,754,990. The award was used to fund the maintenance adoption subsidies. Half of the award was utilized for subsidies in SFY 2009-10. The other half will be utilized for subsidies in SFY 2010-11. The deadline to obligate the funds is September 30, 2011.

## **Adoption Training/Technical Assistance**

### 2008-2009 Update

Training to the field was provided by the Adoption Program Manager which addressed revisions of the adoption rule to adoption staff, Guardians ad Litem,

and legal staff across the state at regional and statewide meetings. Also a memorandum was sent regarding significant revisions, such as no changes can be made to a subsidy without concurrence of the adoptive parents and the need to use an updated full disclosure form prior to an adoptive placement. This training also incorporated effective practice throughout. In addition, a new 12-month initiative was established in December 2008, "100 Longest Waiting Teens," and training and technical assistance was also provided to the counselors assigned to these 100 teens. Casework tools for conducting a comprehensive review of each teen's case file were provided and case specific consultations were also conducted.

### Accomplishments

During the reporting period, 20 of the 100 Longest Waiting Teens were placed and/or finalized in an adoptive family; seven of the 100 Longest Waiting Teens aged out of foster care without achieving a permanent adoptive family.

### Collaboration

As a part of the Adoption Information Center contract, Pat O'Brien of *You Gotta Believe* was the speaker/trainer for the statewide Adoption Conference. His focus was to assist staff in learning casework activities that addressed finding permanent connections to adults for teens.

### Program Support

Technical assistance was provided to adoption counselors, supervisors, specialists and sub-contract providers of the CBC Lead Agencies each month during three separate monthly conference calls. Each conference call targets a different group including the following: one call is for adoption supervisors and specialists, one call is for the counselors assigned to the longest waiting teens project, and one call is for adoption Homefinders/recruiters.

### Future Plans

The "100 Longest Waiting Teens" 12-month project will continue for another year.

## **Post-Adoption Services**

### 2008-2009 Update

Two new adoptive parent support groups were established and two new post adoption services positions were created during the reporting period. In addition, a statewide effort was initiated by the Department to increase the number of

adoption competent mental health professionals by partnering with Rutgers University and St. Petersburg College Continuing Education Department. A contract was approved for Rutgers University to conduct a train the trainer session and establish 17 trainers in Florida for the Adoption Competency curriculum created by Rutgers University more than six years ago.

### Accomplishments

Two new adoptive parent support groups were established and two Community Base Care agencies designated a position to handle all post adoption services for adoptive families in their areas.

### Collaboration

Children's Mental Health offices at the state and the local community levels have been collaborating with the Department and Community Based Care staff to identify and encourage attendance of mental health professionals in the adoption competency training in each of the communities.

### Program Support

The Adoption Program Specialists with the Department facilitate conference calls each month to provide support to post adoption services counselors, adoption supervisors and specialists, adoption homefinders/recruiters and the trainers for the adoption competency curriculum. A plan to establish an advisory council for the adoption competency curriculum training program has been developed and will be implemented next year. The council will provide oversight regarding potential changes or additions to the curriculum and additional needs of trainers.

### Future Plans

Minimum standards for post adoption services are being discussed and will be included in the statewide five-year plan as well as the five-year plans being developed by local planning teams under the guidance of the Department and Office of Adoption and Child Protection.

### **Inter-Country Adoptions Entering State Care**

During SFY 2008-2009 there were five international adoption dissolutions which resulted in five adopted children being placed in Florida's foster care program. Four children were adopted from Russia and one child was adopted from the Ukraine. All five children remained in foster care at the end of the reporting period. None of the children were related to each other and all have received therapeutic services and resided in family foster home settings. Florida will continue to ensure that children affected by dissolution of an inter-country

adoption are placed in care. Florida will also provide support to these children and collaborate with all adoption service providers.

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**

### 2008-09 Update

During the period under review, the Department and Community-Based Care partners continued their emphasis on the delivery of comprehensive independent living services to eligible youth in foster care and young adults formerly in foster care. This is illustrated by the level of funding provided by the Florida Legislature. For example, during SFY 2008-09, Florida's contribution of state funds for independent living services was almost double the amount of the Chafee/Education and Training Voucher federal grants. The two federal grants amounted to approximately 12 million dollars and the state contributed an additional twenty million dollars above the required state matching funds.

Florida's system of care continued to provide youth ages 13-17 in licensed foster care with a variety of services, including assessments, life skills classes, educational support, employment training, counseling and support services. The Quality Parenting Initiative has begun to assist foster parents in heightening their commitment, skills and knowledge regarding their role in preparing these youth for leaving foster care.

In Florida, 1,475 youth "aged out" of the foster care system in SFY 2008-2009. These youth set out to establish themselves and their future in Florida's communities without parental guidance. The Independent Living Program provides services to youth in foster care and youth who were formerly in foster care.

Services provided included life skills training and financial, educational and social support. Examples of such services are parenting classes, career counseling, therapy and psychological counseling and assistance with time management and organization. These services were funded through a web of federal grants, general revenue dollars, and national, state and community private funds.

### Accomplishments

Briefly, accomplishments included: increased numbers of youth participating, emphasis on skill-building, compilation of data from staff and youth, and the on-going development of measures to inform policy and practice. Florida's stakeholders and providers are committed to continued improvements in this service area.

Florida continued to increase the number of youth participating in services after reaching age 18. For example, in state FY year 2008/2009, 5,729 youth were eligible to receive the Road to Independence program and 3,004 youth received the service.

The statewide youth survey checklist for 13 through 22-year-olds was implemented again in 2008-09, providing helpful status information in the youths' key life domains. The survey participation will also help youth prepare for the implementation of the National Youth Transition Database (NYTD).

The Performance Measure Workgroup reviewed the youth outcome work products of other agencies to develop the best approach for implementing outcome measures specific to the Independent Living Program. This included the Florida Office of Program Policy, Analysis, and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) Report 04-78 entitled "Independent Living Minimum Standards Recommended for Children in Foster Care," the 2006 Annual Report of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, and the February 2008 Federal Rule for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Each of these reports contains recommended youth outcome measures and they were cross-walked to determine similarities and differences. Currently, in the final phase of implementation, the Department in collaboration with Performance Measure Workgroup has selected 4 key Independent Living indicators that will be included in FY 10-11 CBC contracts.

The Florida Youth Leadership Academy was a successful event. Each of the participating youth is sponsored by a graduate of the Department's Child Welfare Leadership Academy. Participation by the youth was enthusiastic and they expressed appreciation for the opportunity.

### Collaboration

This is a particular strength in Florida. The active and effective Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) is comprised of youth, foster parents, advocates, providers, representatives of education, disability, workforce, medical and housing service fields. In its on-going effort to be transparent and approachable, the Department maintains a web site specific to the Council's work at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/AdvisoryCouncil/index.shtml>

In 2009, key Florida stakeholders convened to discuss the 2008 Federal Fostering Connections legislation. These stakeholders identified the need to consider redesign of the "Road to Independence Program" (RTI) to better meet the needs of youth in the foster care system and to promote better and more successful outcomes for those youth. A workgroup was convened in December

2009 through a joint invitation from the Department, the Florida Coalition for Children and the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC). The group is considering a redesign of the Road to Independence Program, expanding care to age 21, and other voluntary provisions included in the Fostering Connections legislation.

### Program Support

The Secretary's personal, continued, observable, and demonstrated commitment to the population of youth eligible for independent living services was one of the most effective supports for this program. Technical assistance and consultation was provided directly by the Family Safety Program Office and also by other divisions within the Department including the Assistant Secretary for Programs Transitional Living Coordinator and the contract/fiscal oversight units. An illustration of the high quality of program support in Florida is that the Statewide Independent Living Coordinator was hired by the Administration for Children and Families in the spring of 2009 to work at the Children's Bureau in the field of youth development and independent living services.

### Future Plans

Florida looks forward to implementation of the National Youth in Transition Database. Despite the challenges in implementing any new data system, many staff and stakeholders are enthusiastic about the potential this project holds for improving outcomes for youth. (Please see Chapter 6, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program for details). Collaboration with the ILSAC and all stakeholders will continue to figure prominently in all future planning regarding re-design of services, education of all stakeholders and leaders, education of staff through regional training events, identification of areas needing improvement, outcomes measures, conducting a statewide Quality Assurance Review and its subsequent analysis and using contract monitoring to improve practice..

## **TITLE IV-E FOSTER CARE DEMONSTRATION WAIVER**

Florida received federal funding during the course of a five year period based on the amount the state would have received under standard Title IV-E rules. This amount increased by three percent per year over the federal foster care funding in the federal fiscal year that ended September 30, 2005. The program aligned its funding incentives with the program goals of maintaining the safety and well being of children and enhancing permanency by providing services that help families remain intact whenever safe to do so. The Waiver has afforded Florida the flexibility to refocus its efforts on prevention, while safely and effectively reducing the number of children who enter foster care.

The Department will continue its participation in the Waiver Demonstration Project through September 2011 as currently authorized. The State of Florida has begun discussions with its federal partners for the potential extension of the waiver. Initial indicators are that the waiver continues to be successful in meeting goals and safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care.

### 2008-2009 Update

Florida's flexible Title IV-E funds have allowed the Department and its partner lead agencies to create a more responsive array of community-based services and supports for children and families typically funded using Title IV-B funds. Capped allocations of the waiver funds are co-mingled with Title IV-B funds to support child welfare practice, program, and system improvements that promote child safety, prevent out-of-home placement, and expedite permanency.

This strategic use of the funds has also allowed community-based lead agencies to implement individualized approaches that emphasize both family engagement and child-centered interventions.

Examples of expanded services include: (1) Nurturing Parenting Programs, which incorporate parent and child services and education (e.g., infant massage, empathy skill-building, parenting skills); (2) crisis intervention services, such as mobile crisis response teams designed to de-escalate high-risk situations; (3) Family Team Conferencing to engage families in service planning; and (4) Family Finding programs to reduce children's length of stay in out-of-home care.

Major themes that emerged from focus groups/telephone interviews conducted between April and September 2009 with staff from three Community-Based Care lead agencies include:

- A significant decrease in the number of children in out-of-home placement served by CBC lead agencies since implementation of the waiver. One lead agency reported that it has experienced a 52-percent decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care. This decrease was attributed in part to the flexibility that the waiver has given to CBCs in offering a greater range of resources to child protective investigators (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health services).
- The identification of systemic barriers to family safety and placement prevention. For example, one lead agency has been able to shift resources from services that focus on reducing residential placements to the County Administrative Services Organization, which gives case managers immediate and direct access to funds for family supports and services.

- The decrease in the number of children in care has contributed to lower caseload sizes, which has in turn contributed to increased staff retention; a more stable, knowledgeable, and experienced workforce; and an overall increase in worker morale.

The CBC Lead Agencies reported an expansion of the prevention and diversion service array since the inception of the waiver. The types of expanded services included intensive in-home services using a wraparound approach that housekeeping, parenting skills, child development education, and budgeting to families at risk. Specific service strategies, such as the use of Family Team Conferencing, and Family Finding have also increased.

Ongoing evaluation results for Florida's Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver Demonstration Project suggested positive benefits from the flexible funding strategy. The latest report from a third party evaluator for the waiver demonstration project revealed that not only has the overall number of children served in Florida's child protection system decreased significantly, but performance on permanency and recurrence of maltreatment measures has also improved.

### Accomplishments

When comparing SFY 2008-09 to SFY 07-08, the average number of children in out-of-home care decreased steadily from 24,754 in SFY 07-08 to 21,020 in SFY 08-09. For the SFY 08-09 exit cohort the average percentage reunified within 12 months of their latest removal was 64.8%. This was a significant increase when compared with the SFY 07-08 exit cohort. For the SFY 08-09 exit cohort the average percentage who were adopted within 24 months of removal was 41.9%. Although the analysis showed no significant difference between the number of children adopted in a timely manner in the SFY 08-09 cohort and the 07-08 cohort, Florida continues to exceed the national standard of 32% performance measure.

Other trends examined from the pre-Waiver year (SFY 05-06) through SFY 08-09 showed that the spending on front-end services increased from 3.3% to 5.9% of total expenditures, and that spending on licensed out-of-home care decreased from 26.31% to 21.2%.

The reduction in the proportion of children who entered out-of-home care after receiving services is consistent with the practice where the majority of CBC Lead Agencies have expanded their array of prevention and diversion services available to children and families that are involved in an allegation of abuse or neglect. Based on these two measures, it would seem as if these preventive



efforts aimed at providing supports and services to the families and keeping children safely at home have been successful.

### Collaboration

As previously reported, the waiver proposal was developed as a joint effort by DCF and its CBC Lead Agencies. In keeping with the truly collaborative nature of this project, the steering group continues to oversee implementation and meet regularly as needed.

### Program Support

Florida will receive federal funding during the course of a five-year period based on what the state would have received under IV-E rules. This amount will increase by three percent per year over federal foster care funding in the federal fiscal year that ended September 30, 2005. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has also provided for additional funding in support of waiver services. The program put funding incentives in line with the program goals of maintaining the safety and well-being of children and enhancing permanency by providing services that helped families remain intact whenever possible.

- Oversight and Coordination - The steering group has continued to meet via conference call on an as needed basis.
- Communication and Training – The steering group has developed and deployed training and technical assistance material related to demonstration implementation. We continued to provide technical assistance and training upon request. During this federal fiscal year, training and technical assistance was provided with regards to the waiver and transition to FSFN.
- Independent Evaluation - The evaluator continued to complete the semi-annual progress reports on the status and activities related to the evaluation of Florida's IV-E waiver demonstration project. These are available on the Center's website at:  
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/Pages/Default.aspx>
  - The evaluation will describe and track IV-E waiver implementation and determine over the course of the waiver, the effectiveness of an expanded array of services and supports in improving outcomes for children and families. Implementation of the waiver serves as a catalyst for systemic improvement efforts.

## Future Plans

The Department will continue its participation in the Waiver Demonstration Project through 2011 as currently authorized. The State of Florida plans to begin discussions with its federal partners for the potential extension of the waiver. Initial indicators are that the waiver continues to be successful in meeting goals and reducing children in out-of-home care.

# Chapter 2

## Collaborative Activities and Initiatives

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### Overview of Collaborative Partners, Activities and Initiatives Across Child Welfare

As previously noted in Chapter One, Florida's child welfare system engages in a high degree of collaboration. All child welfare systems involve many stakeholders and partners, and Florida is no exception. In developing policies and programs, the Department of Children and Families collaborates with other state and local agencies, tribal representatives, foster parents, relative caregivers, foster youth, service providers, Children's Legal Services, the Office of Court Improvement, child advocates, the Legislature and other stakeholders to maximize families' opportunities for success. The Department's internal program and operations offices also collaborate across their specialties, such as mental health, substance abuse, developmental disabilities and economic supports, to the benefit of Florida's children and families touched by the child welfare system.

However, Florida is unique in that it contracts for the delivery of most of the child welfare core services and initiates new services through Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBCs). For the child welfare system to function optimally, this requires a high degree of ongoing collaboration. This structure also provides an excellent opportunity to tailor services that address the diverse needs of Florida's children, families and communities and fosters creativity and productivity of child welfare professionals. During the report period, many examples of collaboration efforts occurred and are discussed below.

In addition to state level partners, communities have worked together with local governmental agencies, such as the schools and law enforcement agencies, as well as private and nonprofit service or advocacy groups. Examples of interagency efforts in Florida included:

- coordination of physical and behavioral health services that involved shared data;
- collaboration and coordination with agencies responsible for services to the developmentally disabled and for public education so child welfare client needs were being properly addressed;
- alignment of services and supports when child welfare and juvenile justice issues overlapped;
- identification of resources for child care, employment, and other services under the responsibility of non-child welfare agencies; and
- designation of "champions" for children and families whose needs were unusually complex and were being met across different agencies' areas of responsibility.

The local agencies and external stakeholders provided input into this Annual Progress and Services Report. Extensive collaboration between the Department, the courts, Guardian ad Litem Program, and community agencies led to many innovative court processes that helped to

facilitate timely permanency. One such collaborative project, Best Practices Model for Child Support in Dependency Cases, involved the Department of Revenue's Child Support Enforcement division, Children's Legal Services, Circuits, and the Office of State Court Administrator.

The Best Practices Model for Child Support in Dependency Cases provided guidance on issues related to child support in dependency proceedings so that Florida's children receive the financial support they need. According to the principles of unified family court as described in *re Report of Family Court Steering Committee, 794 So.2d 518 (Fla. 2001)*, the best practice is to handle the child support matter before the same judge hearing the dependency case to avoid conflicting orders and multiple court appearances by the parties, as well as to increase efficiency and wisely utilize court resources. Three judicial circuits have implemented this best practice model.

Through collaboration with Community Alliances, Community-Based Care (CBC) agencies learned about new programs and ways to support families and children in each community. The Alliances were catalysts for information sharing opportunities and were provided a unique opportunity for hands-on involvement in the local systems of care.

Community-Based Care lead agencies reached out to the faith-based community. For example, Churches in Partnership was a new initiative in Pinellas County wherein a child protective investigator was paired with a church in the community, which assisted in ensuring that the basic provisions of a family, such as clothing, food, furniture, special medical equipment, etc., were met.

## Ongoing Collaborative Activities and Initiatives

### Florida's Emergency and Disaster Plans for Child Welfare

The Department has a statewide Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The plan includes a section dedicated to "Child Welfare Disaster Plans." The plan is a "good business practice" -- part of the fundamental mission of all government agencies to be responsive to the needs of the residents of Florida, particularly in times of emergency. The Department's plan contains additional critical components of disaster preparation plans, such as: staff education; evacuation plan development and update for caregivers of children under care or supervision of the Department; staff phone trees; alternate operations locations; responding to varied expected and unexpected threats; servicing displaced staff, etc.

#### 2008-2009 Update

Florida's privatization of child welfare case management services has created lead agencies. Each lead agency has locally driven Continuity of Operations Plans and Child Welfare Disaster Plans. The disaster plans address how the lead agency, along with any subcontracted case management agencies, would assist families in maintaining uninterrupted services if displaced or adversely affected by a disaster. All written plans are updated and submitted annually to the Department. Copies of the written plans are provided to the Department's Offices of General Services and Family Safety Program Office, as well as being made available to the circuits, regions and within all community-based care locations.

#### Accomplishments

After the Hurricanes of 2004 and 2005, Florida's state agencies began to develop more comprehensive disaster plans. On May 2006, the Department of Children and Families published the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan. The plan establishes policy and guidance to ensure the execution of mission-essential functions in various emergency situations, to include natural disasters, accidents, technological emergencies and military or terrorist related incidents. The COOP integrates the various programs under the department. Along with the integrated COOP plan, each community-based care lead agency has a disaster preparedness plan to address child welfare specific activities throughout the state in such emergency.

In case of a disaster, one of the aftermath activities of local agencies responsible for case management services is to quickly begin to contact families that care for children under state custody or supervision. During these contacts, the child's case manager (primary case manager) explores if there are any services to the child interrupted by the disaster.

The case manager will explore with the family expected duration of interruption, alternative service providers, transportation considerations, etc.

In addition, local agencies make determinations as to the extent of damage and interruption of services. If the agency identifies that certain services to children may be interrupted, such as speech therapy, mental health services, educational supports like tutoring, etc., they will work with local community providers and volunteers to address the provision of alternative services and ensure that the case manager supervisors make the staff aware of the alternative services available.

If a family relocates intrastate due to a disaster, the child's primary case manager will request, through the Courtesy Supervision mechanism, that a secondary case manager be assigned in the new county. The secondary case manager will be responsible for conducting visits, identifying new needs based on the relocation, providing stabilization services to the family, and completing referrals that would ensure the child is provided services for previously identified needs. The primary and secondary worker would also work with each other and with the local providers in their respective areas to ensure that new providers have current, relevant information as to the child's needs and status in service provision prior to leaving their originating county.

If the family relocates interstate, the primary worker will immediately notify the Florida Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Office (ICPC) and will forward a packet of information to be sent to the receiving state so that notification and a request for services can be made. The packet will include a Child Social Summary that will contain information as to service needs and will request that once a local case manager is assigned, that case manager make contact with the child's Florida case manager to discuss service needs. The receiving state's case manager will be asked to affect continued services to address the child's previously identified needs as well as any new needs identified in their own contacts with the family.

During the 2008-09 reporting period, activation of the COOP was necessary for the western panhandle counties (Bay, Escambia, Franklin, Gulf, Okaloosa, and Santa Rosa) as a result of Hurricane Gustav.

### Collaboration

### *Local and National Coordination*

The Florida Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Office (ICPC) continues to work directly with central ICPC offices in other states to send and receive information and documents, as customary. If the central ICPC office in another state is unable to communicate, ICPC will work with the child welfare program office equivalent in that state as well as the American Public Human Services Association to identify alternate means of communication.

### Program Support

The Florida ICPC Office, located in Tallahassee, also plays a key role during times of emergency. In this ever-mobile society, services are provided for many children for whom family members reside in other states. There are more than a thousand Florida dependent children placed with parents, relatives and other caregivers in sister states at any given time, as well as more than a thousand children placed in Florida who come to us from other state's child welfare systems. The ICPC Office serves as the central point of contact for state-to-state communications regarding the welfare of these children.

The ICPC Disaster Preparation and Response Plan (DPRP) aims to provide case managers who have children in other states or who are providing services to children from other states a single point of contact for communications. The primary point of contact in the ICPC Office is the ICPC Administrator.

The Department's leadership and CBC Lead Agencies provide up-to-date information and communications at times potential disaster as well as follow-up to any emergency situation. Support can range from "ready" conference calls to deployment of additional staff to impacted areas.

### Future Plans

Currently, ICPC does not address emergency or disaster-related movement of dependent children. ICPC Administrators in states receiving these children have worked together to review current law and identify avenues to allow the provision of services and supervision in such emergency situations. It was determined that these types of movements could receive immediate ICPC approval, services and supervision under Regulation 1.

Regulation 1 provides a notification and approval mechanism for situations in which a family caring for a dependent child in one state wishes or needs to move to another state. Regulation 1 allows for the dependent child to move with the family rather than having to wait in his or her home state while the family relocates and goes through the home study and approval process, which can often take months. Regulation 1 applies to all placements: parents, relatives, licensed care and adoptive settings.

It is of the utmost importance that states receiving these children notify the state of origin and request all documentation that can be obtained regarding the child's medical, behavioral and educational history, reasons he or she came into care, family history, case plan, information on visitation allowances and limitations, contact information for siblings and other significant persons in the child's life, etc. Evidence of the suitability of the current caregivers, particularly the home study, background checks and information on training and education provided should also be obtained as quickly as possible.

The Department and its Community-Based Care Agencies will continue to work with state emergency management personnel and agency leadership to ensure the safety of its clients and staff prior to during and after any disaster that Florida may experience.

### **Tribal Consultation**

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirements are codified in Florida Statutes and are found in Florida Administrative Code. A statewide Indian Child Welfare Act Manager and Tribal Liaison have worked directly with six Regional Indian Child Welfare Act Specialists around the state.

Florida Administrative Code requires that Child Protective Investigators make a determination of eligibility for the protection of the Indian Child Welfare Act at the onset of each investigation. A standardized form, written policy, procedural guidance, training documents and videos were posted online, and Child Protective Investigators are required to enter electronic documentation in the state's SACWIS system.

During the reporting period, the Department continued negotiations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida toward a state to nation agreement. The agreement will enable the Seminole Tribe to assume full responsibility for child protective investigations and case management services on their reservations in Florida. On October 16, 2008, Department representatives met with

Sergeant John Bissett of the Seminole Tribal Police Department to continue discussions and proposals for the agreement. The tribe continued to express an interest in finalizing the agreement.

Additional contacts during the year included email and telephone conversations with Kristi Hill, Family Preservation Administrator with the Seminole Tribe Family Services Department; Carolyn White, Family Services Executive Director with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Atmore, Alabama (while the Poarch Band of Creek are not a federal tribe with reservations located in Florida, their reservation is very close to the Florida-Alabama border and Department staff have frequent contact with the tribe); and with Dr. John De Gaglia, Director of Social Services with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. Subjects of communications between the Department and the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes included resolution of concerns and issues involving services to tribal children, compliance with ICWA policy, and training opportunities.

When *The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* became law, the Department spoke with Mark Lichtenberg (who represented Helene Buster, Seminole Family Services Director) of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and with Dr. John De Gaglia, Director of the Social Services Department of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida to determine interest in accessing federal assistance through this direct funding source. Neither tribe indicated that they would pursue access to these funds. Neither tribe has accessed Title IV-E federal funding for foster care or entered

into a Title IV-E agreement with the state in the past, nor have Chafee funds been accessed. Both tribes have extensive internal financial resources available to them through tribal holdings and interests and fund and manage their own services programs in addition to any funding received through the Indian Health Services.

### Data

The agency's quality assurance process captures information regarding Florida's level of compliance and progress in meeting federal requirements established by the Indian Child Welfare Act. In the areas of initial inquiry regarding possible ICWA eligibility and the timely notification to the applicable tribe improvement must be made. The data showed greater compliance in investigations when compared to ongoing case management data. There are several theories regarding the root causes of the disparity in this data and additional analysis is underway. Data extracted from Florida's SACWIS system also reflects a need to improve compliance with placement of ICWA eligible children.

The following data has been extracted from *Florida Safe Families Network*:

*Data effective October 1, 2008:*

- The number of children in Out-of-Home Care with race of American Indian/Alaskan Native (regardless of other races): 111
- Of the 111 children referenced above, the number who have an identified Tribe 1 and the number who have an identified Tribe 2: 70 and 8 (70 unduplicated count for who have one or the other or both)
- The number of children in Out-of-Home Care identified as ICWA Eligible: 55



- Of the 55 children referenced above, the number placed in an ICWA compliant placement: 0

*Data effective September 30, 2009:*

- The number of children in Out-of-Home Care with race of American Indian/Alaskan Native (regardless of other races): 117
- Of the 117 children referenced in #1, the number who have an identified Tribe 1 and the number who have an identified Tribe 2 ): 86 and 8 (88 unduplicated count for who have one or the other or both)
- The number of children in Out-of-Home Care identified as ICWA Eligible: 65
- Of those 65 children referenced above, number who are placed in an ICWA compliant placement: 12

There are additional screens in FSFN that capture a case manager's attempts to comply with ICWA placement preferences; however, the fields are text fields not numeric data fields. The system also captures the numbers of cases closed by reason of "Jurisdiction Transferred to Tribe." The Department does not have data showing this as a closure reason until post December 2009, outside the current reporting period. In addition, the legal module includes data that reflects whether or not a Designated Tribal Agent is a part of the legal proceedings and provides other notification data. As the legal elements of FSFN are increasingly utilized and data populated, we will be able to extract additional information for analysis.

### Accomplishments

Florida's FSFN is in the final stages of full statewide implementation and has developed enhancements that support accurate identification and tracking of children eligible for the protections of ICWA. This new electronic functionality will significantly improve Florida's ability to track data on ICWA eligible children.

Specific modifications to FSFN were proposed by tribal representatives and others participating in the statewide Florida Dependency Court Improvement Panel. Their recommendations were included in written requests for system modifications that were added to FSFN in December 2009. The effectiveness and accuracy of data related to ICWA compliance should improve as staff becomes more proficient in utilizing the system. Some ICWA elements are text fields and are reviewed as a part of the quality assurance process as opposed to access by numeric data extract.

In addition to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) elements for race and ethnicity, the child's eligibility for the protections of the Indian Child Welfare Act are captured on FSFN's basic person management screen. Additional fields in FSFN electronically document the following:

- An adult or child's tribal affiliation (there are two data fields available in the event the person has an affiliation with more than one tribe)
- Whether or not the child's placement is in compliance with the mandates of the Act (if the child is documented as ICWA eligible, this field becomes a required response)

- Documentation of efforts made to determine ICWA eligibility and prevent removal or a noncompliant placement
- Documentation that the mandated Placement Preferences have been explored
- Documentation of participation in case planning
- Documentation when a case involves tribal representation and action
- Documentation when a case is closed to transfer to tribal jurisdiction

During the reporting period, ICWA training was provided onsite in multiple locations in Florida and local tribal participation in the training was encouraged. An ICWA training video, accompanying PowerPoint and other documents have been developed and posted online for easy access to these resources. The ICWA training resources accompany a new ICWA resource webpage located on *Florida's Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice* website. <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/icwa/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

### Collaboration

The statewide ICWA Manager has maintained communication with Florida's two federal tribes (and a federal tribe located in southern Alabama with members living in north Florida), Regional ICWA Specialists and local child welfare staff to support effective application of ICWA practice. This accessibility has enabled tribal representatives and local child welfare staff to work with the state office to quickly resolve issues that arise and to build and maintain positive working relationships.

The Department met with representatives of the Seminole Tribe at a Casey Youth Convening in May 2008. There has been follow-up via email; contact information provided and an offer to meet again.

Copies of the previous Annual Progress and Services Report have been provided via email to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians for their review and input. The Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Poarch Band of Creek are included in Florida's annual Dependency Summit and in subsequent workgroups and committees associated with the Summit.

As required, the Department provided the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Poarch Band of Creek Indian and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians a copy of the Child and Family Services Plan for 2010-2014 and the 2008 Annual Progress and Services Report.

### Program Support

Program support to the field has included onsite training and the addition of direct access to ICWA resources online, including training materials, key documents for practice, forms, sample correspondence, and national contact information. Child Welfare staff has immediate access to their local ICWA Specialists and to the statewide ICWA Specialist when assistance is needed. The state office averages more than a hundred calls and emails per year for guidance with ICWA matters, originating both in-state and out-of-state. Florida is ranked eleventh nationally in American Indian/Alaskan Native population (Source: 2000 United States Census). Although the FFY 2008-09 Annual Progress and Services Report

population of our two federally recognized tribes is under 5000, census data reflects more than 110,000 American Indian/Alaskan Native persons residing in Florida.

## Future Plans

Future plans include:

- Continuing negotiations with the Seminole Tribe toward a state-to-nation agreement;
- Continuing to involve Florida's federal tribal representatives in our annual Dependency Summit, statewide committees and other training opportunities;
- Increase tracking of data on ICWA compliance through the SACWIS functionalities and quality assurance monitoring activities to determine causes in identified areas of need and to improve compliance;
- Providing training and technical assistance;
- Sharing this year's Annual Progress and Services Report; and
- Establishing contact with other tribal associations and groups in the state who wish to participate in training and initiatives that support families and protect children and to develop collaborative training opportunities. (CFSP Goal # 2; Benchmark 1: Developing a Family Centered Practice Model, QIP Goal 1, Strategy A, Action Step 1).

## **Health Care Services**

### 2008-2009 Update

While the Health Care Plan has not changed during the reporting period, it has been enhanced by several projects including beginning work on improving the Child Health Check-up; updating the elements of the CBHA with the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA); movement toward a Trauma Informed System and establishment of a medical home for foster children; access to a statewide immunization registry; and reviewing the practice and policies surrounding the use of psychotropic medication for children in care.

### Accomplishments

Section 39.407, Florida Statutes, authorized the Department to provide medical screenings and follow up treatment for children removed from their homes and maintained in out-of-home placements. The Department utilized two health care screening/assessments processes to accomplish this, the Child Health Check-up (EPSDT) and the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA). These assessments provided recommendations for further medical, dental, and behavioral health treatment the child may need.

A new understanding of the trauma all children undergo when they are involved in any child welfare system has been recognized and progress has been made in developing and implementing a trauma informed system of care in Florida, including the health care providers who work with our children. A Trauma Informed System recognizes the impact of trauma on staff and those it serves, provides respect, information, collaboration, hope, and works to identify and change policy or procedure that has the potential to be traumatizing.

The Department has improved its ability to assess the quality of the implementation of health care services throughout the state. Utilization of the Quality Assurance (QA) process in reviewing the assessment and provision of health care services has been a major tool.

For example, a recent special QA review was conducted regarding children living in out-of-home care placements who were prescribed psychotropic medications. This review was in response to concerns raised by an external workgroup charged to examine the death of a child. The review focused on the quality of case management and service provision around behavioral health services, specifically psychotropic medications. This review resulted in the identification of system problems and solutions which included tracking of psychotropic medication use for foster children, obtaining express and informed consent or court orders prior to providing these medications to children, and a renewed emphasis on proper case work concerning health care services.

The Gabriel Myers Workgroup was formed to address these issues and its recommendations resulted in the commitment to create a new Chapter of the Florida Administrative Code, 65C-35-*Psychotropic Medication for Children in Out of Home Care* and a new Operational Procedure, 155-10/174-40 *Services for Children with Mental Health and Any Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment Needs in Out of Home Care Placements*.

In 2009, during the development of an interagency agreement, the Departments of Education, Children and Families, Juvenile Justice and the Agencies for Work Force Innovation and Persons with Disabilities identified the need for children placed in out-of-home care to have immunization records more readily available. Florida SHOTS, a program in the Department of Health (DOH), provides a statewide computerized immunization registry that houses the immunization records for the children of Florida. Florida schools and many licensed child care facilities have access to this registry, but the child welfare system did not. Working with the Department's Information Technology and the DOH, the Department was given permission to establish a network that provided access to Florida SHOTS. Having access to the registry will expedite school enrollment for foster children and help to ensure immunization records for these children are current.

The Department's Assistant Secretary for Programs established a workgroup to address the Fostering Connections Act and the implementation of the act in the Florida dependency system. The workgroup was comprised of individuals all program offices within the Department, DOH, Florida Coalition for Children, DJJ, AHCA, and CBC lead agencies. Although many of the requirements of Fostering Connections regarding provision of health care services were already addressed through existing statutory or administrative code, opportunities for enhancement were identified by the workgroup. Accordingly, the workgroup created committees to address major issues such as program eligibility barriers to providing services and medical home definition and components. Each committee developed a plan of action that addressed the issues surrounding the establishment and implementation of a medical home concept. Three sites were identified--Jacksonville, Sarasota, and Ft Myers—as potential models for expansion of the medical home concept across the state.

The Department conducted quarterly conference calls with the behavioral health contacts from the CBC Lead Agencies and staff from Child Welfare Behavioral Pre-paid Mental Health Plan, Medicaid, and Children's Mental Health, a division of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office, to discuss and resolve issues that affected the state's system of care. The

Department also started the process of developing a new Children and Families Operating Procedure (CFOP) to cover all aspects of providing behavioral health services to children served in out-of-home care. This started with a Child's Resource Record that provided information on all medical appointments, assessments, and treatments through the required Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA), use of psychotropic medications, including medication monitoring and authorization, and the process to place children in residential treatment programs. This comprehensive operating procedure was discussed during conference calls and had extensive review by the CBC Lead Agencies as well as providers and advocates throughout the state (CFSP, Goal #3: Benchmark; QIP, Goal 3, Strategy B, Action Step 3 & 4).

### Collaboration

In response to the Gabriel Meyers Workgroup, the Department included several of the recommendations from the workgroup in the new section of the 65C-35 F.A.C. Recommendations also drove many of the procedures in the new CFOP on providing behavioral health services.

The Department worked closely with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices and other state level agencies, statewide advocacy groups, and universities to help develop a trauma informed system of care in Florida. This initiative crossed agencies and service providers and made significant inroads to understanding that children, served by the Florida child welfare system have suffered trauma and need to be provided trauma informed and sensitive services from the time they enter care until they are returned home or find another permanency solution.

### Program Support

The Department provided regional training for child welfare workers and service providers. Staff was updated through webinar training on the latest issues in service delivery, including psychotropic medications. Another major initiative was the Integration of Services Training Series. This intensive in-service training included a series of day long training modules on topics such as Health and Development, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse, as well as how these issues intersect with child welfare and teaming strategies to improve service delivery. The curriculum was instructionally designed using a panel of subject matter experts to shape the content.

### Future Plans

During SFY 2009-2010, the Department will continue to provide training on the integration of services and family engagement as the best way to meet the child and his/her family need for all health services including medical, dental, and behavioral health.

The Department's Operating Procedure on Behavioral Health Services will be implemented as will the Florida SHOTS initiative.

The Department will move forward on a recommendation of the Gabriel Myers Workgroup (further explained later in this document) to extend the requirement of the pre-consent review for psychotropic medications for all children in out-of-home care under 11 years of age, who are

prescribed two or more psychotropic medications. This requirement will be placed in all CBC Lead Agency contracts for SFY 2010-2011. This will require a modification to the contract that the Department has with the University of Florida which currently provides the pre-consent consultations for the children under six years of age. The CBC Lead Agencies may also contract with a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist locally to fulfill this requirement.

The Medical Home Model will be further developed in collaboration with the Community-Based Care agencies, the Fostering Connections work group and other state agencies to ensure that children served by Florida's child welfare system receive the medical services they need. This will include further improvement of the Child Health Check-Up (EPSDT) evaluation upon coming into the care of the Department and a complete follow up on any health, medical, dental, or behavioral needs that are identified during this process.

The Department has forged a strategic partnership with Casey Family Programs, which assisting the state in developing and promoting best practices as it relates to early childhood development. Working alongside key stakeholders, Casey is assisting Florida in crafting effective messages to convey the importance of developmental screenings and related early intervention services.

### **Consultations with Physicians and other Medical Professionals**

#### 2008-2009 Update

The Department convened the Gabriel Myers Workgroup to review the provision of psychotropic medications and other behavioral health services to the children in its care, which included members from the health care community. The workgroup also took testimony from medical professionals and physicians during its meetings. The content of proposed legislation, administrative code and operating procedure regarding the use of psychotropic medication for foster children in out-of-home care was very much influenced by these professionals. Medical professionals from the Department of Health (DOH) and Children's Medical Services personnel were also consulted regarding immunization records and developing a Medical Home for foster children.

#### Accomplishments

The Department has come very far to establish clear, effective and thoughtful policies and practices regarding the use of psychotropic medication for children in foster care. A workgroup was established, an extensive case review conducted and the process for promulgating Chapter 65C-35, F.A.C nearly completed, as well as the draft of the Children and Families Joint Operating Procedure 155-10/174-40, Services for Children with Mental Health and Any Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment Needs in Out-of-Home Care Placements.

The Department gained access to the Florida SHOTS statewide computerized immunization registry which houses the immunization records for the children of Florida (please see the previous reference in the Health Care Services, Accomplishment section).

The Department met with physicians and other medical professionals to develop a preliminary understanding and feasibility of how the Medical Home concept for foster children might work, established initial statewide contacts that wished to be a part of the Medical Home project and identified three sites where a Medical Home concept was being implemented.

The Department's providers and lead agencies in their communities have conducted regular breakfast meetings with doctors, worked with local health departments, contracted for nursing services and received other supports and information from medical professionals.

### Collaboration

The content development of Chapter 65C-35, F.A.C., and the Joint Operating Procedure were done through extensive solicitation of feedback by the Family Safety Program Office from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices of the Department, Children's Medical Services and other members of the health care community.

### Program Support

The Department developed training through several formats to the CBC Lead Agencies and Children's Legal Services (CLS) staff on draft Chapter 65C-35, F.A.C., as well as the draft Children and Families Joint Operating Procedure 155-10/174-40, Services for Children with Mental Health and Any Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment Needs in Out of Home Care Placements.

Four quarterly conference calls were conducted with the behavioral health contacts for all CBC lead agencies, and staff from Child Welfare Behavioral Pre-paid Mental Health Plan, Medicaid, and Children's Mental Health a division of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program. These calls provided a forum to address issues common to the provision of behavioral health services to children served by the Florida child welfare system and helped eliminate barriers to enhancing coordination between the various stakeholders in our system of care.

The Department conducted bi-weekly conference calls and meetings with the DOE/DCF Interagency Agreement work group at both the state and local levels. These calls and meetings helped identify and eliminate the barriers to coordinating needed services across agencies and counties in Florida to ensure that children in out-of-home care are provided the full array of educational services, including behavioral health services that are needed to produce a positive educational experience.

### Future Plans

- Fully implement Child Welfare's access to the FL SHOTS database that to provide a free, statewide, centralized online registry to help health care providers and schools safeguard immunization records;
- Complete the promulgation process for Chapter 65C-35, F.A.C. regarding psychotropic medication
- Finalize the Joint Operating Procedure 155-10/174-40, Services for Children with Mental Health and Any Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment Needs in Out-of-Home Care Placements;
- Continue Quarterly Child Welfare/Behavioral Health Conference Calls to help support the fielding of the Children and Families Joint Operational Procedure 155-10/174-40, Services for Children with Mental Health and Any Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Treatment Needs in Out-of-Home Care Placements; and



- Develop and distribute a website address that will provide access to the names of providers for medical, dental, and behavioral health including Medicaid and Children's Medical Services providers. (CFSP Goal 3: *Improving Service Array* Benchmark, QIP, Goal 3, Strategy B, Action Step 1)

## **The Task Force on Fostering Success**

The Task Force on Fostering Success (Task Force) was established in July 2007, by then Secretary of the Department, Bob Butterworth, to examine child protection issues that were brought to light during media coverage of the Courtney Clark case. This Task Force was formed to scrutinize insufficiencies within the state's child protection system.

This 23-member panel, comprised of child protection professionals and other child welfare stakeholders, initially focused attention on the gaps that existed in the system when responding to and locating missing children. With extensive public comments and analysis of current case practice, the panel recommended administrative, policy, legislative, education, and training efforts to be undertaken to ensure the safety of Florida's children. The Task Force continued during the reporting period under Secretary George Sheldon.

### 2008-2009 Update

The Task Force participated in four quarterly statewide meetings held around the state as listed below:

August 25, 2009	Orlando Florida
June 4, 2009	Tampa Florida
March 9, 2009	Tallahassee
December 12, 2008	Ft. Lauderdale

Subcommittees also participated in various conference calls and work group meetings.

### Accomplishments

The Task Force served as an ongoing advisory group and met as a full group and also through sub-committees. They accomplished the following and:

- Assisted in the development and planning of the 2009 Dependency Summit and established six workgroups in January 2009:
  - Reviewed the adoption process and developed proposed legislation to reach permanency for children whose parents are incarcerated for a long length of time;
  - Analyzed provision of services for youth who enter Independent Living Program and referred their recommendations to the chair of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council. (Recommendations included mentoring programs for youth who age out and who go to college, assistance with jobs, housing, etc.);
  - Conducted literature review of varying foster/adoptive parent training programs in Florida and nationally;
  - Sponsored several presentations on the "Disproportionality of Minorities in the Foster Care System;"
  - Developed recommendations related to the sustainability of the CLS' model of representation and regarding best practices related to representation of children in the dependency system;

- Reviewed the interrelations and integration of the Department's Family Safety Program Office, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office; spearheaded the APD waitlist project where we matched how many children in care were on waitlists;
- Orchestrated the interagency agreement between DOE, DJJ, APD, AWI, and the Department; and
- Reviewed a proposal to conduct a literature review and analysis on Child-On-Child Sexual Abuse processes;
- Conducted a full inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the death of Gabriel Myers resulting in recommendations to the Department and Legislature. The full report can be viewed at:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/GMWorkgroup/docs/GabrielMyersWorkGroupReport082009Final.pdf>.

### Collaboration

The Task Force membership included representatives from the Judiciary, State Social Service and Criminal Justice agencies, Education, local children's services, child

advocates, child welfare and substance abuse and mental health providers, parents, and youth. This unique group had the capacity to leverage and influence both policy and practice through their recommendations.

### Program Support

The Task Force was a collaborative arm that provided a wide array of information for the child welfare communities. As noted in the accomplishments for each workgroup, the Task Force provided much program support.

### Future Plans

The Task Force plans to:

- Examine the process of child-on-child sexual abuse from the call to the Florida Abuse Hotline to treatment services. The Gabriel Myers Report/Child on Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup report with recommendations will be made to the Task Force on Fostering Success and the Department during the Spring/Summer of 2010;
- Analyze child protection process and make concrete recommendations that can assist with reforms in investigation practices; the Subcommittee on Safe Families will present its findings and recommendations in early 2010;
- Support the development and planning of the 2010 Dependency Summit;
- Assist in development of therapeutic resources for foster care victims of human trafficking;
- Monitor the deployment of remote data capture devices that track caseworkers with GPS and also enable caseworkers to document activities from the field; and
- Establish a Trauma Removal Workgroup to review the traumatic impact of child removal.

## **Juvenile Justice Transfers**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Department partnered with CBC Lead Agencies and the DJJ to define “the number of children under the care of the State child protection system who are transferred into the custody of the State juvenile justice system” as those youth jointly served by the dependency and delinquency systems. Data-matching reports were developed to capture the number of youth jointly served by the dependency and delinquency systems. The data is captured within Florida Safe Families Network.

The number of children active as a child welfare case who were in a DJJ facility or shelter on 9/30/09 was 232. This data count included the following placement types: DJJ Detention Center - More than 12 Children, DJJ Detention Center - Up to 12 Children, DJJ Facility - More than 12 Children, and DJJ Facility - Up to 12 Children. The counts included any child who had an active placement in one of these four types of placements during the appropriate timeframe.

### Collaboration

The Department, CBC Lead Agencies, and the DJJ met periodically to implement systematic changes to achieve safety, permanence, and well being for children, especially those at high risk and with disruptive behavior.

### Future Plans

The Department and the DJJ are currently planning a QA review of jointly served youth; specifically, youth in foster care who are also committed to a DJJ residential facility. This initiative is intended to assess effective and timely planning between the

departments so the youth can be successfully transitioned back into the community upon his/her release from the residential facility. In those circuits in which planning and implementation activities are creating successful outcomes, the core elements of the circuits process will be summarized and identified as models for replication in all circuits with local modifications to fit the unique needs of each community.

## **Operation Full Employment (OFE)**

### 2008-2009 Update

Former Secretary Bob Butterworth launched OFE in January 2008, by challenging leadership throughout the Department and partners in the community to offer employment opportunities to young adults aging out of the foster care system. The goal was to provide former foster youth with employment experience in a professional environment and a steady paycheck, to further their road to independence and self-sufficiency.

OFE supports CFSP Goal #3: Benchmark 1: *Individualizing Services for Family Members to Meet Their Specific Needs and Enable Families to Nurture Their Children*; QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 2) providing youth with the skills and supports they need in overcoming the detrimental effects of a childhood damaged by factors leading to involvement in the child welfare system.

Florida has developed an array of services to build life skills for children ages 13-17, to include educational funding and other supports which are also aligned with federal requirements of Chaffee and Road to Independence. Additionally, the Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) has also focused on the area of employment for foster youth who have aged out of care.

### Accomplishments

During 2008, more than 100 youth, formerly in care, had been hired within the child welfare and social services system. To further develop this initiative, a statewide workgroup was convened in October 2008 and adopted a framework for action for the Department, CBC Lead Agencies, business partners, and other state and system agencies and partners. The process included youth-driven input and perspective in both the content and design. The strategies included alignment of outcomes, the identification, accessibility, and coordination of relevant services and resources that were already in existence in Florida. Participating organizations included Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrections, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and CBC Lead Agencies. The AWI through its local workforce boards committed to provide employment interest/aptitude testing, work related behavior and skills training.

In January 2009, Secretary George Sheldon identified OFE as a key Department initiative in the Secretary's Strategic Direction for 2009-2011. Throughout 2009 local and statewide collaboration continued, raising awareness and participation of both youth aging out of the system and communities and businesses willing to invest in their futures. The number of youth hired rose to 300 in October. (AWI reported more than 900 total foster youth in and aged out of care having worked within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of the State Fiscal Year).

The Department and its partners recognized the importance of data and developed collection tools to track outcomes of young adults participating in OFE. Additional data provided through AWI, the youth and employee surveys, and the Independent Living Critical Checklist verified employment outcomes.

Additionally, the Department initiated the Independent Living Special Review as a result of concerns raised by the Florida Youth SHINE, an advocacy group whose membership includes youth who have been or are currently in Florida's foster care system. The Special Review had three phases, of which the first was completed in October 2009. The Department acknowledged the need to include trained youth and young adults in the special review and in the ongoing local QA processes.

### Collaboration

OFE for youth in foster care has supported youth in their transition to independence. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 2). One example of collaboration was a model developed in Tampa between the local Department's Automated Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS), CBC's Independent Living (IL) and the local Workforce Board. This program provided 16 youth with training. Variations of

this collaboration have proven to be successful in Pinellas, Tallahassee, Broward, Jacksonville, and Fort Myers. Most communities around the state collaborated with local agencies to align training with employers who offer in-kind training for young adults with soft and hard employability skills.

Additionally, two other programs, the Refugee program and Touchstone Village, worked with the local community college and hired "peer-to-peer" young adults to assist their peers educationally and continue to gain work experience, while attaining their education. Touchstone Village recently opened its doors to the IL and Road to Independence (RTI) young people. By incorporating employability skills in every aspect of life (cooking, shopping, career planning, job searching, resume writing, etc), and providing follow-up supports, it has produced positive outcomes for these program participants.

During the summer of 2009, 28 youth participated in the Workforce Solutions summer youth employment program. They were provided work readiness skills and work experiences within the four county areas of Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, and

Okeechobee. Additionally youth participated in Expanding Horizons, which was an enrichment program that combined academics and professional development. Youth were recruited to participate in a mentoring and job-shadowing program through a partnership with the Treasure Coast Builders Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Workforce Solutions earning a National Center for Construction Education and Research Certification.

The Department, CBC Lead Agencies, and dedicated stakeholders, including Foundation of Foster Care, have continued to reach out to the local city resources to find supports for their transitioning young adults. Central Region partnerships included Connected by 25 (Cby25), FastTrack GED, Education Solutions International (ESI), Panera Bread, ManPower and others. Cby25 has employed four young adults, FastTrack GED attendees can obtain a degree in 12 days, and ESI is developing a potential pilot "Employability Model" to reach 100 young adults. ManPower, a for-profit temp agency has offered to develop a curriculum to enhance the young adults' opportunities for success. Panera Bread has stepped forward to provide 19 young adults friendly and supportive training and employment in their franchise sites in the Greater Orlando area.

In June 2009, a group of dedicated stakeholders from Gadsden, Leon, and Wakulla counties supporting Big Bend Community-Based Care (Big Bend CBC) created a structure to provide assistance, services, and support to the transitioning young adults (17+). This group researched the community for resources, and laid the foundation for employability skills training with motivational and inspirational speaker's career awareness, career assessment, financial aid assistance, and job shadowing opportunities with employability skills training.

Lastly, in 2009 (and currently in 2010) a statewide two-week About Face Training Program was offered in Lakeland, Jacksonville, Orlando, Plant City, Pensacola, Quincy, West Palm Beach, and Leesburg. The Paxen Group, Inc., a training resource contracted by the Florida National Guard, provided 90 foster care youth the opportunity to participate in this program free of charge.

This reality-based program is designed to help 13-17 year old youth focus on life, health, fitness, and employability skills. Through this collaboration of DCF/CBC contacts, 15 foster care youth completed the program with nine going on to attend programs in Orlando and Tallahassee. Currently, Paxen's Forward March intensive job readiness and job placement program for 18-23 year old adults is accepting transitional foster youth.

### Program Support

In an effort to ensure children served by Florida child welfare agencies received educational and vocational services and supports, the Department, DOE, and AWI entered into an Interagency Agreement. The coordination of services and supports

across agencies was critical to positive educational and meaningful life outcomes for Florida's children. Such services required the coordinated flow of information across multiple child-serving agencies to ensure that policy, procedure, service delivery, and resource development were provided in a manner that maximized the likelihood of positive outcomes. The State-level agreement supported local agreements among service agencies and school boards.

To establish and clarify expectations and outcomes for Regions and Circuits regarding OFE, each Regional Director appointed an OFE Champion/Point Person. These Champions tracked young adults' participation in local employment initiatives. The Champion, with key stakeholders' cooperation, established and maintained relationships with local public and private partners. Through this process the child welfare providers were able to identify the infrastructure and support necessary to improve the outcomes of employability for transitioning young adults.

The Department developed a core group of policy staff and consultants to provide ongoing statewide technical assistance. This group has conducted technical assistance and training at:

- the 2009 Dependency Summit, Regional Training meetings
- the Florida Coalition for Children Conference
- Train-the-trainer stakeholder meetings, and
- Independent Living youth events in order to share best practices for initiating and strengthening local employment initiatives.

The Department also provided Technical Assistance Resource Packages to Regions, Circuits, and CBC providers. The Tool Kit was finalized in March 2009, and is located on the University of South Florida website: <http://cbcta.fmhi.usf.edu/flcwp/ofe/ofe/default.html>. This is the Strengthening Youth Partnership resource page and the Department's website.

### Future Plans

The Department's future plans include:

- Continue to collaborate with the ILSAC, DOE, DJJ, DOC, AWI, the Center, CBC providers, and local stakeholders to provide technical assistance and support OFE's continued expansion;
- Work with local communities to develop a cost analyses of the initiative;
- Expand employment opportunities for transitioning young adults utilizing local community resources;
- Research and share effective independent living curriculum with respect to work ethics and readiness and tools for young adults, caregivers, and services workers for a possible statewide standardized curriculum;
- Participate in the IL Services RTI re-design workgroup established through the collaborative efforts of DCF, Florida Coalition for Children, and ILSAC;
- Engage Florida's young adults who "aged out" of care in the QA initiatives and employability preparation;



- Review and update the current employability and placement assistance planning for transitioning young adults to increase applicability, effectiveness, contact and advocacy for OFE with statewide employers (industry leadership); and
- Continue technical assistance to support and encourage the Regions/Circuits in defining their role in supporting, encouraging, and engaging their local communities to continue focusing on successful employment readiness, training, job opportunities, and best practices.

## **Additional Collaborative Projects**

### **Innovation Sites**

A major goal of Florida's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is development and implementation of family centered practice. (CFSP Goal # 2 Benchmark 1: *Developing a Family Centered Practice Model*: Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), Goal 1, Strategy A, Action Step 1 and CFSP Goal 2: Benchmark 2: *Implementing Family Centered Practice in Innovation sites*, QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 1). To accomplish this goal, the state realized its best approach was to establish three "Innovation Sites." The three Innovation Sites were selected and began to focus on development and implementation of a family centered approach during this reporting period.

Innovation sites were selected through a competitive application process. The selection committee was comprised of Department and community leadership. Applicants authored proposals that included discussion of a summary of approach, readiness for change, and strengths / barriers to implementing family centered practice. Innovation sites were selected based on attributes such as leadership and commitment to change and likelihood of success. The three Innovation Sites are: 1) 1st Judicial Circuit (Pensacola and Surrounding Area); 2) 8th Judicial Circuit (Gainesville and surrounding area); and 3) 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (Miami-Dade County). Each innovation site received an additional allocation of \$75,000 in FY2009-2010 to be used for local training and technical assistance.

Each Innovation Site has developed a core team to lead its local planning and implementation efforts. Local implementation plans were comprised of a variety of training, technical assistance and consultation to meet the unique needs of the local child welfare system. Innovation Sites have also identified project teams of key stakeholders who have developed and have helped to implement their local improvement plans.

The initial draft of Florida's family centered practice framework was provided to the Innovation Sites at the kickoff meeting in August 2009 (concurrent with Dependency Summit). Innovation Sites are key partners as the Department continues to refine the framework during initial implementation.

### **The Office of Court Improvement**

The Department has a strong history of collaborating with the court system to address the legal aspects of child welfare and the needs of children and families. Program staff, service agencies, Guardians ad Litem, Children's Legal Services, court officials and staff, and others come together to learn and plan at major events such as the Dependency Court Improvement Summits. These Summits have symbolized the major commitment the Department and its partners have toward full collaboration on topics that are critical to safety, permanency, and well-being.

Consistent with CFSP Goal #2, (Benchmark 3: *Improving and expanding Family Centered Practice Statewide*: QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 3), the Department has shared the family centered practice framework paper with the Office of Court Improvement to ensure that a consistent direction was taken for the Court Quality Improvement efforts.

The Department and the Office of Court Improvement have continued meeting jointly on a monthly basis for more than two years. These meetings have provided a forum for planning for shared events such as conferences or technical assistance, sharing information on joint projects, and identification of potential problems and solutions.

This was and continues to be the means for staying mutually informed on the progress of the Child Welfare and the Dependency Court Quality Improvement Plans. During this reporting period, these meetings effective collaboration efforts have resulted for training and other projects. Examples:

- Florida's federal Quality Improvement Plan,
- A video for youth in the dependency system,
- Data sharing between Florida Safe Families Network and the court's judicial tracking system,
- 2009 Dependency Summit, and
- Practices and procedures regarding the administration of psychotropic medications to children and youth in the dependency system.

The state was also selected as a participant in a court targeted technical assistance project, offered by a collaborative comprised of the American Bar Association Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues, the National Center for State Courts, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The first Collaborative Targeted Technical Assistance Meeting occurred December 12, 2008, and included representatives from the Department, Children's Legal Services, and the Office of Court Improvement (OCI) within the Florida Office of State Courts Administrator. The quality improvement planning activities of the Court Collaborative strengthen and support this facet of the statewide Quality Improvement Plan.

### **2009 Dependency Summit**

The Department actively engaged the courts in the planning, development, and staffing of the annual Dependency Summit for Florida's Child Protection Professionals. This single statewide forum provided statewide training, networking and system improvement planning opportunities for approximately 2000 conference attendees. Attendees included representatives from the Department, judiciary, law enforcement, health, juvenile justice, guardians ad litem, child protective investigations, community-based care agencies, case management, youth, and other key stakeholders. The conference successfully delivered local judicial circuit action plans that laid the foundation for continued local collaboration efforts of the courts and child protection professionals to address systemic issues.

The training content developed for the 2009 Summit was established by an interdisciplinary panel including representatives from 27 stakeholder groups in Florida. The vast number of agencies, stakeholder groups and partners involved clearly demonstrate Florida's commitment to collaboration. Partners involved were from the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Department of Juvenile Justice, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program, The Task Force on Fostering Success, Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA), Department of Health Child Protection Teams, Florida Coalition for Children, Adult Mental Health Program, Children's Mental Health Program, Substance Abuse & Mental Health programs, Florida Abuse Hotline, Big Bend Community-Based Care, Children's Legal Services, Family Services of Metro Orlando, Office of Court

Improvement, Department of Education, Florida's Children First!, The Domestic Violence Program, Regional Conflict Counsel, Florida's YouthSHINE, Circuit judges, Citrus County Sheriff's Office, Executive Office of the Governor, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Foster Parent Association, Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

Consistent with CFSP Goal #2, (Benchmark 3: *Ongoing progress will establish further benchmarks for statewide implementation of family centered practice:*

QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 3), the Department continues to work closely with the Innovation Sites around implementation of family centered practice. Several sessions on family centered practice approaches and applications were offered at the 2009 Dependency Court Summit. A series of train-the-trainers sessions across the state were offered September and October 2009, and all materials posted on the web for statewide use. Family centered practice philosophy and techniques have been integrated into the core curriculum for child welfare staff, including those in the Innovation Sites.

### **Florida Dependency Court Improvement Program (CIP)**

The Department continues to partner with the Office of Court Improvement to plan and conduct statewide conferences that include workshops on multiple aspects of the case planning process. These workshops are attended by many different types of

professionals from the child welfare system. Examples of professionals include parents' attorneys, judges, case workers, clerks and service providers.

CIP staff coordinated the *Justice Through the Eyes of a Child* workshop at the December 2008 winter statewide circuit and appellate judges' educational program. The workshop included a panel of youth in or formerly in foster care and Andrea Khoury, a national speaker from the American Bar Association. Two Florida judges led a discussion about local initiatives that encourage children to participate in court.

CIP staff educated Florida dependency judges and magistrates about the Florida Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) findings. CIP staff prepared a summary of the findings, highlighting those determined to be court related. The summary was sent to the judicial officers on December 10, 2008. On May 6, 2009, at the request of the chair of the CIP statewide panel, the Florida chief justice issued a letter to all the chief judges and trial court administrators, reiterating the findings and the importance of achieving improvements related to safety, permanency, and well-being.

CIP staff, working with other Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator staff, allotted monies (from numerous funding streams) and provided technical assistance for each judicial circuit to host a local circuit training event. Nine circuits held individual training events, while five circuits used their funds to attend the Florida Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Annual Conference in Tampa. These events, held between February and April 2009, focused on issues related to domestic violence and dependency. Overall there were 1,342 participants: 64 judges, 258 court staff and 1,020 stakeholders.

CIP staff mailed *Involving Children in Court* packets to all dependency judges and magistrates in March 2009. The packets contain:

- Judge Jeri B. Cohen’s memo discussing the court quality improvement plan and role of statewide panel;
- Florida bench card: *Children and the Court* developed by Office of Court Improvement staff as approved by a Dependency CIP panel;
- ABA bench card: *Engaging Young Children (ages 0 – 12 months)*
- ABA bench card: *Engaging Toddlers (ages 1-3) and Preschoolers (ages 3-5)*;
- ABA bench card: *Engaging School Age Children (ages 5 – 11)*;
- ABA bench card: *Engaging Adolescents (ages 12 – 15)*;
- ABA bench card: *Engaging Older Adolescents ( ages 16 +)*;
- Legal Authority for Including Children in Court developed by Office of Court Improvement staff as approved by DCIP panel;
- A literature review on involving children in court developed by Office of Court Improvement staff as approved by DCIP panel;
- A technical assistance brief, *Questions Every Judge and Lawyer Should ask about infants and toddlers in the child welfare system*, prepared by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ);
- ABA: *Establishing Policies for Youth in Court – Overcoming Common Concerns*;
- Article discussing *Children and Procedural Justice*, Court Review- Volume 44;
- *Independent Living Courts in Florida* by Office of Court Improvement staff as approved by DCIP panel;
- ABA youth guide, *Hearing Your Voice: A Guide to Your Dependency Court Case; and*
- *Tools for Engaging Children in Their Court Proceedings* by New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children.

CIP staff coordinated a regional training workshop on Florida’s dependency child support model on July 10, 2009 in Tallahassee, Florida. This multidisciplinary training event was attended by 30 child welfare partners.

Shortly after legislative session ended, a CIP attorney held a conference call for judges, magistrates, and court staff. The purpose of the call was to inform them of recent family law changes, including changes in dependency law that took place during the 2009 legislative session.

Throughout the fiscal year, on a monthly basis, CIP attorneys reviewed and summarized case law, and distributed the updates to judges and magistrates to keep them informed on the latest legal developments.

### **The Performance Measures Workgroup**

In 2008, the Department's Secretary appointed the Performance Measures Workgroup to manage the implementation of the Regional Quality Assurance (QA) Model. The workgroup is

composed of senior managers from the Department of Children and Families and Chief Executive Officers and board members from several Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies. This team coordinated with the Department on implementation of the federal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and addressed performance indicators and measurement topics, especially by working with CBC contract measures. This group continues to help the Department identify measures that provide over-arching strategies that guide improvement in Florida's child welfare system.

### **The Florida Relative Search Pilot Project**

The Department collaborated with community partners on the importance of performing diligent searches for the identification of and linkage with relatives of our children in care (*Strategic Direction 2009 – 2011*). As a result of then Secretary Butterworth's commitment to developing and implementing innovations that provided better service to clients and increased coordination with community partners, the Department conducted in the summer and fall of 2008. The strategy of the program was to help determine if the common sense approach of outsourcing the search for relatives of children in care could be one method utilized to help meet the goal of safely reducing the number of children in foster care, reflecting both a sense of urgency as well as a sense of family and community.

The goal of the pilot project was three-fold:

- meet the 2012 goal of safely reducing out-of-home care by 50%, while also increasing placement stability of out-of-home by increasing the number of children in approved relative placements;
- increase the number of children in out-of-home care who are able to achieve timely permanency; and
- provide our children in care with permanent family connections.

# Chapter 3

## Program Support

### Training & Quality Assurance

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#### Training

##### Child Welfare Staff

###### 2008-2009 Update

The Department continued its responsibility for the establishment of statewide training policy, provision of technical assistance, and implementation of several statewide training events. The Department also continued to provide oversight of content for three contracts with two state universities involving pre-service curriculum development, trainer and child welfare staff certification through a state Training Academy, and a web-based knowledge resource, "Florida's Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice."

The Department's commitment to the education, training and professional development of child welfare staff continued to focus on the following key areas:

- pre-service training and certification programs;
- advanced in-service training focused on program specific systems of care;
- supervisory training, focusing on (a) management/leadership and (b) clinical supervision skills development;
- child welfare staff recruitment and retention programs; and
- training to address emergent needs.

The Child Welfare Training Program was designed to achieve the following goals:

- positively impact the quality of decisions made regarding children and families who require assistance from programs providing child welfare services;
- positively impact the quality of care of children who must be removed from their homes due to abuse, abandonment, or neglect;
- support the state's achievement of the goals of the Federal Child and Family Service Review and Florida's Quality Improvement Plan;



- support the Department's child protection staff, contracted Sheriffs' offices and contracted Community-Based Care providers of child welfare services through the development of a single, integrated pre-service curriculum that can be delivered to reflect the local culture of the state and the system of care of the employer;
- provide quality information and resources to the child welfare workforce in a user-friendly and timely manner; and
- maximize federal financial participation funding through the appropriate design and delivery of Florida's Child Welfare Pre-Service Curriculum Training Program.

In addition to building a sustainable partnership with child welfare stakeholders, the Department continued to support the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). This was done through the development of mandatory performance improvement strategies designed to achieve the QIP outcomes and goals. Additionally, ongoing training opportunities were provided and made available to the three "Innovation Sites". Three Innovation Sites were selected and began to focus on development and implementation of a family centered approach during this reporting period.

### Accomplishments

During 2008-2009, the Department, working in conjunction with its community-based partners, embedded the policy and procedure framework that has historically structured the statewide training system into Florida Administrative Code, by developing Florida's first "Training and Certification Rule." Rule promulgation is anticipated during Summer 2010 and will require a variety of targeted in-service instructional opportunities, as well as ongoing technical assistance and consultation on "Training Rule" related issues. Implementation will also more clearly delineate the process for becoming certified, and the functions and expectations of certified child protection professionals. Crafting the content of the training rule included completing a series of workshops and formal rule development hearings around the state to ensure collaboration and feedback from stakeholders.

The purpose of the proposed Training and Certification Rule, 65C-33, F.A.C., is to codify the training and certification process of Florida's child welfare services staff, by carrying out the provisions of section 402.40, F.S., regarding child welfare training, and the provisions of section 402.731, F.S., regarding child welfare certification. The proposed rule:

- sets forth the minimum standards for Florida's Child Welfare Professional training and certification process;
- establishes the position classifications and certification designations required for Child Protection Professional certification;

- defines terms relating to the training and certification of Child Protection Professionals and Child Welfare Trainers;
- addresses additional training and certification requirements for Supervisors;
- establishes Child Welfare Trainer certification requirements; and
- sets forth continuing professional development training requirements for the recertification of Child Protection Professionals.

These minimum standards ensure that each participant has successfully attained the knowledge, skills, abilities, and priorities necessary to competently carry out his or her child welfare work responsibilities, as required by statute.

Beginning in 2008 and concluding in 2009, the Department, worked in partnership with state and local subject matter experts and a team of instructional designers, developed a week-long intensive training workshop entitled, "The Family-Centered Practice Training Series." Workshop content focused on the theory, philosophy and paradigm-change related to a family-centered approach to services, as well as a number of engagement and family teaming strategies designed to improve the quality and consistency of practice. Implementation occurred in 2009, through a number of local train-the-trainer initiatives; ongoing implementation of family-centered practice training continues to occur for investigators, caseworkers, supervisors, managers, and legal services (CFSP Goal 1: QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Steps 2 and 3). In addition, family-centered practice has been included as a linchpin in the newly integrated pre-service core curriculum. More than 180 trainers attended the train-the-trainer events, held regionally around the state. A Family-Centered Practice Training Series Resources webpage has been developed to support ongoing implementation.

Florida is concluding development of its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), known as Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). During the past two years, numerous in-service navigational training events occurred across the state as the new FSFN components were deployed. The ongoing navigational training was integrated into a single, core pre-service child welfare curriculum; rollout of this fully integrated curriculum, utilizing the expertise of the contracted Training Academy, has already occurred in some areas of the state.

In addition to integrating FSFN functionality with statutory/rule requirements and best practices while presenting a family-centered approach to child welfare, the new core pre-service curriculum focused heavily on the importance of the worker's relationship with the family, as well as, the frequency and quality of the contacts between the worker and the child and family during home visits (CFSP Goal 1: QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 2).

During 2009, the Department worked in partnership with state and local subject experts and a team of instructional designers to begin the process of updating the required “Supervising for Excellence” training for all newly hired/appointed supervisors, so that the content would more clearly frame the role and expectations of a supervisor as a mentor and teacher. Concurrently, this update to the curriculum was designed to also convey the critical link between effective supervision and quality assurance systems, as the Department’s recently developed Regional Quality Assurance Model was built upon the role of supervisors as a key frontline measure for ensuring quality of practice. Other revisions to the curriculum included integrating the Department’s Family-Centered Model of Practice. The new Supervising for Excellence curriculum was completed in the summer of 2009, and several train-the-trainer sessions were conducted to help facilitate local in-service training of supervisors (CFSP Goal 1: QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Steps 4 and 5).

### Collaboration

Florida’s child welfare training programs integrated strategies that enabled child welfare staff to develop and refine the knowledge, skills, abilities, and priorities staff must possess and demonstrate on a regular basis to provide the level of care required by the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).

Planning reflected the current and future needs of the Department and child welfare stakeholders and partners, and was based on a continuous cycle of integrating needs assessment data and program evaluation results into the established critical education, training, certification, and professional development needs of child welfare staff. This process was designed to be flexible and responsive within the framework of federal and state requirements and national best practices.

The Department worked with numerous stakeholders throughout the state in the design/redesign of the integrated pre-service curriculum, as well as in-service training including “The Family-Centered Training Series,” “Mentoring through Qualitative Discussion,” and “Supervising for Excellence.” Child welfare professionals working for local Department of Children and Families offices, Sheriffs’ Offices and Community-Based Care agencies were consulted regarding the redesign the core Performance Assessments, which will become part of the new 65C-33, Florida Administrative Code.

### Program Support

Topical web pages were added into the knowledge resource, Florida’s Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice (The Center), for ready access by any interested stakeholders to training and reference materials, reports, “best practice” links, and other supports of excellence in child welfare practice. On average, the Center recorded approximately 2 million “hits” per month, up from approximately 500,000 “hits” during 2007-2008. The primary objectives of the Center were:

- to ensure timely and consistent information and training to Florida’s child welfare professionals emphasizing easy access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, resulting in one right answer accessible to all users statewide on demand;

- to link customers to resources, innovations, and evidence-based models and best practices throughout the country;
- to provide virtual meetings, live training and educational events, and online collaborative forums that facilitated communication and information sharing among Florida's child welfare professionals and related stakeholders such as foster parents, youth, and education professionals; and
- to provide consistent and authoritative answers to frequently asked questions posed by the Center's customers, and to disseminate answers statewide in cooperation with the Department.

The Center's site was updated with the "Trainer's Corner," where trainers could access relevant information such as the statewide master training calendar, numerous state and national web-based in-service training, and informative/instructional child welfare resources. Approximately 175 hours of online training was available through the Center, and participants were provided Certificates of Completion after passing post-tests that can be used to meet in-service training requirements. The Center may be accessed at: <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/Pages/Default.aspx>.

### Future Plans

Full statewide implementation of the new pre-service curriculum is to occur by June 30, 2010.

Because the Department recognizes the supervisor is key to modeling critical analysis skills and supporting family-centered practice with his or her staff, the Training and Certification Rule will require that in order to be certified, all child welfare supervisors must successfully complete: (a) the applicable Performance Assessment (which will evaluate the supervisor's interpersonal skills as well as his or her ability to accurately and appropriately assess a counselor's casework) and (b) the newly revised "Supervising for Excellence" curriculum.

The Department will continue to enhance **online learning** opportunities for delivery of required or essential instructional content. The Department will use current initiatives already underway through the partnership between the Department and the University of South Florida's Center as a model for online instructional learning. It is anticipated the Center will be of significant benefit in terms of its functional capability to serve as the host site for webinars in order to disseminate vast amounts of information on any number of important topics quickly and efficiently to a statewide audience of trainers, investigators, case managers, supervisors, executive staff and other interested agency personnel. Opportunities to enhance the breadth and scope of online learning, as both a primary and supplementary instructional approach, will be considered. Core content in the required pre-service curriculum will be reviewed for relevancy for instruction through an on-line approach.

The Department has embraced the **cross-training** concept by sharing and utilizing resources both internal and external to the Department. The child welfare system is interrelated and shared by many stakeholders and cross-training of all parts of the system is both an efficient and effective way to learn. These shared training opportunities will be enhanced in the future.

Modeled after the current “**Family-Centered Practice Training Series**”, the Department plans to undertake an in-service curriculum development initiative that focuses on enhancing the professional skills and abilities of child welfare and related stakeholder professionals, interagency coordination, and teamwork efforts. This training series will include a number of related workshops that build upon a core foundational theme of effective family teamwork, but will also include specific focus on strategies to enhance partnership with mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other human services providers. It is anticipated that a team of subject matter and instructional design experts will support the Department in this upcoming initiative. This will include exploring a number of cross-training and collaborative initiatives.

Both the frequency and quality of visits will also be added to and evaluated in **Field-based Performance Assessments** which will be developed in conjunction with the Training and Certification Rule; the Performance Assessment was the skills demonstration portion of the certification process, whereby candidates for certification were evaluated both on their demonstrated casework abilities and observed interpersonal skills.

Future plans also include revising and updating the **foster and adoptive parents’ pre-service curriculum and training**, with input from Community-Based Care agencies and foster and adoptive parents. The current Florida Model Approach to Partnership and Parenting (MAPP) can be the basic guideline and provide the content framework for the revised training; however, emphasis will be on ensuring that child-specific needs are addressed in the design and mechanisms are in place for accountability so that substitute parents are receiving necessary training to help meet identified needs.

In the upcoming reporting period, the Department will also explore additional partnerships with the university community, through the schools of Social Work. The Department, working in partnership with the Consortium of State Schools of Social Work, will explore opportunities to either establish or enhance child welfare-related curricula in Bachelor's and Master's level social work programs. The use of the Title IV-E tuition waiver will continue to be maximized and additional strategic partnerships with schools of social work will be pursued, in order to better prepare new (or returning) child welfare professionals who are entering the workforce to have additional skills, developed through their educational programs.

The Department will expand existing training related workgroups, subject matter instructional design teams, advisory groups, or other committees with training related oversight, to more clearly identify a key team to provide ongoing guidance on training issues. A key pre-existing training advisory committee that provided much input and guidance into the current training system's structure is no longer active, creating a void in strategic leadership for the statewide vision and expectation for child welfare training. This will also include exploring a number of cross-training and collaborative initiatives.

Future plans also include developing/enhancing current training information through the technology platform. The current system used for tracking child welfare pre-service and in-service training as it relates to obtaining and maintaining child welfare certification is SkillNET. This is an antiquated system, built in a software language that is not consistent with the Department's current Information Technology (IT) platform. This results in costly and time consuming maintenance efforts for basic status tracking information. The Department will explore opportunities to develop alternate training tracking systems, through either modification or enhancement of existing IT systems, development of a new information technology system, or the creation of other tracking and monitoring mechanisms.

## **The 2009 Statewide Dependency Summit**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Department organized and implemented the 2009 Dependency Summit. The Summit is one of the largest child welfare conferences in the country, with more than 2,000 participants attending in August 2009, which was the 10<sup>th</sup> year of this event. The Summit is also seen as the most significant force in driving improved practice by convening a broad array of child protection stakeholders annually to renew our collective goal to lead the nation in the protection of vulnerable children. It is considered a national model for promoting court improvement initiatives with the joint legal and child welfare audience attending the event. All twenty circuits developed local action plans to address areas of concern within their respective communities.

### Accomplishments

The Department reached out to a rich array of stakeholders to bring people together and make change happen during the Summit. The 2009 Dependency Summit boasted record attendance of more than 2,000 child welfare professionals including: Child Protection Investigators (CPI); staff representing: Department regional/circuit administration, Florida Abuse Hotline Central Office, Communications and Community Relations, Contracts, Department of Juvenile Justice, Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Community-Based Care Agencies, Providers and Community Partners, Office of Court Improvement, and Research, Curriculum Development and Training; Substance Abuse

& Mental Health professionals, Domestic Violence and Refugee Services professionals, Children's Legal Services/State Attorneys Office/Office of Attorney General and/or other legal staff, Department of Health/Child Protective Team (CPT) members; Guardians Ad Litem; attorneys for parents; Judges and Magistrates (more than 80 attendees), Law Enforcement Child Protection professionals, former foster youth, Foster and Adoptive Parents, Colleges and University staff/faculty, and Legislators and/or legislative staff. Federal Children's Justice Act grant funds were used to provide scholarships for attendees to ensure a diverse audience of child welfare and related stakeholder professionals.

More than 60 different workshops were offered to increase professional knowledge with major content tracks including Family-Centered Practice, Multidisciplinary Teaming, legal and legal advocacy, and child protective investigations. Workshop sessions were recorded and made available on the Center's website at:

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/videos/Pages/depend09all.aspx>.

### Collaboration

The training content developed for the 2009 Summit was established by an interdisciplinary panel including representatives from 27 stakeholder groups in Florida including: Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Department of Juvenile Justice, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program, Task Force on Fostering Success, Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA), Department of Health Child Protection Teams, Florida Coalition for Children, Adult Mental Health Program, Children's Mental Health Program, Substance Abuse & Mental Health programs, Florida Abuse Hotline, Big Bend Community-Based Care, Children's Legal Services, Family Services of Metro Orlando, Office of Court Improvement, Department of Education, Florida's Children First!, Domestic Violence Program, Regional Conflict Counsel, Florida's YouthSHINE, Circuit Judges, Citrus County Sheriff's Office, Executive Office of the Governor, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Foster Parent Association, and Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

### Program Support

The Summit provides support and technical assistance to Program staff, service agencies, Guardians ad Litem, Children's Legal Services, court officials and staff, and others by providing an opportunity to come together to learn and plan. The Summit symbolizes the major commitment the Department and its partners have toward full collaboration and sharing on topics that are critical to safety, permanency, and well-being.

## Future Plans

Future plans include continuing the annual Dependency Summit in August 2010. Themes for planning the 2010 Summit include a focus on quality parenting and collaboration/integration of services, while also ensuring an even greater youth and foster parent presence at the event.

## **Regional Training**

The Department continued to provide opportunities to enhance the skills of professionals in our system and the quality of the services provided to customers. To facilitate learning, the Department presented three regional training across the state in Miami, Orlando, and Tallahassee. Persons encouraged to attend the training included professional staff from the Department, Sheriffs' Offices, and Community-Based Care agencies; staff who provided case management, adoptions, quality assurance, revenue maximization, eligibility determinations, child protective investigations, interstate compact, and substance abuse/mental health services; staff who represented ACCESS Florida, Guardian ad Litem, Children's Legal Services, court personnel, foster parents and any other interested parties.

Attendees received up to 6.5 hours of in-service training that may be applied toward recertification requirements for child welfare professionals.

## **Florida's Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice (The Center)**

The Center was established to provide needed information and support to Florida's professional child welfare stakeholders. Funding was provided through a contract with the Department. Operating within the University of South Florida's College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI), the Center served Child Protective Investigation professionals from the Department and various Sheriffs' Offices, Child Welfare Legal Services provided by DCF and the Attorney General or State's Attorney Offices, and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies.

The Center functions under the guidance of a joint statewide Steering Committee of stakeholders who act similarly to a Board of Directors. The Steering Committee's mission is as follows:

"The Steering Committee will establish the vision for excellence in the protection of children and promotion of families. Through oversight and guidance to the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice, strategies will be developed to ensure sustained support of customer needs in addition to addressing solutions for emerging issues."



To review the Center's primary objectives refer to Program Support in the Child Welfare Training section of this Chapter.

### Accomplishments

A fully searchable online knowledge base is built around current rules and policies, embedded links to relevant Florida State and Federal statutes and rules, recent decision memoranda or policy interpretations, fiscal requirements, national best practices, research, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) with authoritative answers. The Center processed requests from customers for policy clarification or interpretation by acquiring answers from the Department and posting those in the Center database. Knowledge base access is available online to all users 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Center sponsored live meetings and other web conferencing services for stakeholder customers. Interactive web events may be coordinated by the Center or by the leadership of each stakeholder agency without the need for Center involvement. Training, meetings, workgroup events, etc. are among the many ways this service can be used. The Center provided training and support in using these services at the request of stakeholder members.

### Collaboration

The collaboration component served as an interactive online information sharing portal where peers and experts can interact with each other and share documents. This component featured video conferencing, video streamed educational and training presentations, and other interactive functions designed to facilitate learning, information sharing, and identification of training and technical issues for inclusion in the Center's services.

### Program Support

The Center's mission is to support and facilitate the identification, expansion, and transfer of expert knowledge and best practices in child welfare case practice, direct services, management, finances, policy, and organizational development to child welfare and child protection stakeholders throughout Florida.

## **Family Safety Program Office Training Bulletin**

The Department published Training Bulletins in an effort to share important information, promising practices, and innovative ideas from Florida's child welfare community. The Training Bulletins are electronically distributed statewide. Articles pertained to family-centered practice, coordination of services, engagement and assessment strategies,

and working across the fields of mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse, medical, and educational issues.

The Center's website may be accessed to view the various training bulletins: <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/trbltn/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

### Future Plans

The Department will continue to work with the Center to enhance the number and quality of online in-service training. This will include improving both the post-testing and the tracking of post-testing, functions available through the Center so participants can obtain needed ongoing training hours to maintain professional certification.

The Department will continue to work with the Center to improve the type of information available in the Center's Knowledge Library including:

- reclassifying available information categories so they align with the major child welfare service delivery functions of prevention, investigations, in-home, and out-of-home; and
- assigning key program staff as the programmatic lead for advising and providing input on the type of information made available within each category.

The Department will work with the Center to develop specific *Family-Centered Practice* and *Quality Parenting* resource pages on the Center's website. This will allow key information pertaining to these strategic initiatives of the Department to be readily available.

### **Technical Assistance**

Florida requested and received technical assistance from numerous national resource centers (NRC), as well as private foundations. The technical assistance was helpful with defining and implementing a sustained practice framework (for both child protective and child welfare staff) with an emphasis on a strength-based/individualized approach to family engagement. Family-centered practice was a key factor underlying many gaps in safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

- The National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology assisted with data analysis and factors that contribute to placement instability.
- The Court Collaborative Targeted Technical Assistance includes National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, American Bar Association, and the National Center for State Courts Staff assist the Judiciary in the development of strategies to support and compliment the strategies being implemented as part of Florida's Program Improvement Plan.

- The National Resource Center for Family and Permanency Connections identified evidence-based practices related to permanency and case planning, as well as provided support to Circuit One in the implementation of a Family Centered Practice Model.
- National Resource Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare analyzed and is helping to develop/modify approaches to risk and safety assessment, linkage to services and supports.
- The state also worked with national and state consultants, such as Eckerd Family Foundation and the Youth Law Center, to continue efforts that focus on recruiting and retaining quality foster families and adoptive families that meet the needs of children
- NRC for Organizational Improvement provided assistance and support regarding performance measurement and other processes relevant to a continuous quality improvement model. Successful quality improvement depends on being able to set appropriate standards that measure performance, and to use information about performance to make appropriate and effective decisions about system change.
- The National Resource Center for Child Abuse Prevention (FRIENDS) assisted local prevention planning teams with information regarding the importance of parent leadership, evidenced-based programming, and training on the five protective factors.

Florida will continue to request assistance from the NRCs and national foundations as we move forward with statewide implementation and institutionalization of family centered practice.

The technical assistance from National Resource Center for Family and Permanency Connections will be essential to ensure timely and appropriate permanency. Specific assistance will be requested as we continue to shift the practice culture to one that is family oriented and strengths based. Providing services and family supports to achieve permanency goals, including reunification, permanent guardianship, and adoption. Ongoing consistency of practice and family engagement to ensure quality and adequacy of post-reunification supports.

National Resource Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare continued technical assistance on recognizing and addressing relapse dynamics and other special issues for families with identified substance abuse problems. The basic substance abuse and mental health (behavioral health), physical, and dental health needs of children are an ongoing concern. It is essential that child welfare staff understand why it is necessary to complete a thorough assessment of safety and risk throughout the life of the case, the ability of workers to match services to needs, and the oversight of investigative and case management quality. Ongoing assessments along with timely and consistent delivery of services with a focus on mental health and substance abuse services, using

a wide variety of quality service providers, will drive family successes. The ability of workers to identify and access appropriate services must be developed and supported

The service array must integrate case management and services to address the constellation of issues and strengths that each family brings to their particular situation. Education, substance abuse, physical and mental health, domestic violence, economic assistance, delinquency and other related issues must all be considered to ensure “family driven, youth guided” service delivery.

The Department will continue our partnership with the Office of Court Improvement and with the Court Collaborative. Family centered practice involves the entire child welfare system and is dependent on the legal/judiciary process to advocate for children. The involvement of children and youth, as age-appropriate, is critical to making sure legal processes meet their needs. In addition, caregivers need information and assistance in order to participate in legal activities appropriately and effectively, and to serve as key partners in family engagement. Leaders, staff, caregivers, managers, attorneys and the judiciary need knowledge and skills on the concept and application of family centered practice. Children’s Legal Services staff must have the knowledge and skills to promote family and child involvement, and ensure individualized case planning.

## **Federal Funding Training and Technical Assistance**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Department continued to provide training and technical assistance to revenue maximization and related staff. Federal funding training and technical assistance was intended to teach staff about major federal funding sources and the worker’s task to meet specific guidelines and eligibility requirements for ensuring continued funding. The goal of the training was to help staff recognize that eligibility requirements are based on the provisions of the Florida Statutes and the Social Security Act, as amended and related enactments relevant to the tasks of promoting child safety, permanency and well-being. These requirements are synonymous with quality case management and documentation (CFSP Goal 2: Objective 3).

### Accomplishments

The Department facilitated two regional training and its annual Dependency Summit. Federal funding training and technical assistance was a part of these training events. Topics included adoption assistance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and FSN. Additionally, the Department provided training and technical assistance on federal funding specific topics through webinars, monthly statewide conference calls, and other in-person training workshops or on-line training opportunities. Frequently Asked Questions were posted on the website of the Center.

## Collaboration

The Department collaborated with ACCESS Florida, the Department of Revenue, and the Agency for Health Care Administration to discuss implementation of the federal funding programs made available to states through Title IV of the Social Security Act. Training was provided through collaboration between the Department and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies.

## Program Support

The Department embraced the cross-training concept by sharing and utilizing resources both internal and external to the Department. The child welfare system was interrelated and shared by many stakeholders and cross-training of all parts of the system was both an efficient and effective way to learn.

## Future Plans

The Department will continue to integrate federal funding training into the family-centered practice curriculum. The implementation of the Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver, the new SACWIS system and the Department's focus on prevention provide the opportunity for such integration. In addition, the cross-training opportunities will be enhanced in the future.

## **Quality Assurance Review System**

### 2008-2009 Update

The Regional Quality Management (QA) Model, which was implemented in July 2008, continued to operate as the state's standardized child welfare quality assurance system. The Quality Assurance Standards used to assess performance in case management and child protective investigations were updated and refined in June 2009 and implemented in July 2009.

The Department received its second round Child and Family Services Review final report on January 5, 2009. During the rest of this fiscal year, the Department was in the process of developing its required Program Improvement Plan, known in Florida as the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

## Accomplishments

Four quarterly reviews of ongoing case management services in each local system of care, and two comprehensive reviews of child protective investigations (CPI) in each of the 20 circuits, were conducted. In addition, the child welfare quality assurance system conducted a special Process Management review of Independent Living services for young adults formerly in foster care and a special comprehensive review of all children in foster care who have been prescribed psychotropic medications.

The results and analyses of these reviews were provided in written reports that were maintained on the Center's Quality Assurance section; so, in the spirit of transparency, could be accessed by stakeholders and other interested parties. Data collection included performance for recurrence of abuse or neglect and the repeated maltreatment of children in foster care (CFSP Goal 1: Overall Benchmark: QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A).

Also, more than 200 Department and Community-Based Care child welfare employees from across the state were trained as quality assurance reviewers. The 16-hour curriculum included a competency assessment and "certification" that the trainee was qualified to conduct quality assurance reviews.

In October 2008, the Department facilitated and oversaw train-the-trainer sessions for "Mentoring and Modeling Quality, Qualitative Supervisory Discussion Guides," (CFSP Goal 1: Benchmark: QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Steps 4 and 5). Fifty-one participants representing the Department and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies attended the train-the-trainer sessions. All the necessary materials to deliver ongoing training were provided for use at the local level.

Florida's QIP was developed through the Department's collaborative and productive efforts with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)'s Children's Bureau and culminated in Children's Bureau's formal approval of the QIP on July 20, 2009.

### Collaboration

Workgroups were assembled using subject matter experts from the Department and the Community-Based Care providers from around the state to refine the Child Protective Investigator (CPI) and Case Management Standards. Other collaborations included facilitating and participating in Performance Measure Workgroups to identify and formalize reporting measures, and to provide feedback about the processes within the Regional Quality Management Model.

The development of the QIP provided many opportunities for collaboration. External stakeholders, such as the Florida Office of Court Improvement and its Court Collaborative partners, were vital to the planning process and results. Other partners, such as the Community-Based Care providers and the Mental Health/Substance Abuse Program, also participated in various improvement planning activities.

### Program Support

Department staff planned, prepared, and facilitated four quarterly quality assurance Managers' meetings/training with 20 Community-Based Care quality assurance

managers and six regional (Department) quality assurance managers. These ongoing meetings/training built strong working relationships between and among quality assurance staff and facilitated the Department's ongoing efforts to ensure inter rater reliability among reviewers throughout the state.

Information resources to support both quality assurance and quality improvement were available to program staff and other stakeholders. Topical web pages were designed into the Center's website for ready access to training, reference material, reports, "best practice" links, and other useful items.

As previously mentioned, FSFN supported the state's quality management system that encompassed ongoing quality assurance and quality improvement activities at the state and local levels. FSFN provided case specific data used for routine quality assurance reviews and special or high-profile case reviews and for measuring performance within the child welfare system, providing a statewide view, as well as unit or worker specific views. FSFN also supported continuous quality improvement efforts. Analysis of FSFN data allowed state and local operations to identify issues related to safety, permanency, and well-being (CFSP Goal 1: QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A).

### Future Plans

The Department's future plans include:

- continuing quarterly QA Reviewer Training;
- continuing quarterly QA Managers Meetings;
- continuing quarterly reviews of case management and semi-annual reviews of child protective investigations;
- conducting additional data analyses as new data points are developed;
- establishing new and improved performance measures;
- refining CPI and Case Management Standards and processes within the Regional Quality Management Plan to include re-defining sampling methodologies and sampling stratification;
- completing a review of Independent Living services for youth in foster care who have reached their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday with the objective to assess services provided to prepare them for transition to adulthood;
- completing a review of Independent Living services for children in foster care between 13 through 16 years of age to assess pre-independent services, normalcy plans, and service needs; and
- completing a joint review with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to assess transition planning of foster care youth currently in a DJJ residential facility but ultimately returning to the community.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) State Grant**

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The “Promoting Safe and Stable Families” program assists the Department in achieving CFSP Goal #3: Improve Service Array. To increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities and to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment is a priority within Florida's foster homes. The “Promoting Safe and Stable Families” program allows the Department to develop, expand and operate coordinated programs of community-based services.

Florida supports the hypothesis that expanded and improved prevention efforts and early intervention services contribute to a safe reduction in the number of children in the local dependency system, while facilitating a more efficient and timely movement of children to permanency.

Through family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification, and adoption services, Florida's system of care strives to:

- prevent child maltreatment among families at risk through the provision of supportive family services;
- assure children's safety within the home and preserve intact families in which children have been maltreated, when the family's problems can be addressed effectively;
- address the problems of families whose children have been placed in foster care so that reunification may occur in a safe and stable manner in accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997; and
- strengthens adoptive families by providing support services as necessary so that they can make a lifetime commitment to their children.

Florida's lead agencies work closely with subcontracted providers to provide training and technical assistance related to funding criteria and rules, which results in collaborative and successful use of resources. Recruitment Services have been previously discussed in Chapter 1.

Given the importance of preventing child abuse and neglect and the wide range of programs and strategies available, the Department continues to invest in a continuum of prevention services. The Department strives to prevent child abuse and neglect in various communities throughout the state through its community-based care approach and specific contracts and partnerships with recognized experts in the fields of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programs and strategies. The Department continues



its renewed interest in ensuring the success in new and existing child abuse prevention programs.

Embraced strategies continue to be:

- assessing the current strengths in the public child welfare system and in the communities for preventing child abuse and neglect;
- building effective partnerships with important partners in prevention, including community based child abuse prevention programs, the faith community, early childhood programs, schools, health care providers and other relevant entities;
- engaging parent leaders who have experience using services to strengthen their families as key partners in planning, implementing and evaluating prevention activities;
- reviewing national models of prevention programs and incorporate those that best fit the state's needs and interests; and
- utilizing training and technical assistance opportunities to support these activities as needed.

The Department has begun to analyze local effective practices. Opportunities to replicate effective practice through training and technical assistance will be expanded in the next reporting period.

Core strategies in serving all families have strived to reflect family-centered practice, a strength-based approach, providing services that are accessible and expanding the array of available services.

### **Family Preservation Services (25.24% of the FFY 2009 Grant)**

Florida continues to increase efforts towards families (including adoptive and extended families) at risk or in crisis, including:

- information and referral to include substance abuse and domestic violence related services<sup>1</sup>;
- targeting services geographically in zip codes where there is a high volume of calls to the Hotline;
- use of Diversion Court<sup>2</sup>;
- creation of the Clinical Response Teams; <sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Activities that provide families with needed information about community and statewide services and agencies that provide specific services and if necessary, provide referral information.

<sup>2</sup> This specialty court division is dedicated to hearing cases involving families in which dependency petitions have been filed, but due to the family's circumstances and level of need, case plan completion is expected in a very short time. The Court is able to closely monitor progress and ensure that the children involved are able to quickly gain safety and stability in the care of their own parents.

<sup>3</sup> Clinical Response Team is a process by which key community providers have agreed to come together to ensure appropriate front loaded services are identified for families with substance abuse and/or mental health issues that threaten the safety of their children. The team works to engage the family in treatment immediately via expedited access to assessment and linkage to services. The assessing clinician will work with first responders in the identification of a safety plan relevant to the level of risk identified with the goal of preventing the removal of children from their biological home.

- creation of Family Preservation specialist positions

### **Family Support Services (22.05% of FFY 2009 Grant)**

Florida continues to increase efforts to provide caregivers with available supports in the community to promote the safety and well-being of children and families. There are numerous examples of extended family and non-relatives stepping forward, often at some personal sacrifice, to provide home placements, transportation, mentoring, or other supports. There are many situations where it is clear that parents would be unable to fulfill the requirements of their case plan without support from extended family.

While there are many examples of typical supportive programs to families, Florida has readily embraced:

- the *Winds of Change*, the Child Abuse Prevention Month Public Awareness Campaign (Prevent Child Abuse Florida's Child Abuse Prevention Month statewide campaign);
- parenting classes geared toward various developmental ages and stages and the effects of family violence and substance abuse on children;
- health and nutrition Education training sessions;
- home visiting activities and services;
- early developmental screening of children to assess needs, and assistance to families in securing specific services to meet those needs; and
- information and referral to community resources, such as job employment services and ACCESS Florida (for on-line benefits applications).

The Title IV-E waiver has enabled Florida to invest in services and initiatives that generate alternatives to a child's removal from his/her family. One example is the Florida's use of Family Support Teams which provide round the clock wrap-around and in-home services. These services improve the well-being and stability of the family, by assisting caregivers in the areas of basic housekeeping, budgeting, parenting, understanding child development, and awareness of what services exist in their communities.

### **Time-Limited Family Reunification Services (22.71% of the FFY 2009 Grant)**

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services are provided to a child once removed from his/her home and placed in foster care and to the parents or primary caregivers. These services are designed to support the reunification of the child safely and appropriately within the 12-15 month period.

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services in Florida include:

- Family Assistance Support Team (FAST);<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Classroom and in-home education services provided to parents who will be or have been reunified with their children.

- family team conferencing<sup>5</sup> with all families prior to reunification, and just before post-placement supervision services are successfully terminated;
- Follow-up care to families;<sup>6</sup>
- mentoring/Tutoring services<sup>7</sup>; and
- quarterly permanency staffing on all children who are in out-of-home care placements.

### **Adoption Promotion and Support Services (25.99% of the FFY 2009 Grant)**

In Florida, Adoption Promotion and Support Services have encouraged the adoption of children from the foster care system when adoption promotes the best interests of the child. Pre- and post-adoptive services and activities have expedited the adoption process and supported adoptive families to prevent disruptions.

The adoption of foster children continues to be a state, as well as a local strength. In recent years, Florida has received federal bonuses for its adoption performance.

Adoption Promotion and Support Services<sup>8</sup> include:

- child-specific or targeted population recruitment efforts;
- collaboration with Early Learning Coalitions;
- home and school visitation with post adoptive families and children;
- launch of the “100 Longest-waiting Teens” initiative
- adoptive parent support groups;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prevention/Reunification Specialists facilitate meetings. These conferences are made available to clients referred under the prevention referral process.

<sup>6</sup> Activities include weekly home visits to discuss parenting and communication issues as well as specific strengths and challenges to the family.

<sup>7</sup> Activities provided to children to enhance their self-esteem, self-confidence, and provide a positive adult role model. Tutoring allows the child to obtain additional educational support and training.

<sup>8</sup> Services and activities designed to encourage more adoptions from the foster care system, when adoption promotes the best interests of children, and to support children and adoptive parents during the adoptive placement process and after finalization.

<sup>9</sup> Activities related to creating new adoptive and foster parent support groups and supporting and maintaining existing parent support groups. The support groups seek to reduce the social isolation of families by developing a peer support network.

- counseling referrals;
- town hall meetings and “Lunch and Learn” activities;
- individual and family counseling for adopted children and/or family members (must be of 12-month duration or less);
- adoption workshops/seminars for adopted children and their families and professionals on topics relevant to on-going issues facing adoptive families;
- on-going parent education and training opportunities for adoptive families; and
- follow-up support services and liaison to adoptive families<sup>10</sup>.

### **Community Facilitation and Innovative Practices**

Recognizing that when the Department, Community-Based Care agencies and our many partners such as faith based organizations, civic groups and our business partners collaborate and provide family centered practices, we can make a difference in the preserving Florida’s children while protecting children. Several innovative practices are listed below to illustrate the State’s commitment. Examples of innovations include:

- **Quality Life Center** - A localized prevention program that serves three high-risk zip codes in central Lee County. This area had the highest number of abuse reports two years ago when the program was first funded. Each family’s case plan is individualized and can include services provided by the center.
- **Brevard (County) C.A.R.E.S.** (Coordination, Advocacy, Resources, Education, and Support) Program, which provides support to families and helps divert families from the child welfare system by providing services to families that are experiencing stress, and are in need of support and resources. The CARES program provides families with Wraparound Services and Family Team Conferencing and provides families referrals and funding for counseling, mentoring, financial assistance, and links to natural community supports. Referrals are made by anyone in the community who knows of a family needing extra support and assistance and by Child Protective Investigators. This program impacted the system fiscally by saving dollars in unnecessary out-of-home care and case management.
- **Help Now of Osceola County** – Help Now provides for an Expert Advocate/Trainer position and a Child Advocate position for Osceola County.

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<sup>10</sup> Lead agencies designate staff whose sole responsibility is to work with families who need assistance after their adoption is finalized. Staff attempt to locate resources within the community for pre and post-adoptive families to meet both the child’s and family’s needs. This person also educates adoptive parents, biological parents, and adoptive children on available resources to obtain family birth information. The Post-Adoption Specialist also documents, records, and maintains case files for post adoption services rendered, and provides mini-trainings for staff and community service providers on post-adoptive services and related issues.

The Expert Advocate/Trainer works closely with Case Management staff to ensure that appropriate services are provided to victims of domestic violence and their children. The Child Advocate provides counseling services to children residing at the Help Now shelter.

**Keeping Families Together** – A diversion project supporting the work of local Child Protective Investigators (CPI's) by providing information, support and services to families in Pinellas and Pasco counties. The goal is to provide community resources and support to families so that children may remain safely at home with their families. Eckerd Community Alternatives (ECA)'s Keeping Families Together features Community Resource Specialists who work directly with Child Protective Investigators to serve as navigators by providing linkages to community resources in an effort to prevent dependency and mitigate risk of potential removal of children from their families. These specialists utilize resource information gathered from asset mapping projects; they also have access to the ECA Utilization Management Specialist; ECA Volunteers; 2-1-1; and other community resources. On a case-by-case basis, the specialists may request funds to meet the needs of families as approved by the ECA Utilization Management Specialist. In Pinellas County, the ECA Prevention staff is on site once a week at the Sheriff's Department. In the future, ECA and Pinellas Sheriff's Office, Child Protective Investigations will be co-located in a new location. This program design enhances communication and the community resources staffing process.

**Administration (4.01% of the FFY 2008 Grant)**

Includes the costs of in-home and out-of-home "community facilitation services" that are not provided through contributions from state and local sources. These services are defined in Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, Section 431 as the costs associated with developing, revising and implementing and coordinating the comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan/Promoting Safe and Stable Families five-year plan.

The table below displays the specific details regarding the differences between the estimated and actual grant award.

FY 2008 Title IV-B, Difference Part II	Estimated Award	% of Est. Award	Actual Award	% of Actual Award	
Family Preservation	3,932,681	24.85	3,717,027.50	25.26	-0.42%
Family Support	4,090,969	25.85	3,020,921.44	20.53	5.31%
Time Limited Family Reunification	3,457,816	21.85	3,597,801.68	24.45	-2.61%
Adoption Promotion & Support	4,249,258	26.85	3,921,958.14	26.65	0.19%
Administration	98,271	0.62	456,695.24	3.10	-2.48%
<b>Actual Total Award</b>	<b>15,828,851</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>14,714,404.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

## Chapter 5

# Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Grant Application

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This chapter serves as the application for Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funding. There are two sections to this chapter:

- (1) Current activities and accomplishments during the reporting period and
- (2) The proposed plan for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011.

Each of these sections addresses plan requirements and the three program areas in Florida's state plan.

The goals and objectives pertaining to the Child Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Plan remain consistent with the Child and Family Services Five Year Plan (CFSP), 2010-2014.

It is paramount that children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. The Florida Department of Children and Families, with primary support from the Family Safety Program Office, continues to be the lead agency designated to administer the Child Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Act grant funds. The Family Safety Program Office is also the designated lead agency for the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) federal grant and the Children's Justice Act (CJA) grant. This oversight affords technical assistance for the implementation of evidenced-based and other effective practices and for the development of systemic approaches to outcome improvement at both the state and local community levels.

This continuity in lead agency designation facilitates and promotes achievement of the following defined statewide objectives:

- Prevent children from experiencing abuse or neglect.
- Ensure the safety of children through improved investigative processes.
- Ensure the safety of children while preserving the family structure.

# **CAPTA ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

## **OVERVIEW**

The State continues to develop, strengthen and support prevention and intervention services in the public and private sectors to address child abuse and neglect. Because of Florida's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state population, the Department and the Executive Office of the Governor have addressed Section 106 (a) of CAPTA through community-based plans and services. Florida funds a multitude of unique community-based services designed by community groups and delivered by child welfare professionals. Each Community-Based Care Lead Agency (CBC) under contract with the Department uses CAPTA funds to support case management, service delivery, and ongoing case monitoring in its area. The array of services includes in-home supports, counseling, parent education, Family Team Conferencing, homemaker services and support groups. Prevention services are delivered at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels and treatment interventions are designed to prevent the reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect.

### **Activities and Accomplishments Related to Plan Requirements**

#### **PART C**

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) has a significant requirement for States to have provisions and procedures for the referral of children under the age of three who are involved in substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect to early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) [42 U.S.C. 5106a, Sec. 106(b)(2)(A)(xxi)]. Florida has defined "substantiated" as any case with verified findings of child abuse or neglect.

The Department of Health (DOH) is the state's lead agency and has the primary responsibility of delivering services under Part C in Florida. However, there are activities and services where collaboration between the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Health is essential.

Florida's Early Steps program is designed to ensure that children under the age of three who are involved in substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect and are potentially eligible for early intervention services are referred for assessment and potential services.



The Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT) is authorized and required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as amended by Public Law 105-17. The role of FICCIT is to assist public and private agencies in implementing a statewide system of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs providing appropriate early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and risk conditions and their families. The Department of Health is the lead agency for this council, as well, but this represents one of the more critical partnerships for young children for the Department of Children and Families.

#### 2008-09 Update

The FICCIT plays a very important role in the decision making process for the children and their families in the state of Florida. The following are some of, but not exclusively, the responsibilities of the FICCIT:

- Assist and advise the lead agency (DOH) in coordinating activities for the planning and preparation of IDEA applications and amendments, as appropriate.
- Provide advice and assistance to the lead agency in the development of policy and definitions for the minimum components of Public Law 102-119, IDEA, Part C.
- Assist in the preparation and submission of an annual report on the status of Early Intervention Programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and risk conditions and their families.
- Recommend procedures for distribution of funds and priorities for program support under Part C of the IDEA as amended by Public Law 102-119.
- Assist the lead agency in developing and reporting information and evaluations of programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and risk conditions and their families.
- Assist the lead agency in seeking information from service providers, service coordinators, parents and others about any federal, state, or local policies that impede timely service.
- Conduct meetings on a quarterly basis at various locations throughout the state. The meetings are open to the general public.

### Accomplishments

During the reporting period, two Department of Children and Families leaders were appointed to the FICCIT.

Also during the reporting period, an interagency agreement was developed by a work group of the FICCIT which resulted in the children referred to the Early Steps program receiving services.

By working with the FICCIT, the Department established a stronger relationship with DOH, which resulted in receiving the assistance of its staff in other Department initiatives, such as the Gabriel Myers Workgroup. This workgroup addressed very young children receiving psychotropic medication.

### Collaboration

Representatives from the Department of Children and Families, Family Safety Program Office, Children's Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and the Department of Health's offices of Children's Medical Services, Maternal and Child Health, Prevention and Intervention and Early Steps, along with Florida Head Start, and the Florida Center for Prevention and Intervention and Infant Mental Health have worked diligently on the interagency agreement regarding referrals to the Early Steps program.

### Program Support

A CAPTA workgroup within the Council was developed in the summer of 2006 to address and implement federal requirements. This group continues to work toward ensuring that all potentially eligible children are referred for early screening for disabilities. The Department of Children and Families staff has participated on both the council and the workgroup and will continue to do so.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT (CJA)**

The Department of Children and Families applies for and receives the Children's Justice Act (CJA) grant award annually through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The Family Safety Program Office is responsible for completing the grant application and monitoring the program.

### Accomplishments

The Department authorizes funds for programs and projects to support and implement recommendations received from its multi-disciplinary task force, the Task Force on Fostering Success.

For this reporting period, the following items were supported through the grant:

- The annual Dependency Summit to educate, train and bring together current and potential child welfare stakeholders to elicit creative and innovative practices to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases. Approximately 1,700

people working on behalf of children attended, including leaders and staff from the Department of Juvenile Justice.

- The Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Special Study in Development of Policy and Practice Approaches to develop an evidenced-based approach for working with youth involved in the dependency system who are either the victims or perpetrators in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse.
- Technical support, training and expertise for supervised visitation programs which included a website for programs to utilize for on-line training and other resource links, including an annual data report regarding access and visitation between children in foster care and their families.
- Supported attendance at critical meetings that support reform in Florida's child welfare system, e.g., the Task Force on Fostering Success, the Children's Justice Act Task Force, and a grantee representative to attend the annual national Children's Justice Act meeting.

### Collaboration

The Task Force on Fostering Success fulfills requirements of the CJA Grant Award by meeting quarterly. Sub-committees and workgroups affiliated with the Task Force focused on child sexual abuse, provided oversight of Florida's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan, and reviewed improvements in the child welfare system regarding the use of psychotropic medication for children in foster care. There is also a multidisciplinary steering committee for the development of the annual Dependency Summit.

### Program Support

The Task Force provides programmatic support by reviewing and providing recommendations to the Department and Community-Based Care agencies on serving abused and neglected children. Staff members from the Department provide support to and participate in the meetings, as well as develop work plans and other products relating to the work of the Task Force.

## **COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM (CBCAP)**

### 2008-09 Update

Florida received the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP) grant award of \$1,382,558 based on Florida's child population and matching funds through the state's Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund. Close to \$1 million of the allocated 2009 funds supports continuation of prevention programs, including the Florida 2-1-1 Network, and a continuing contract with the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, Inc. for activities related to the annual child abuse prevention campaign.

Statewide and regional projects focus on public awareness and community education initiatives, training for professionals, and support of statewide resources for family violence prevention.

### Accomplishments

During the reporting period, funded programs provided direct services to more than 10,000 children, caregivers, and other family members. Education and training designed to prevent child abuse and family violence reached more than 7,500 children, parents, community members and professionals.

Because Florida focuses its activities and services to prevent child abuse and neglect at the community level, the needs of our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities, families and children are much more likely to be met.

### Collaboration

While child abuse prevention and family support programs administered under the CBCAP funds primarily focus on promoting positive parenting, healthy family functioning and family self-sufficiency, a variety of service models are supported, including family resource centers, school/community partnerships, community centers, intensive home visiting, and school-based prevention services for children.

### Program Support

The Department contracts with a set of core programs for primary and secondary child abuse prevention services to complement the existing network of additional primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs and services. The specialist from the Family Safety Program Office coordinates efforts with providers, communities, and state and local leaders and advocates.

## **CITIZENS REVIEW PANELS**

In response to the CAPTA requirements, as required in 42 U.S.C. 5106a, Section 106 (c)(6), the Department has designated three entities as Citizen Review Panels. Each of these meet the requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act: The currently designated panels are:

- Task Force on Fostering Success (formerly the Task Force on Child Protection),
- Independent Living Services Advisory Council; and,
- Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee.

For additional information, activities, recommendations and the required Department responses of these three panels, please refer to their annual reports included as Attachments.

### **Task Force on Fostering Success**

The Task Force was established in July 2007 by then Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, Bob Butterworth, to examine child protection issues that were brought to light during media coverage of the Courtney Clark case. This 23-member panel, comprised of child protection professionals and other child welfare stakeholders, initially focused attention on the gaps that exist in the system when responding to and locating missing children. With extensive public comments and analysis of current case practice, the panel recommended administrative, policy, legislative, education, and training efforts to be undertaken to ensure the safety of Florida's children. The Task force was re-established in December 2008 by Secretary George Sheldon.

### 2008-2009 Update

Various subcommittee conference calls and work group meetings occurred over the course of this reporting period. During the reporting period there were four quarterly statewide meetings:

- August 25, 2009- Orlando Florida
- June 4, 2009- Tampa Florida
- March 9, 2009- Tallahassee
- December 12, - 2008 Ft. Lauderdale

### Accomplishments

In addition to those accomplishments listed under the Criminal Justice Act section of this chapter, the Task Force on Foster Success achieved the following:

- Reviewed the adoption process and developed proposed legislation to reach permanency for children whose parents are incarcerated for a long length of time.
- Analyzed provision of services for youth who enter Independent Living Program and referred their recommendations to the chair of the Independent Living Services Advisory Council. Recommendations include mentoring programs for youth who age out and go to college, assistance with jobs, housing, etc.

- Conducted literature review of varying foster/adoptive parent training programs in Florida and nationally. Their work was linked with the Quality Parent Initiative that is now in seven CBC's around the state. Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation are our leaders in changing our foster parent recruitment and retention initiative. These pilots informed the workgroup progress.
- Sponsored several presentations on the "Disproportionality of Minorities in the Foster Care System". The committee will support statewide efforts to address the issue through local initiatives and support of the Florida Council on the Status of Black Men and Boys' Foster Care and Family Issues Subcommittee
- Established new workgroups in January 2009 for the following new initiatives:
  - Legal Representation of Children This group is providing input and continuous improvement to the child welfare legal system to include the Children's Legal Services within the Department of Children and Families.
    1. This group of stakeholders worked for a year to develop recommendations related to the sustainability of the Children's Legal Services model of representation and regarding best practices related to representation of children in the dependency system.
    2. Secretary Sheldon reconstituted the Legal Services Subcommittee with expanded membership to ensure that all voices can engage in the dialogue and work together to build the best system of care possible for our children. The August 26, 2009 meeting was the first meeting of the reconstituted Subcommittee.
    3. Continued work on the issue of representation of children is occurring throughout Florida and the nation through the work of the Florida Bar and the American Bar Association (ABA).

Integration within the Department This group has reviewed the interrelations and integration of the Department of Children and Families, Family Safety, Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

#### Interagency Relations

- Spearheaded the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, APD, waitlist project to match how many children in care were on waitlists.
- The goal was to get services more immediately and this was accomplished with many kids who were languishing.
- The Department of Education, DOE, was a big partner because every child had to be staffed and this was a true teaming effort.
- This group was instrumental in getting the DOE-DCF-APD-DJJ-AWI interagency agreement.

#### Oversight of Implementation

- Reviewed a proposal to conduct a literature review and analysis on Child-On-Child Sexual Abuse processes.

*Gabriel Myers Work Group* This group's charge was to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the tragic death of 7-year-old Gabriel Myers. Gabriel died on April 16, 2009, when police indicated he apparently hanged himself in the shower of his foster parents' home. The work group conducted a full inquiry into the facts of the case, in light of case management and judicial decisions, as well as determine the contributing effects that psychotropic drugs. The work group's final report has been designated as the Task Force annual report in that it reviewed the child welfare system through this case and identified areas of change and improvement  
(<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/GMWorkgroup/docs/GabrielMyersWorkGroupReport082009Final.pdf>)

### Collaboration

The Task Force, by its design and composition, is able to accomplish the charge to review issues that cross agencies and organizations with emphasis on Child Protection and Child Welfare. Membership includes representatives from the Judiciary, State Social Service and Criminal Justice agencies, Education, local children's services, child advocates, child welfare and substance abuse and mental health providers, parents and youth. This unique group has the capacity to leverage and influence both policy and practice through their recommendations.

### Program Support

Program Support is primarily provided by the Department of Children and Families, Family Safety Program Office and Operations. Other agencies are called upon for specific support when needed.

### The Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC)

This council is legislatively mandated under s. 409.1451(7), Florida Statutes. The functions of ILSAC are to review and make recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of independent living transition services. The ILSAC also touches upon many broader aspects of foster care, including achieving permanency.

## 2008-2009 Update

Council members have a variety of experiences and are from diverse backgrounds, including former foster care young adults. The 40-member panel meets quarterly. Each year, the council prepares and submits an annual report to the Florida Legislature and the Department of Children and Families on the status of services being provided, including successes and barriers to these services. The annual report provides recommendations for improvements to services for Florida's children and young adults. Further detail is provided at the following link: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/AdvisoryCouncil/index.shtml>

As required by statute, the Council met periodically (approximately quarterly) during this period and issued a report for the period ending December 31, 2008. The Annual Report is the Council's primary work product. Although not covered by the time period of this report, the 2009 report is also available at the link above. The Council assessed the effectiveness of the service delivery system and made recommendations for improvement.

## Accomplishments

The Council continues to be a strong voice for youth and includes a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure various perspectives are heard. Under the leadership of Jane Soltis, the ILSAC chairperson, the Council works closely with the Department and the community-based care agencies to improve service delivery.

## Collaboration

The Council represents a collaborative with youth, foster parents, executive agencies, advocate attorneys, and child welfare service providers.

## Program Support

Members of the Council are active in their communities and across the state. They help to provide training and technical assistance to ensure the program is supported at the local and state level. The Department provides staff support to the Council. Both the Council Chair and the members provide advice and consultation to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and leadership of child welfare programs.

## The Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee

This citizens' committee was established by the Florida Legislature in 1999 under s. 383.402, Florida Statutes. The committee uses an 18-member state panel and locally developed multi-disciplinary teams to conduct detailed reviews of the facts and circumstances surrounding child abuse and neglect deaths in which a verified report of abuse or neglect is accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline. The purpose of the committee is to develop data-driven recommendations for reducing preventable child deaths due to abuse and neglect by caregivers.

## 2008-2009 Update



- Reviewed the case records and child death reports of 204 children whose deaths were confirmed to have been from verified child abuse or neglect. Of those deaths, 198 occurred in 2008 and 6 deaths occurred in prior years. Reviews were completed by the statewide committee and by locally developed multi-disciplinary committees.
- Provided findings from reviews to the Florida Department of Children and Families so that initiatives could be taken to improve practice.
- Submitted the annual State Child Abuse Death Review Committee report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House.
- Identified recommendations for legislative action, including expansion of child death review to include all children or, at a minimum, all child deaths reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline.
- Provided training on investigating physical abuse and/or neglect deaths, mandatory reports of child deaths, and the opportunities for making good risk assessments and what they can mean to the protection of children.

#### Accomplishments

- Provided training across the state in child death investigations. Trainings have contributed to increased reports to the Hotline. For example, deaths related to murder/suicides and abandoned newborns are received as calls to the Hotline. This training is routinely provided by state committee members.
- Continued to support prevention efforts with lead assistance from the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, Inc.(The Ounce).
- Conducted case file reviews and made recommendations to improve practice through:
  - Helping all parties achieve a greater understanding of the causes and contributing factors of deaths resulting from child abuse or neglect;
  - Identifying gaps, deficiencies or problems in service delivery to children and families by public and private agencies that may be related to child abuse deaths; and
  - Developing and implementing data driven recommendations for reducing child abuse and neglect deaths.

## Collaboration

- The Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee worked with the Department of Children and Families on the following initiatives undertaken in 2009/2010:
  - Development and adoption of standardized guidelines and multidisciplinary approaches for the investigation of the unexpected deaths of infants and children.
  - Development of clearer guidelines for field drug testing of caregivers as part of their protocols for the investigation of the unexpected deaths of infants and children.
  - Expansion of risk assessments conducted by child protective investigators to include drowning risk factors when there is a pool on the premises or bodies of water close to the home.
  - Ensuring a multi-disciplinary staffing held when there is a change in the child's placement that differs from the recommendation made by the Child Protection Team and/or DCF.
  - Addressing reporting and consistency in child death findings through on-going comprehensive data analysis that includes comparative data by circuit, potential under-reporting of maltreatment types, verification rates, and reporter types.
  - Worked extensively with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Ounce of Prevention, local law enforcement, local child protective investigators, medical examiners, and other community leaders to provide information and train staff on prevention programs that are successful in preventing child deaths.

## Program Support

The Florida Department of Children and Families provides staff support to the State Death Review Committee and local Child Death Review Committees.

## **TRAINING**

Please note training activities, products and events are also described under other sections of this chapter and in Chapter Three of this report.

## 2008-09 Update

The Department contracts with Florida International University (FIU) to develop and maintain Florida's pre-service curriculum for Florida's child welfare work force. The

current curriculum was implemented on January 1, 2007. The design of the curriculum encompasses all 148 core competencies presented to the Florida Legislature, as required by s. 402.40, F.S. The sequencing of the curriculum was established through instructional design concepts, based on proven elements of adult learning theory. Pre-service training on the legal requirements for removal and placement provide new case managers instruction on placing children in close proximity to a child's family (caregivers) at the time of removal.

Standardization of delivery is encouraged, but trainers are allowed to change the sequence of delivery, augmenting the prescribed format to include specific information pertinent to the local system of care. Trainers cannot offer a different curriculum, as Section 402.40, F.S. prescribes a "single integrated curriculum." Trainers can however enhance curriculum content by utilizing actual case and/or agency specific document(s) during trainings to increase the skill set and knowledge base of their respective trainees.

During 2008-2009, the pre-service curriculum began the process of revision and updating to incorporate navigational instruction for Florida's SACWIS system, the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). The revisions are being completed by FIU with input being provided by both Department programmatic leads, content experts and community-based and law enforcement field staff.

In-service or ongoing training is required to maintain certification as a child welfare professional. A total of 48 hours of in-service training must be completed every three years to keep certification current. Community-based care agencies and Sheriff's Offices develop their own in-service training plans responsive to their local needs. Budget for both pre-service and in-service training is included in the overall funding structure for these private providers under contract with the Department.

The Department also offers a variety of in-service training opportunities for staff. These include bi-annual Regional Training events, the aforementioned Dependency Summit, and a variety of specific in-service training on critical topics that are delivered through both classroom style and web-based instruction.

### Accomplishments

The Department, through its contracted providers (Community-Based Care agency employees), delivers training to current and prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under Title IV-E. Training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

Two regional training events were held in which more than 1,000 combined staff attended these events. The 2009 Dependency Summit was also held, with

approximately 1,700 in attendance for August 2009. Lastly, in findings from a survey of Community Based Care Agencies and review of their 2008 – 2009 Training Plans, on average one in-service training opportunity was provided to staff on a monthly basis (12/year). The most frequently trained topics included mental health, domestic violence, interviewing and substance abuse issues.

The Florida Abuse Hotline supports each circuit with training material concerning mandated reporter information upon request.

Additionally, the State Child Death Review Committee, in conjunction with other agencies such as, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, and Healthy Families Florida provided training throughout the state to increase awareness on mandated reporting. Case examples include, but not limited to: murder suicides; traffic crashes that resulted in a child's death where the caretaker was neglectful or impaired by substances; deaths that involved drugs (legal and illegal) and/or alcohol in the home where the caretaker was impaired; and drowning deaths, which were a result of children being inadequately supervised.

#### Collaboration

As illustrated, the Department works collaboratively within the various program offices of the Department as well as with community stakeholders to provide training for mandated reporters, as well as other professionals responsible for service provision.

#### Program Support

The Department, through its contracted providers (Community-Based Care agency employees), delivers training to current and prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under Title IV-E. Training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

### **Activities and Accomplishments Related to State Plan Program Service Areas: 42 U.S.C. 5106a**

The second requirement of the CAPTA grant is to address Florida's three program areas in its state plan. Each of these program areas underpins and is integrated with the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and the Children and Families Services Review (CFSR), so cross referencing has been provided where applicable. The goals,

objectives and bench marks of the QIP and CFSR are outlined and updated in Chapter 7 of this report.

In addition to the three state plan program areas, strides in other program areas are briefly described.

### **(1) INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, SCREENING, AND INVESTIGATION OF REPORTS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

During this reporting period, the Family Safety Program Office focused on refining the Intake (investigations) area of the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), to improve assessment and provision of services to families. Significant changes (explained in greater detail below) included the design of a safety plan instrument and template for statewide use, expansion of data extraction/analysis capabilities for managers, and the development of new practice in the areas of child trafficking, foster care referrals, and referrals involving youth in the juvenile justice system.

#### Information and Data

Release 2a of FSFN provided a new standardized safety plan for use by child protective investigators across the state. This release was completed during the reporting period to document an immediate response, timely decision-making, and specific safety actions taken and the involvement of the family in safety planning when imminent harm to a child is identified. The template provides a concise electronic format for documenting safety considerations and safety actions jointly developed and signed by the worker and family (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, CFSR Item 4 and QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 1). A number of training workshops and resources were developed to support the implementation of the FSFN Safety Plan practice and related system template.

“Child Protective Investigative Trend Reports” were created and made available through The Center’s web site to facilitate quality improvement efforts. These reports are separate from the data reports contained in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and are intended to be an additional source of useful information. Commonly referred to as “Spinner Reports,” this system provides program staff and stakeholders with access to investigation data trend elements on a state, region or circuit level basis (up to 24 months). Available charts include, for example, data on the percent of investigations containing a specific type of maltreatment (burns, medical neglect, etc.) or type of finding (verified or no indications, etc.) (QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A).

#### Second Party Reviews

During this reporting period, the Department also designed a ‘Second Party Reviewer’ certification process for managers with the responsibility for approving cases containing

certain risk indicators (e.g., a child 4 years old or younger, etc.) in FSFN. The certification process included meeting a set of prerequisites based on prior work experience and completing the Second Party Review training developed by the Family Safety Program Office (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 2). Both web-based and field based trainings were made available on the Second Party Reviewer process and certification.

#### The Florida Abuse Hotline

The single entry point to child welfare services in Florida is the Florida Abuse Hotline. All child abuse and neglect allegations received through the centralized Florida Abuse Hotline located in Tallahassee, occurs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Reports can be placed via the toll free telephone number (1-800-96-ABUSE), fax, in writing, through telecommunication devices for the deaf, and via a link on the Department's internet website.

Florida Abuse Hotline counselors improve child protective investigation response time by quickly identifying where the child will actually be during the next 24 hours, and if there are any potential dangers to the child protective investigator. The implementation of the Hotline's Crime Intelligence Unit in 2005 also increases the quality of the initial contact with the child and family by giving child protective investigators important criminal history and law enforcement information prior to commencing an investigation and having more complete information on hand to make safety assessments and improve front end decision making.

Upon receiving and accepting a report for an allegation of abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment, Hotline counselors generate a report in FSFN which is then forwarded to the Hotline's Crime Intelligence Unit within 28 minutes. Within 28 minutes, the Crime Intelligence Unit completes Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), Juvenile Justice Information System, Department of Corrections, Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and FDLE Sexual Predators checks and forwards the abuse/neglect report to the county in which the child is physically located or, if the child is out of state, is anticipated to return to Florida.

In most, if not all states, families are able to be transferred between the assessment and investigative tracts (in either direction) based on any number of factors – with the most predominant determinants being safety considerations and resistance encountered from the family. Florida is no different in this respect.

#### Assessment, Screening, and Prevention Referrals

As mentioned in Chapter One, foster care referrals to the Hotline generally deal with licensing issues or special concerns involving foster care children, not abuse or neglect. Effective with the changes in FSFN, licensing staff are now allowed to be assigned as

the primary worker (instead of investigative staff) and can directly access and enter casework activity and assessment outcomes involving these referrals.

Florida recognizes that incidents with serious safety concerns should receive complete and appropriate child protective investigations. However, some situations reported to the Department are more appropriately addressed by a less adversarial assessment of needs and offer of services outside of the child welfare system. Engaging families in a less threatening way, when the situation does not warrant a formal investigation, increases the likelihood a family will acknowledge problems and agree to receive recommended services.

Intake through the Florida Abuse Hotline includes identifying such circumstances when a call does not rise to the level of a protective investigation, but may be addressed as a “prevention referral.” This practice is designed to give the Department an opportunity to help communities identify and provide services for families in order to avoid formal entrance into the child welfare system. The Department tracks such prevention referral activities and will continue to closely monitor the effects.

In January 2009, the Florida Abuse Hotline implemented a “Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Referral” process by which concerns related to event in DJJ facilities are forwarded to the DJJ to identify and investigate, but only when the concern does not rise to the level of a report of abuse/neglect for acceptance by the Florida Abuse Hotline. The Department of Juvenile Justice worked closely with the Florida Abuse Hotline to develop screening criteria used to forward appropriate information to facility staff.

#### Alternative Response System

Alternative or differential response models provide for a family centered approach to child maltreatment cases that align with legislative mandates in section 39.001(1), F.S., to “engage families in constructive, supportive, and non-adversarial relationships.” Florida completed an Alternative Response System (ARS) pilot project in three counties (Duval, Bay, and Seminole) from April thru October 2008.

Other states determine the appropriate response to the family based primarily on the type of child maltreatment alleged, in which chronic, neglect cases involving lack of shelter, food or clothing typically assigned in the assessment track. Florida’s uniqueness is found in the fact that every family will continue to receive an initial safety assessment designed to identify “imminent or present signs of danger” prior to initial track assignment. If significant safety issues are identified, families will be assigned to the traditional investigative tract for a complete investigation. If no significant safety issues are noted but prospective or long term risks to the children are identified, families will be assigned to the family assessment track for follow-up.

## Criminal Background Checks in Florida

By adding statutory language on background screening to Chapter 39, Florida's dependency statute, the federal requirements are more clearly defined as it relates to screening for adoptive parents, relative and non-relative placements. No legislative changes were made as to criminal background checks in the 2009 legislative session.

Florida Administrative Code, 65C-16.007 requires that the preliminary home study for adoptive parents must include a records check of the Department's central abuse registry and criminal correspondence checks on the intended adoptive parents. Foster parents must have an initial federal criminal records check, a local criminal records check annually, and a state criminal check every five years, according to 65C-13.009, F.A.C. Other statutory requirements regarding foster parents still remain part of Section 435.045, F.S.

The Crime Intelligence Unit completes criminal history checks for investigations and placement to include subjects of the investigation for both child and adult abuse reports, and also other adult household members. Criminal history is completed by individual subjects using demographic information searching the following systems:

- Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) for subjects 12 years and older;
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) for subjects ages 12 to 26;
- Florida Department of Corrections (DOC) for subjects 12 years and older; and,
- Florida Sexual Predator Website for subjects 12 years and older.

The Florida Abuse Hotline provides Community-Based Care (CBC) service workers with preliminary placement approval for potential caregivers who may provide emergency placements. This access authorizes the Department to conduct both Florida and National criminal history checks for subjects identified as a potential placement and requires fingerprint submissions for subjects in the potential home over the age of 18 within 10 days of the criminal history request being completed.

As the first state to implement the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, Florida is authorized to search the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for subjects of the abuse report 12 years and older for the purpose of child protective investigations. When completing and approving home studies for foster and adoptive parents, the background screening process includes an abuse and neglect registry check from other states when the prospective parents have lived in other states within the five year period preceding the application to foster or adopt. The Department continues to have a designated Specialist to receive and process all requests for abuse registry checks from other states for foster care placements and adoptive parents.



In summary, the types of background checks conducted vary by program and reason for the request (i.e. investigation, emergency placement, planned placement); The Crime Intelligence Unit also conducts planned placement checks for investigations and non-licensed relative/non-relative placements. The Circuit background screeners also perform background screening activities for other situations such as childcare, employment, etc.

For additional information on the functions of the Crime Intelligence Unit, please refer to the Attachment section.

## Human Trafficking

Florida's statutory framework has been revised so that the Department can address the needs of these child victims of human trafficking. Specifically, s. 787.06(1)(d), F.S., states "It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Children and Family Services and other state agencies cooperate with other state and federal agencies to ensure that victims of human trafficking can access social services and benefits to alleviate their plight." The child protection statute,

s. 39.301(1), F.S., allows the Department to become involved when "a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care." Similarly, s. 39.301(2)(b), F.S., defined suspected or known child trafficking as a form of "criminal conduct" requiring notification of law enforcement by the Department.

In May 2009 the Department became one of the first states in the country to include "Human Trafficking" as a child maltreatment in order to be investigated by child welfare staff. To support implementation, the Family Safety Program Office in collaboration with the Office of Refugee Services, developed and disseminated a statewide operating procedure, a human trafficking indicator tool, and a Florida Abuse Hotline job aid for use in screening human trafficking maltreatments. Additionally, and again in conjunction with trainers on contract with the Office of Refugee Services, the Family Safety Program Office arranged for statewide training for child protective investigators and case management staff responsible for intervening with trafficked children. This overall training effort in identifying child trafficking victims received statewide recognition in 2009, when it received a "Prudential – Davis Productivity Award." This award program recognizes and rewards Florida's state government employees whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity, and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida's taxpayers and businesses.

## Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse

The Secretary's Task Force on Fostering Success began its study regarding child on child sexual abuse in the foster care system.

In May 2009, the Department, working in conjunction with the Justice Research Center, identified both trends and patterns for youth involved in the dependency system who are either the victims or perpetrators in incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse, as well as, evidenced-based approaches for service provision. The final report and recommendations were received by the Department in December 2009, and this work was used to provide a foundation to a sub-committee of the Secretary's Task Force on Fostering Success, which is now providing a more focused review of this issue.

## Disproportional Representation of Children of Color in Child Welfare

As in many other states, Florida's child welfare system has a disproportionate representation of African American children. The Task Force on Fostering Success has identified this as a priority issue for Florida's child welfare system.

The Department coordinated with the Center for Advancement of Child Welfare Practice to create an on-line resource page addressing "disproportionality" in child welfare in February 2009. During the same month the Family Safety Program Office developed a report showing disproportionality in out-of-home care at various points in the child welfare system. This report is updated monthly and can be used locally to identify gaps and develop local solutions.

### **(3) CASE MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING ONGOING CASE MONITORING, AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES AND TREATMENT PROVIDED TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

Several lead agencies reported the use of Family Team Conferencing (FTC) as a strategy to engage families in service planning expanded substantially during State Fiscal Year (SFY) 08-09. Nine of the eleven CBC lead agencies that utilized family team conferencing reported an increase in its use. In addition to utilizing FTC, CBC lead agencies reported an overall shift toward family-centered practice, giving examples of increased support of biological parents, as well as services and supports for relative caregivers, such as support groups and caregiver resource specialists who connect relatives to community services. Lead agencies CBCs also report:

- The Family Finding program is used as a strategy to reduce a child's length of stay in out-of-home care has increased. Two lead agencies with existing Family Finding programs increased the capacity of the service and one lead agency implemented a new Family Finding program during SFY 08-09.
- Services focused on adolescents in out-of-home care have also increased. Among these are independent living support services and the use of programs that provide treatment and support for youth with behavioral health difficulties.
- The Youth Villages Intercept program is used by two lead agencies to help emotionally and behaviorally troubled children and their families live successfully.

CBC lead agencies also reported an expansion of placement stability services and supports and permanency specialists who have oversight responsibilities for out-of-home care and adoption cases to ensure that the case plan goals are appropriate and that the child is moving through the system toward permanency.

A multitude of programs throughout the state provide services to prevent re-entry, for example, Family Support Teams, The Nurturing Program, The Family Integrity Prevention Program, CARE Program through Children's Home Society, mobile response teams for after hour crisis intervention, Healthy Families Orange, Behavioral Analysis Programs and Healthy Opportunities for Parenting Excellence (HOPE). Several Neighborhood Partnerships programs located across the state focus on strength-based localized case management utilizing the Family Team Conference Model. Also, Family Intervention Specialists through Substance Abuse and Mental Health assist families with substance abuse issues.

#### **(5) DEVELOPING AND UPDATING SYSTEMS OF TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORT THE PROGRAM AND TRACK REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FROM INTAKE THROUGH FINAL DISPOSITION AND ALLOW INTERSTATE AND INTRASTATE INFORMATION EXCHANGE.**

Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) is the Department's automated child welfare case management system, replacing HomeSafenet. The state's automated information system, HomeSafenet, met its purpose of identification of the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. This legacy system was replaced in August 2007.

Compared to the legacy system, FSFN currently provides enhanced functionality for intake, case management, and data reporting activities. The activities include individualized decision support tools, a single automated case record that follows a child who moves from one agency or provider to another; immediate access to the child's service, medical, and mental health history; tools for supervisory and management casework review; and improved data interpretation and accuracy of management reports.

During 2009, the Department focused on the design, acceptance, and pilot testing of remaining components of the SACWIS system including automated eligibility determination and financial processing. In August 2009, a major release of the system which included the automation of eligibility determination through and interface with the state's public assistance and eligibility determination system of record was successfully implemented. This implementation was followed by additional acceptance and pilot testing of financial functions and a major eligibility upgrade which was implemented in December 2009. Pilot testing of financial processing and related functional components of the system continued through March 2010, and the Department is currently working with its contracted child welfare service providers to complete the full transition to FSFN for financial processing as the last implementation step.

#### **Modernization of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)**

Since Florida's population is highly mobile, and many families have origins or connections in other states, the Interstate Compact process is an important part of Florida's efforts to identify and take advantage of opportunities for children's lifelong connections and stability. The ICPC processing system within the State of Florida began a conversion to electronic transmittal and

web based data transmission in Spring 2008. The goal of the modernization project was to eliminate transmittal of paper ICPC files through the mail, reduce the number of persons who handle a file, and shorten the time spent in the approval process. The assignment of cases by state has resulted in personal relationships being developed between Florida ICPC specialists and their counterparts in other states. Staff has also gained additional knowledge of the laws and regulations of their assigned states.

ICPC modernization converted the existing tracking system to a paperless file system. The process now scans all incoming and outgoing documents and creates various data entry screens to capture and store information on each case. One of the best features of the system is the generation of automatic e-mail reminders and notices for critical dates in the ICPC process.

The Interstate Compact System (ICS) database can be accessed by the courts, community-based care lead agencies, Guardians ad Litem, and Department attorneys. These stakeholders can view the master ICPC file and determine case status. This transparency has improved the quality of ICPC work and significantly reduced the time it takes to process a case within the State of Florida.

### **Additional Activities and Accomplishments in Program Areas not Included in the State Plan**

#### **(4) ENHANCING THE GENERAL CHILD PROTECTIVE SYSTEM BY DEVELOPING, IMPROVING, AND IMPLEMENTING RISK AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS**

The Department's initial child safety assessment was automated in 2002 which provided a standardized tool for assessing safety. In July 2007, the grouping of risk and safety factors was modified to align with the safety constructs adopted by the Department's Alternative Response System workgroup. The new child welfare information system tool breaks down the constructs into signs of present danger, child vulnerability, and parental protective capacities. This facilitates the ability of child protective investigators to much more effectively address interaction of these constructs leading to a safety determination and development of a safety plan. Multiple community-based care lead agencies have recently implemented new home visit forms that specifically address risks and services being offered in the home. Community-Based Care of Brevard, Inc. implemented an assessment tool which is administered at the onset of removal to identify strengths and needs. When placement is needed, children are placed in the least restrictive, normal environment. Services and placements are individualized in accordance with unique needs and potentials of each child.

The Department has implemented several countermeasures to address these findings. Design sessions in Florida Safe Families Network are addressing safety plans and multiple training initiatives have also been implemented.

During work sessions of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Statewide Assessment Safety Outcomes Workgroup, the Child Safety Assessment was noted as only containing one question each on substance abuse and domestic violence, which are two of the most frequently reported and substantiated maltreatments in Florida. Florida is examining assessment tools that may be useful to address this safety factor.

An exit interview completed within five days of a child's exit from a licensed foster care home is useful in determining potential risk or safety concerns as many children who are abused or neglected in the foster home do not report or disclose issues until after leaving the foster home. However, contract monitoring reports still continued need for consistent administration of the interviews.

Florida fully transitioned to the community based care model in 2005. Although policy requires ongoing assessments of risk and safety, currently there is not a statewide model of practice for assessing ongoing risk and safety. However, multiple community-based care agencies report seeking technical assistance from national consultants to enhance their assessment tool to differentiate between risk and safety. Design sessions in the automated statewide child welfare information system are addressing the statewide model of practice for assessing ongoing risk and safety.

## **(6) DEVELOPING, STRENGTHENING, AND FACILITATING TRAINING**

The Department contracts with Florida International University (FIU) to develop and maintain Florida's pre-service curriculum and also contracts with University of South Florida to operate a Training Academy. Every child welfare pre-service curriculum trainer must successfully complete The Training Academy in order to ensure that as trainers, they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver the single integrated pre-service curriculum. It is through the Training Academy that child welfare trainers demonstrate competency in content delivery, and accordingly is an assurance of quality training delivery.

The Training Academy also provides ongoing technical assistance and consultation to any child welfare trainer in the state. This ongoing support is also a contractual requirement.

The Department, through its contracted providers (Community-Based Care agency employees), delivers training to current and prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under Title IV-E. Training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

## **(8) DEVELOPING AND FACILITATING RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING INDIVIDUALS MANDATED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

The Department of Children and Families, Child Care Services Program Office, is statutorily responsible for the administration of child care licensing and training throughout Florida. Child care staff is mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect.

The Child Care Services Program Office currently regulates licensed child care facilities, licensed family day care homes, licensed large family child care homes, and licensed mildly ill facilities in now 61 of the 67 counties in Florida. In addition, the Child Care Program Office administers the registration of family day care homes not required to be licensed.

Child care personnel must begin training by commencing coursework within 90 days of employment in the child care industry. The introductory child care training is divided into two

parts. Part I includes the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Annual in-service training requirements include child abuse, working with children with disabilities and community, health and social service resources.

**(11) DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING INFORMATION TO IMPROVE PUBLIC EDUCATION RELATING TO THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM AND THE NATURE AND BASIS FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The Florida Abuse Hotline supports each circuit with training material concerning mandated reporter information upon request.

Additionally, the State Child Death Review Committee, in conjunction with other agencies such as, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, and Healthy Families Florida provided

training throughout the state to increase awareness on mandated reporting. Case examples include, but not limited to: murder suicides; traffic crashes that resulted in a child's death where the caretaker was neglectful or impaired by substances; deaths that involved drugs (legal and illegal) and/or alcohol in the home where the caretaker was impaired; and drowning deaths, which were a result of children being inadequately supervised.

**(14) SUPPORTING AND ENHANCING COLLABORATION AMONG PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES, THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM, AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES (INCLUDING LINKAGES WITH EDUCATION SYSTEMS) AND TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEEDS, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS, OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS ABUSED OR NEGLECTED, INCLUDING SUPPORTING PROMPT, COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE THE SUBJECT OF SUBSTANTIATED CHILD MALTREATMENT REPORTS**

Gabriel Myers Workgroup

A workgroup was appointed under the auspices of the Task Force on Fostering Success whose charge it was to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the tragic death of 7-year-old Gabriel Myers. Gabriel died on April 16, 2009. Police indicated he had apparently hung himself in the shower of his foster parents' home. The workgroup conducted a full inquiry into the facts of the case to determine the contributing effects of psychotropic drugs. The workgroup's final report has been designated as the Task Force's required Citizen's Review Panel's annual report in that it reviewed the child welfare system through this case and identified areas of change and improvement. The report can be located in the Attachments Section of this report and at the following web address:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/GMWorkgroup/docs/GabrielMyersWorkGroupReport082009Final.pdf>

Trauma Informed Care

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, one in four children has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning or behavior. While learning problems and emotional problems stemming from the experience of trauma can co-occur, it is important to be aware of the trauma history of children who are observed to have problems of attention and concentration, aggression, or other behavioral difficulties. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network is an excellent source of information and resources for teachers and parents.

[http://www.nctsn.com/nccts/nav.do?pid=ctr\\_aud\\_schl](http://www.nctsn.com/nccts/nav.do?pid=ctr_aud_schl)

The Department established an Advisory Team which is comprised of membership from multiple agencies relevant to both adult and child perspectives. This team meets face-to-face quarterly to move Trauma-Informed Practice forward.

The Office of Adoption and Child Protection

The 2007 Legislature created the Executive Office of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in the Governor's Office and assigned much of the same responsibilities the Task Force had undertaken in development and implementation of Florida's State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005 through June 2010. In

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addition, the 2007 Legislature created the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet charged with developing and implementing a “shared and cohesive vision using integrated services to improve child, youth and family outcomes...”

Florida’s collaborative efforts in the prevention of child abuse and neglect previously supported by the Inter-program Prevention Task Force will continue to work collaboratively with the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection. As mentioned, the Office of Adoption and Child Protection is to establish a Child Abuse Prevention Advisory Council comprised of representatives from each state agency and appropriate local agencies, and organizations to serve as the research arm of the office. Additionally, the Advisory Council assists in the development of an action plan for better coordination and integration of the goals, activities and funding pertaining to the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect conducted by the office.

For example, the QIP Goal 1: Strengthen policy and improve practice to ensure safety of children is directly linked to the prevention goal as stated in the 18-month Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009 – June 2010. Prevention Goal 1 is to reduce by June 30, 2010 the child abuse rate from the fiscal year 2007-2008 statewide rate of 28.8 to 27.5 per 1,000 children.

In accordance with state law (s. 39.001, F.S), the Office of Adoption and Child Protection steered the creation of an 18-month Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009 – June 2010 (The Plan). The plan provides plans of action for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families. This plan reflects Florida’s commitment to engage state agencies and local communities in a collaborative effort to prevent child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promote adoption; and support our adoptive families. Utilizing the Plan, Florida supports the exploration of feasibility of developing programs or initiatives, such as the following:

- Blueprint for Strengthening Families Initiative
- Whole Child Connection
- Faith Prevention Initiative Blueprint



- Positive Parenting Program
- Healthy Families Florida
- Short Term Home Visiting

For more information on the interim 18-month plan, please refer to <http://www.flgov.com/pdfs/ChildAdvocacy/flplcapp122008.pdf>

Additional work has occurred this reporting period to develop the State's Five Year Prevention and Permanency Plan. At the time of this writing the plan is in its final stages for publication by June 30, 2010.

The five year CAPTA plan supports the activities outlined in Florida's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), and based on the second round CFPSR results; the Department's Strategic Direction 2009 - 2011 developed for Secretary George Sheldon, and the agency's Long Range Program Plan for Fiscal Years 2009-2010 through 2013 – 2014 as well as a number of other meaningful reform efforts such as the Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009 - June 2010.

Another stated goal of the Child and Families Services Plan is to improve *Service Array* and utilization of prevention and diversion programs. Specifically, the objective is to reduce the number of out-of-home placements to focus on in-home services, prevention and diversion referrals. Strategies are to:

- Conduct gap analysis of prevention service needs;
- Increase the number of safety plans implemented;
- Increase the use of family support and family preservation services; and,
- Increase diversion referrals through use of ARS and other diversion program.

## **PROPOSED PLAN FOR FFY 2011**

The Proposed Plan section outlines initiatives already begun that will continue through the next funding cycle (2011) and adds new activities for promoting the safety and well-being of Florida's children. Part C, the Criminal Justice Act, Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program, Citizen Review Panels, and training ongoing and additional efforts are outlined, as well as, the three program areas of intake, case management and technology included in Florida's current plan.

*In previous chapters of this report the sections under each program area, Future Plans, are also part of the 2011 plan.*

The proposed plan for 2011 includes activities, products and events described for the reporting period that have continued year-to-date and will continue and be improved upon. The implementation of recommendations from the Children and Families Services Review addressed through Florida's the Quality Improvement Plan is the essence of the plan for 2011. Many of the recommendations from external citizen work groups, councils and task forces will also be the focus of much future work on behalf of children and families.

## **Future Plans in the Required Elements**

### **PART C**

The Eligibility Criteria Workgroup will convene to review the existing interagency agreement for access to Early Steps to assess for necessary revisions at the statewide and local levels. Increased collaboration with the Department of Health's Early Steps will also occur to ensure access for child victims.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT (CJA)**

The Department will remain committed to implementing the various initiatives already supported through its CJA funding as the CJA is an ongoing federal block grant. The Task Force for Fostering Connections will continue to meet the collaborative requirements for the grant and the in-progress initiatives are consistent with the intent of the grant funding. These include: The Task Force on Fostering Success, the annual Dependency Court Improvement Project, or Dependency Summit, the Clearinghouse for Fostering Success and addressing issues related to Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse.

Two additional initiatives will be the (1) review and updating of the Allegation Matrix, and (2) support of the "Innovation Sites."

The Allegation Matrix provides the critical criteria for determinations as to whether abuse/neglect occurred during a child protective investigation. This will be the first updating of the matrix since the late 1990's.

Innovation Sites for improving child welfare practice were selected through a competitive application process to develop strategies for implementing Family Centered Practice. Implementation of Family Centered Practice will improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families. The Innovation Sites are intended to be learning laboratories to develop local programs and resources to support the quality and consistency of Family Centered Practice within each of those communities. The CJA grant funding for the Innovation Sites is to be used primarily for training and consultation to improve child welfare practice within those communities.

### **COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM (CBCAP)**

The CBCAP network will convene to assess technical assistance needs to address training on the five protective factors statewide and identify ways to aid the parents of special needs children, as well as continue its prevention efforts.

## **CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS**

Future plans for each of the three designated citizen review panels are described below.

### Task Force on Fostering Success

- Examine the process of the Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse from call to the Hotline to treatment services. Please refer to section (106)(a)(1) of this Chapter for additional information;
- Analyze the child protection system and make concrete recommendations that can assist with reforms in the child protective investigations practices;
- Follow-up to the implantation of the recommendations from the two Gabriel Myers Workgroups and the Subcommittee on Safe Families;
- Support the development and planning of the 2010 Dependency Summit;
- Develop therapeutic resources for foster care victims of human trafficking;
- Monitor the deployment of remote data capture devices that track caseworkers with GPS and also enable caseworkers to document activities from the field; and
- Establish a Trauma Removal Workgroup to review the traumatic impact of child removal.

### The Independent Living Services Advisory Council

The Council will continue as it is mandated in Florida law. This Council is a real asset for the youth served in Florida and for the agencies that serve them. The Council members provide guidance and help to improve services in a non-adversarial and supportive manner. (Please see Chapters 1 and 6 of this document.)

### The Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee

Representatives from the State Committee will work with the Department over the next year to review and revise existing administrative codes and operating procedures. This citizens' review committee will a minimum of four times next year and will review the Department's guidelines on unsafe sleep and drowning. Their annual report will be completed December 2009.

## **TRAINING**

Full statewide implementation of the new pre-service curriculum is to occur by June 30, 2010.

Through the various stakeholders' feedback, the Department will continue to refine training efforts to promote the concept of family centered practice in the intervention, investigation and case management aspects of child welfare.

The Department will also develop rules related to minimum training and certification requirement for frontline and supervisory staff to ensure child welfare professionals have obtained needed competency in the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities.

Additional in-service training opportunities will be provided for staff responsive to identified needs related to the quality of child welfare practice. These will include ongoing Regional Trainings, continuation of the Dependency Summit, a variety of local or specific technical assistance or training workshops, and continued expansion of the Department's on-line training and technical assistance webpage, the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice, currently averaging approximately 2,000,000 web-hits per month. (Please see Chapters 1 and 3 for additional plans.)

### **Future Plans for the State Plan Program Service Areas**

Many of the future plans under these three service areas are imbedded within earlier chapters.

#### **(1) INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, SCREENING, AND INVESTIGATION OF REPORTS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Initiatives will be:

- consideration of expanding use of differential response in Florida;
- release of a revised Allegation Matrix which provides clearer definitions of maltreatment types, examples of assessment factors, and types of evidence and documentation required to substantiate abuse and neglect;

- revision of investigative closure types (i.e., verified, some indication, no indications);
- clarify release of child records for children in foster care;
- update operating procedure outlining criminal background screening for placement and releases;
- develop training for child protective investigators related to work with pregnant, incarcerated women and their families; and
- devise training for child protective investigators and Children's Legal Service's attorneys on documenting reasonable efforts through use of the in-home child safety assessment instrument.

### **(3) CASE MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING ONGOING CASE MONITORING, AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES AND TREATMENT PROVIDED TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

Examine the process of child-on-child sexual abuse from the call to the Florida Abuse Hotline to treatment services. The Gabriel Myers Report/Child on Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup report with recommendations will be made to the Task Force on Fostering Success and the Department during the Spring/Summer of 2010.

Analyze child protection process and make concrete recommendations that can assist with reforms in investigation practices; the Subcommittee on Safe Families will present its findings and recommendations in early 2010.

Make the concept of a Medical Home for foster children a statewide reality by continuing to expand the number of Community-Based Care Agencies that have created a Medical Home. Also, establish the outcomes for the medical home and performance measures.

Continue to strengthen the Department's partnership with the Department of Health and the Agency for Health Care Administration by establishing purposeful goals and initiatives for improved health care for Florida's infants and toddlers and all children in state care. Exploration of the possibility of partnering for the delivery of health services to young mothers of very young children and pregnant teens with Florida's Department of Health, but assist them with their work.

### **(5) DEVELOPING AND UPDATING SYSTEMS OF TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORT THE PROGRAM AND TRACK REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FROM INTAKE THROUGH FINAL DISPOSITION AND ALLOW INTERSTATE AND INTRASTATE INFORMATION EXCHANGE.**

Full deployment of remote data capture devices that track caseworkers with GPS and also enable caseworkers to document activities from the field will be completed if funding allows.

SACWIS will be completed and will be used to better track the life of a child and family case from intake to final disposition. Any necessary refinements to reports and analysis from the SACWIS data base (FSFN) will be completed and used to improve the response of investigators and outcomes for children.

The implementation of the National Youth Transition Data Base survey tool that is youth-friendly and incorporates youth engagement strategies will be completed.

The state will continue to develop strategies to complete home studies requested by another state with increased timeliness through automation, as described earlier.

## Chapter 6

# Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

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The federally funded Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program help ensure youth are engaged in decision making related to their transition to adult life. This includes involvement in becoming economically self-sufficient and achieving desired educational and career goals. Services and supports include education, training, housing assistance, counseling, and other services. In addition, the state of Florida provides funds to supplement the federal grants and required match to assist youth reach their educational and employment goals. Florida's comprehensive program of independent living services is a priority for the Department. The following pages describe activities to date for the period October 1, 2009 through the present and plans for FFY 2011.

### 2010 Year-to Date

#### PROGRAM SERVICES OVERVIEW

Florida has continued to receive funding provided through the federal Chafee Road to Independence Grant and Chafee Education and Training Voucher Grant. Florida matched both grants through general revenue funding. During the 2010 Florida Legislative session, some concerns were raised regarding the accountability of the program's expenditures and outcomes. Legislation required the department to develop administrative code to address payments made directly to youth.

Independent Living services have continued to include parenting classes, career counseling, therapy and psychological counseling and assistance with time management and organization. These services are funded through a web of federal grants, general revenue dollars, and national, state and community private funds. Normalcy plans for teens to help them prepare for leaving foster care were required.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Chaffee Foster Care to Independence

The Chafee Program mandates are contained in Section 409.1451(1-3), F.S. In addition to Florida law, the Department references the federal policy documents, best practice materials, and consultation with stakeholders and the National Resource Center for Youth Development to implement the Chafee program.

#### Florida's Youth Ages 13-17

The program requirements specified in Florida law for youth ages 13-17 include:

- assessments;
- service array of life skills classes, educational support, employment training, counseling and support services; and,
- educational and career goal setting starting at age 13;
- annual independent living staffings for youth ages 13 –14 (Specifies youth involvement);
- independent living staffings every six months for youth ages 15-17 (Specifies youth involvement);
- special judicial review specific to transition within 90 days after the 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and at 17 years 6 months ;
- removal of the age of disability before the age of 18 in order to open a bank account; and,
- expansion of Medicaid benefits to all youth exiting licensed care until age 21.

#### Florida's Youth 18-22

The program requirements specified in Florida law for youth ages 18-22 include:

- the Road to Independence Program;
- transitional Support Services;
- aftercare Support Services;
- tuition and fee exemptions;
- Medicaid for youth exiting foster care until age 21;
- extended court jurisdiction until age 19 for youth that submit a petition to the court;
- youth exiting foster care are eligible to remain in their foster homes or another licensed home arranged by the Department after reaching age 18;
  - requires the Department to advertise the Road To Independence program to specific parties including the youth in care and those involved in education and guidance;
  - case management services as requested; and



- expansion of Medicaid benefits to all youth exiting licensed care until age 21.

Based on eligibility, youth exiting foster care in Florida may receive services until their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This includes an “open door” policy where youth who have reached age 18 years of age may receive services and return for additional services if needed after initial termination. The continuum of services for these youth includes:

- Aftercare services for youth who were formerly in foster care to help them continue to develop the skills and abilities necessary for independent living. This includes but is not limited to mentoring and tutoring, mental health services and substance abuse counseling, life skills classes, (including credit management and preventive health activities), parenting classes, job and career skills training, counselor consultations, temporary financial assistance, and financial literacy skills training.
- Road to Independence Program to help former foster children receive educational and vocational training. The program requires attendance in secondary or postsecondary education and provides a financial award based on the living and educational costs of each participant.
- Transitional support services for youth who have a plan for self-sufficiency. Services include but are not limited to financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, mental health, disability, and other services. Services are intended to provide short-term funds or other services that are critical to the young adult becoming self-sufficient. These services may continue only as long as the young adult demonstrates that the services are critical to his or her efforts for self-sufficiency.

#### Educational and Training Voucher Program (ETV)

The Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC) is legislatively mandated under s. 409.1451(7), Florida Statutes. The members of the Council come from diverse backgrounds. The Council has been a constant in oversight of independent living services including the use of Education and Training Voucher funds. Their agencies and/or affiliations are listed in each of the annual reports. For more information regarding the Council please refer to: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/AdvisoryCouncil/index.shtml>

The Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV) makes financial resources available to meet the postsecondary education and training needs of youth aging out of

faster care and enrolled in a qualified higher education program. The programs provide vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year per youth to support their costs of attending schools for higher education. The Department is the program administrator and works in collaboration with other entities to provide this program to designated youth.

Florida remains committed to strengthening its post-secondary educational assistance program efforts to achieve the purpose of the ETV program. Progress towards improved outcomes and a more comprehensive, coordinated, effective child and family services continuum is evident in the strategies in place. The ETV funds are primarily used to fund the RTI program. The monthly award is based on the living and educational needs of the young adult with a maximum award based on federal minimum wage. Although, the RTI monthly stipend is available to high school students who have aged out of foster care, the ETV program funds the stipend provided to students in post-secondary education. Florida statutes currently allow youth exiting foster care after the age of 16 due to adoption or permanent guardianship to be eligible for the RTI program.

### Independent Living Program Clients Served and Expenditures

#### Clients served – 18+ (unduplicated count):

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY)	ETV	Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	TOTAL
10/1/2007 – 9/30/2008	1,369	2,008	3,377
10/1/2008 – 9/30/2009	1,477	1,668	3,145
TWO-YEAR TOTAL	2,846	3,676	

For Federal Fiscal Year 10/1/2008 – 9/30/2009, there were **619** new ETV enrollees.

#### Actual Expenditures of Chafee ETV allocated funds for FFY 2008:

**\$3,194,636** (\$2,555,708 (Federal) and \$ 638,927 (State match)).

#### Actual Expenditures of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program for FFY 2008:

**\$9,483,937** (\$7,587,150 (Federal) and \$1,896,787 (State match))

## COLLABORATION

### Independent Living Services Advisory Council (ILSAC)

Mandated by Florida Statute, the ILSAC consists of representatives from a wide variety of agencies and organizations. Representation includes Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Florida Network for Youth, Department of Juvenile Justice, the Office of Homelessness, Housing Authority, the Department, youth, foster parents, business community, Guardian ad Litem, providers of transitional living services, foster parents, and other child advocacy organizations.

The purpose of the ILSAC has been to assess the Independent Living Program and services and make recommendations to the Department and the Florida Legislature for improvement. Rather than operating as a part of the Department, the ILSAC's external leadership has created

the independent group specified in law that is committed to improving services for adolescents in foster care.

The ILSAC has been in existence since October 2002. This has created an environment in which the Department has been able to collaborate and maintain contacts with people from other agencies. The Department's central office staff have been involved in workgroups with workforce organizations, children, and adult mental health groups.

The ILSAC provides the forum and the framework for collaboration at many levels. Representatives of virtually all disciplines and resources needed by youth in foster care or formerly in foster care serve on the ILSAC. They are the central "force" for change and support in Florida. The annual reports posted on the internet provide detail about their activities and recommendations for improvement. Please refer to Chapter 4 and the attachments to this report for additional information and samples of reports submitted as a designated Citizen Review Panel as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

## **PROGRAM SUPPORT**

The Department provides support to youth receiving independent living services and the providers of this service in several ways including training, technical assistance, and providing an opportunity for youth and stakeholder voices to be heard. Throughout the year, youth representatives visit the Department's Secretary and senior leadership to provide input and recommendations regarding legislation, program design, and program improvements. In addition, the Department hires former foster youth to work at the Department and at community-based care lead agencies to perform a range of functions.

The Department of Children and Families provides and/or arranges for training related to youth in multiple ways. During the reporting period, this occurred at regional trainings in May 2009 and November 2009, at a statewide meeting dedicated to independent living issues in June 2009, at the Child Welfare Dependency Summit in August 2009, and at the Florida Coalition for Children Conference in November 2009.

In early 2009, the Department compiled a report as required by state law summarizing oversight activities of the Independent Living Program. This report is distributed to the executive and legislative branches of government. This report provides reviewers with a summary of the various means of assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of Florida's service delivery system. It provides support in that the report highlights areas of progress and areas needing improvement.

Throughout 2009, the Department's child welfare Quality Assurance Program focused on the effectiveness of the delivery of independent living services and issued a report after the close of the reporting period. This quality assurance review is part of a comprehensive effort to respond to youth concerns and ensure continuous improvement.

Florida is fortunate to have the support of Connected by 25 and the Eckerd Family Foundation. These agencies provide funding, expert guidance, and advocacy on behalf of young people. Their support is extensive and reaches individual youth, community-based care lead agencies, executive agencies, and stakeholders.

## **Accomplishments Year-to-Date (YTD) 2010 and Plans for 2011**

### **1. Co-ordination of services with other state and federal agencies**

#### **Housing**

##### **Accomplished YTD**

The Department partnered with housing representatives during the 2010 Florida legislative session to expand the definition of eligible population(s) for housing services to include youth aging out of care. The bill did not pass during this difficult legislative session however relationships were strengthened for future efforts.

##### **Plans for 2011**

The Department will continue to partner through the Independent Living Services Advisory Council and with housing providers/advocates to strengthen the service array for youth transitioning out of foster care. A redesign group is currently underway and expansion of housing options is a key issue.

#### **School-to-work**

##### **Accomplished YTD**

School-to-work efforts exist across Florida, but concentrated efforts have occurred in two areas of the state—the Big Bend area in the North and Palm Beach in the South under Operation Full Employment (OFE). Through contracts with individuals with special talent and interest in youth employment, promising models have emerged: Job Shadowing in local businesses while still in High School, peer-to-peer training; and finding large statewide/national businesses to agree to work with us to prepare youth for the workplace, e.g., Publix, Wal-Mart, etc.

## Plans for 2011

The Department will continue to partner with workforce agencies on expanding employment options for youth. A representative of Workforce Florida was recently appointed to the statutorily mandated ILSAC. The Department will utilize the three-way interagency agreement with Florida workforce and education agencies to strengthen educational and vocational services and supports

### **Transitional Living and OJJDP**

#### Accomplished YTD

The Department has collaborated with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice on improving services to crossover youth. Projects have included joint data analysis, quality reviews, and educational planning.

## Plans for 2011

Collaboration will continue through the Independent Living Services Advisory Council, interagency agreements, and quality assurance reviews.

### **Disabled Youth**

#### Accomplished YTD

The Department continues to provide a template, specifically designed for teens, to structuring service delivery to disabled youth in collaboration with the advocacy group, Florida's Children First. The Department also continues meet with Agency for Persons with Disabilities to encourage cooperation to attain shared commitment and responsibility for these youth.

## Plans for 2011

The Department will continue to partner with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, advocates, and with lead agencies to increase awareness of and availability of services.

### **Abstinence**

#### Accomplished YTD

Florida's abstinence program is administered by the Department of Health, go to: <http://www.greattowait.com/>

## Plans for 2011

The Department will continue to partner with the Departments of Health and Education for this particular service.

## 2. Training Goal and Objectives re: Needs of Adolescents

### Accomplished YTD

At the invitation of the Florida Coalition for Children for their annual conference in October 2009, Connected by 25 hosted an independent living training session for lead agency chief executive officers. This event was designed to highlight the special needs of the teen population. The event included Gary Stangler of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and focused on teen and young adult outcomes. In addition, another training session was held for front line staff specific to normalcy, career and education path, employment support, etc. This training was built on needs identified by front line staff at the June 2009 training for independent living coordinators.

The Department sponsored regional trainings in January 2010 and again in June 2010. Independent living workshops emphasizing youth engagement strategies were featured. An example is the video developed in collaboration with court staff:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/youth/dependencyCourtVideo.shtml>

At the same link as above, see publications and resources for training and technical assistance focused on services to teens in care eligible for independent living services.

A statewide Quality Assurance Review was completed regarding independent living services received by young adults aged 18 years or older. These results, along with the checklist survey results, have provided information of where improvement is needed and where practice and policy are working well.

### Plans for 2011

The Department is planning an "independent living" track for the annual Dependency Summit scheduled for August 24-26, 2010.

The Department anticipates implementing a National Youth in Transition Database that exceeds minimum federal requirements. This database will feature youth friendly access and will be key to future program planning/service delivery efforts for teens, for young adults formerly in foster care, and case managers.

The Department posted the results of the Independent Living Services Checklist/Survey (based on youth input and caseworker input) for review by each of the lead agencies. The Independent Living Services Advisory Council is working with lead agencies at the local level to review their data to determine areas for improvement. The results are available at:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/index.shtml>

The Department conducts monthly effective practice calls with all interested parties serving teens in foster care. This call is facilitated by a former foster youth, now an employee of the Department. Participants join from across the state and across disciplines including child welfare, education, and workforce development.

The Department's Contract Oversight Unit monitors each lead agency and conducts reviews of the compliance requirements of federal/state law and rule specific to independent living and services to teens in care. Their reports are circulated widely and used for program

improvements, education of stakeholders and identification of needs of specific populations in specific locations. The tools are available at: <http://ewas.dcf.state.fl.us/asc/cou/CBC.asp>

### **3. Trust Fund Program**

NA

### **4. Youth Participation in State Agency Efforts**

Accomplished YTD

Youth served on the Core Advisory Group identified by the Secretary to develop the quality improvement plan. It included representatives from the Governor's Office, judiciary and legal/law enforcement, community stakeholders, Department managers, youth, adoptive parents, and national experts, among others. The Core Advisory Group was linked to the Task Force on Fostering Success, chaired by former Secretary Bob Butterworth. Youth named this task force reflecting the importance of the 2008 Fostering Connections federal legislation. Emphasis was placed on including youth in local plan development and implementation.

Another promising practice in Florida is the increasing awareness of the importance of the youth's perspective in child welfare decision making. Youth leadership programs include opportunities for youth to "teach" child welfare staff and managers about the benefits of inclusion and engagement of youth. One example is the Florida Youth SHINE. This group is comprised of youth who were formally in foster care.

They provide leadership and advocacy for children in foster care through legislative testimony, training, workgroups, meetings, etc. These youth were instrumental in getting the 2009 Florida Legislature to maintain funding for the Independent Living Program. In addition, they worked closely with legislators to gain passage of a Florida law that gives them access to their child welfare records after they reach age 18.

Florida continues to increase the number of youth participating in services after reaching age 18. For example, in state FY year 2008/2009, 5,729 youth were eligible to receive the Road to Independence program and 3,004 youth received the service.

The Florida Youth Leadership Academy was conducted again in the spring of 2010. The program allows for approximately twenty youth involved with the Department to

participate in a training program that serves to facilitate development of their leadership skills and to carry these skills, especially advocacy, back to their own areas to assist other foster youth. This program has been jointly sponsored by the Department, Connected by 25, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and the Child Welfare Leadership Program Alumni Association.

The Department has implemented the youth survey or the Independent Living Transitional Services Critical Checklist (available at:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/index.shtml>) in coordination with the ILSAC. In partnership with the community-based care lead agencies, the Department has collected data on youth skills and development for youths in foster care, ages 13 through 17, and youth formerly in foster care, ages 18 through 22, in the areas of: life skills; housing; education; employment; adult corrections; juvenile justice; and, case plan, aftercare, and transitional services.

The youth survey results have been compiled and are posted in February 2010 at the same web site listed above.

In 2010, the Department of Children and Families in coordination with representatives of the community-based care lead agencies formed the Performance Measure Workgroup added outcome measures to the Community-Based Care contract template. During the calendar year, the workgroup reviewed the various approaches to implementing a system of outcome measures for youth receiving independent living services

#### Plans for 2011

Youth will continue to serve as advisors and performance improvement experts for Florida's child welfare system. They are involved in multiple aspects of the system including performance improvement activities, quality assurance, database development, and the advisory council.

The Department intends to continue successful projects and activities described in earlier sections of this report. This includes the support of the ILSAC, Florida Youth Shine, the Youth Leadership Academy, quality assurance reviews focused on independent living, training and technical assistance initiatives.

A subgroup of the ILSAC will address the redesign of services to youth formerly in foster care. This subgroup is a collaborative effort between the ILSAC, the Florida Coalition for Children, and the Department. The goal is to provide a recommended framework by the summer of 2010. This work is being supported by the Eckerd Family Foundation and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.



## **5. Medicaid Expansion**

Accomplished YTD

Florida utilizes the Medicaid option to provide Medicaid coverage to all youth exiting foster care up to age 21.

Plans for 2011

This valuable service will continue through June 30, 2010 as it is specified in Section 409.903, Florida Statutes. Medicaid reform is scheduled for the next legislative session and Florida's child advocates will be watching closely to protect benefits for youth.

Florida's SACWSIS and Medicaid technical staff are developing reports to ensure as many youth as possible access this service from age 18 through 20.

## **6. Tribal Consultation to Achieve Benefits for Native American Youth**

Accomplished YTD

See Chapter 2, Pages 47-48

The tribes have not chosen not to access Chafee funds, thus far.

Plans for 2011

The Department will continue to reach out and partner with the tribes as they (the tribes) request.

## **7. Implementation of NYTD: Engaging and Preparing Youth and Technical Assistance Needs**

Accomplished YTD

During the reporting period, Florida continued to build its SACWIS system, Florida's Safe Families Network (FSFN)--the primary vehicle to achieve all the requirements of National Youth in Transition Data Base (NYTD). CGI Technologies Solutions, Inc. is the vendor for building FSFN. Because the SACWIS system pre-dates the design specifications for NYTD, negotiations between CGI Technologies Solutions, Inc., and the Department continued to strive for resolution as to whether or not NYTD standards would be met, with or without additional funds from the Department.

Conference calls and meetings were conducted to discuss the practice and workload implications of NYTD. A broad group of stakeholders were included. Topics covered were:

- Training of staff
- Educating stakeholders
- Collection methods
- How to administer NYTD and ensure participation

As a result of these conference calls, stakeholders and the Department selected to build/use NYTD Plus, full version, as recommended by the NYTD National Advisory Committee, under the auspices of American Public Human Services Association and supported by Florida's Statewide Independent Living Services Advisory Council.

Florida has continued to use a survey tool that gathers similar information contained in NYTD for youth ages 13 to 22 years of age. The results of the survey are reported annually.

Continuing to administer this survey tool since 2007, has prepared youth and case workers for the expectations and processed needed to become compliant with NYTD. Approximately 7,000 surveys are returned each year from caseworkers and youth.

Continued technical assistance in the form of meetings and conferences called related to NYTD will be welcomed. Areas that will be a challenge are maintaining voluntary participation rates of the young adults across time and high levels of participations of all age groups and caseworkers. Florida may request assistance to ensure the data system is fully in place by the October 2010 deadline.

#### Plans for 2011

The Department anticipates implementation of the database as required by October 1, 2010. The database is expected to provide a wealth of new information and more opportunities for youth to work with the child welfare system to improve services.

Implementation of the National Youth in Transition Database is targeted for October 2010. The ILSAC has been instrumental in encouraging and supporting this effort. The ILSAC and the Department are committed to obtaining outcome data to improve program performance

# Chapter 7

## Statewide Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

### 2010-2014

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This report supports the activities outlined in Florida's Quality Improvement Plan (Florida's Program Improvement Plan as required by the federal Child and Family Services Review /CFSR process), and based on the second round CFSR results; the Department's Strategic –Plan 2010-2014<sup>11</sup> developed for Secretary George Sheldon, and the agency's Long-Range Program Plan for Fiscal Years 2009-2010 through 2013 - 2014<sup>12</sup>, as well as a number of other meaningful reform efforts.

#### Goal 1

#### Strengthen Policy and Improve Practice to Ensure Safety of Children

Initiatives such as the Task Force on Fostering Success, enhancements to SACWIS, along with the Title IV- E Waiver, enhance the Department's progress towards achieving this goal.

The Department completed the following objectives for this goal:

- Objective 1: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in the data indicator for child abuse or neglect in foster care. By June 30, 2011, the state's objective is to reach the QIP target for improvement in the data indicator for child abuse or neglect in foster care. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A)
- Objective 1 was achieved. Florida and the Children's Bureau reached consensus on the state's level of improvement specific to the national standards. At the time of the second round CFSR, Florida did not meet the two national standards for safety, nor two of the four permanency composites. Since then, Florida has met the improvement goals for one of the two safety standards and the two permanency standards. The remaining national standard for safety is on recurrence of maltreatment. Florida subsequently achieved the level of improvement for this standard as indicated in the Florida Data Profile- 2009, issued March 23, 2010.
- Objective 2: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in the data indicator for absence of recurrence of maltreatment. By June 30, 2011, the

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/opengov/docs/strategicIntent.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/publications/plan0910/lrpp2009-2014.pdf>

state's objective is to reach the QIP target for improvement in the data indicator for absence of recurrence of maltreatment. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A)

- Objective 2 was achieved. Florida and the Children's Bureau concur with the baseline and improvement target for absence of recurrence of maltreatment. Florida's baseline is 98.66% from FFY 2008; the improvement goal is 98.76%. Florida met the improvement goal as indicated in the Florida Data Profile- 2009, issued March 23, 2010.

Objective 3: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in services to families to protect children in their home and prevent removal or re-entry. By June 30, 2011, the state's objective is to achieve or exceed the QIP target for improvement in the services to families to protect children in their home and prevent removal or re-entry. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Item 3)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.

Objective 4: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in risk assessment and safety management. By June 30, 2011, the state's objective is to reach the QIP target for improvement in the services to family to protect children in risk assessment and safety management. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, CFSR Item 4)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.

Objective 5: By the end of the five-year period covered in this plan, the Department will build upon the interim progress toward meeting or exceeding any national standards or targets set in the Long Range Program Plan.

- Florida has met the improvement goals for the national standards as reported above. Additionally, Florida continued to focus and improve performance in the areas of safe reduction of children in out-of-home care, placement stability, and safe and permanent homes for the longest waiting teens.

#### **Benchmarks:**

By June 30, 2009, the Department will reconstitute the Task Force on Fostering Success to address ongoing issues. Ongoing progress will establish further benchmarks. (Strategic Direction 2009-2011)

- Completed. The Task Force on Fostering Success was convened on an ongoing basis under the leadership of former DCF Secretary and Florida Attorney General Butterworth, and DCF Secretary George Sheldon. It includes representatives from the Governor's Office, judiciary and legal/law enforcement, community stakeholders, Department managers, youth, adoptive parents, and national experts, among others. A dedicated subcommittee regularly assesses progress on the Quality Improvement Plan and provides communication to the Task Force. Please refer to: Chapter 1 update on The Task Force on Fostering Success.

By September 30, 2009, the safety plan and assessment features in FSFN will be implemented and a consistent approach to the assessment of safety, risk, protective capacity and family strengths will be in practice. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 1)

- Completed. Florida's FSFN system includes several automated safety planning and assessment tools for protective investigators and case managers. Online training guides and modules are readily available to workers. Data reports for supervision and monitoring of worker completion of safety assessments are also available through FSFN. Details are available in Chapter 1, Intervention/Investigation and SACWIS sections.

By September 30, 2009, the Department will develop and distribute requirements for maintaining certified second party reviewers. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 2)

- Completed. A memo, distributed to the field on January 20, 2009, detailed the credentialing requirements for second party reviews. *Please refer to: Chapter 1, Intervention/Investigation section.*

By September 30, 2009, the Department will develop curriculum and provide train-the-trainer sessions on supervisory discussion for local in-service training of supervisors. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Steps 4 and 5)

- Completed. The supervisory discussion guides are in their second edition, and are an integral part of the child welfare quality assurance and supervisory practice model. The 2009 statewide guidelines for conducting QA reviews describe the requirements for use of the supervisory discussion guides. Introductory statewide sessions (field staff and train-the-trainer) on supervisory discussion were provided in 2008, and posted on-line for in-service training purposes. Train-the-

trainer materials were also provided online. Revisions to the guides have been made, and an update memo reinforcing the need for training was issued September 4, 2009. Please refer to Chapter 3: Child Welfare Training and Quality Assurance sections for details.

By December 31, 2009, the Department will deliver in-service training on “2nd Party Reviews.” (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 3)

- Completed. The Department prepared training materials and conducted in-service training online, as outlined in a memo to the field April 17, 2009. This memo also reinforced requirements for the process and reviewer certification.

By March 31, 2010, the Department will deliver training on domestic violence topics at regional or statewide training events. (QIP, Goal 2, Strategy A, Action Step 6)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By June 30, 2011, we will increase the availability of and access to in-home intervention and support so that more children can remain safely in their homes. (Strategic Direction 2009-2011)

- Florida’s flexible funding demonstration has targeted (1) title IV-E-eligible and non-IV-E-eligible children ages 0–18 who are currently receiving in-home child welfare services or who were in out-of-home placement, and (2) all families who entered the child welfare system with a report of alleged child maltreatment. The Title IV-E funds are used to expand the array of community-based services and programs available in Florida. Examples include intensive early intervention services; one-time payments for goods or services that help divert children from out-of-home placement (e.g., rental assistance and child care); enhanced training for child welfare staff and supervisors; improved needs assessment practices; and long-term supports to prevent placement recidivism.

By December 31, 2011, the Department will establish alternative response system(s) that better serve the needs of children and families by eliminating unnecessary investigative protocols for low risk referrals.

- Florida concluded the ARS pilot in October 2008 with a final report issued in February 2009. This final report showed the benefits of an Alternative Response model while showing the need for additional modifications based upon the lessons learned from each of the pilot sites.

By December 31, 2011 and ongoing, the Department will implement and revise protocols as recommended by the Fostering Success Task Force (formerly the Task Force on Child Protection) enhancing the reporting and recovery of children identified to be missing.

- During this reporting period, the regional criminal justice coordinators were fully integrated into the child welfare system. We continued to drive the number of children missing downward from 339 in October 2008 to 265 children as of September 30, 2009.

Additionally, on a regular basis, senior management and leadership will use the data and quality assurance reports to monitor the performance in reducing the recurrence of abuse or neglect and the repeated maltreatment of children in foster care. (QIP, Goal 4, Strategy A)

- Program leaders and selected Department managers at least monthly review performance data and improvement efforts. Additionally, performance data is available online as well as summarized in various presentations.
- Please refer to Chapter 3, Quality Assurance and Accomplishments and Program Support sections.

## **Goal 2**

### **Develop and Phase-In Family Centered Practice**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Foster Care and Other Permanent Living Arrangements
- The Task Force on Fostering Success
- Foster And Adoptive Parent Recruitment
- Title IV- E Waiver
- SACWIS
- Licensing
- Chafee Foster Care (Chapter 6)

The Department has set the following objectives for this goal:

Objective 1: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in the data indicator for timeliness and permanency of reunification. By June 30, 2011, the state's objective is to reach the QIP target for statewide improvement of the proportion of children who exited to reunification and did so within 12 months of the latest removal. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy E)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau reached consensus on the national standards. At the time of the second round CFSR, Florida did not meet the two national standards for safety, nor two of the four permanency composites. Since then, Florida has met the two safety standards and the remaining two permanency standards.

Objective 2: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a statistically significant target for improvement in the data indicator for placement stability. By June 30, 2011, the state's objective is to

reach the QIP target to increase the percentage of children who have two or fewer foster care placements in the first year of their latest removal. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D)

- Objective 2 was achieved. Florida and the Children's Bureau concur with the baseline and improvement target for the data indicator for placement stability. Florida's baseline is 88.1. For the 12-month period ending 3/31/07; the improvement goal is 90.7. Florida met the improvement goal in FFY 2007.
- Please refer to Chapter 3: Child Welfare Training and Accomplishments sections.

Objective 3: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve the establishment of appropriate permanency goals. By June 30, 2011, the State's objective is to reach the statewide target on the establishment of appropriate permanency goals. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy E, CFSR Item 7)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.

Objective 4: By the end of the five-year period covered in this plan, the Department will build upon the interim progress toward meeting or exceeding any national standards or targets set in the Long Range Program Plan.

- Florida and the Children's Bureau reached consensus on the national standards. At the time of the second round CFSR, Florida did not meet the two national standards for safety, nor for two of the four permanency composites. Since then, Florida has met the two safety standards and the remaining two permanency standards.

Objective 5: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve caseworker visits with child. By June 30, 2011, the State's objective is to reach the statewide target on caseworker visits with child. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 19)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.



Objective 6: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve caseworker visits with parents. By June 30, 2011, the State's objective is to reach the statewide target on caseworker visits with parents. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 20)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.

## **Benchmark Activities**

### **1. Developing a Family Centered Practice Model**

#### **Benchmark:**

By September 30, 2009, we will develop and disseminate policy statement on family centered practice model. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy A, Action Step 1)

- Draft framework was provided to the Innovation Sites at the kickoff meeting (August 27, concurrent with Dependency Summit), and via follow-up email from Program Director September 29, 2009. Innovation sites have assisted with refining the framework and policy during initial implementation.

### **2. Implementing Family Centered Practice in Innovation Sites**

#### **Benchmarks:**

By September 30, 2009, the Department will select three innovation sites. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 1)

- In May 2009, areas interested in becoming innovation sites submitted letters of interest. The proposals were reviewed by a subcommittee of the Task Force on Fostering Success and Department management. The recommendations were then approved by the Secretary and letters announcing the sites were distributed on July 29, 2009. The three innovation sites are Circuit 11 (Miami-Dade), Circuit 1 (Escambia County) and Circuit 3 (Alachua County).
- Please refer to
  - Chapter 2: On-going Collaboration section, Innovation Sites

By September 30, 2009, the Department will provide leadership development training on family centered practice for the innovation sites. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 2)

- Department leadership, and particularly the innovation site leaders, received information about family centered practice during August 2009, at meetings concurrent with the Dependency Summit. Paul Vincent, a national expert, was a key source and provided some historic background. A series of training events on the topic with a broad audience (including leaders, as well as trainers and practitioners) also occurred during February, July, and August 2009.
- Please refer to:
  - Chapter 3: Child Welfare Training section, Accomplishments;
  - Chapter 3: Quality Assurance section; and
  - Chapter 2: On-going Collaboration section, Office of Court Improvement.

By December 31, 2009, the Department will develop and deliver in-service training on family centered practice for investigators, caseworkers, supervisors, managers, and legal services in the innovation sites. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 3)

- Completed. Several sessions on family centered practice approaches and applications were offered at the 2009 Dependency Court Summit in August 2009. A series of train-the trainer sessions across the state were offered September and October 2009, and all materials posted for statewide use. Family centered practice philosophy and techniques have been integrated into the core curriculum for child welfare staff, including those in the innovation sites.
- Please refer to:
  - Chapter 3: Child Welfare Training section; and Accomplishments.
  - Chapter 3: Quality Assurance Section

By December 31, 2009, the Department will provide training on family centered practice for caregivers and service providers. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 4)

- Completed. Community based care agencies use materials as posted to the Center for their subcontracted providers and licensed caregivers. Various local events at the innovation sites have addressed family centered practice for audiences including caregivers/foster parents and service providers; for example, presentations at the Annual Families First Network Conference in 2009 by Jerry Milner, Janyce Fenton of the NRC-FCPPP and Joanne Brown, NCWRC/Legal. Various technical assistance efforts, such as the Youth Law Center and Eckerd Project, are also providing training and related information on family engagement.
- Please refer to Chapter 3: Child Welfare Training section, and Accomplishments.

By March 31, 2010, the Department will review progress on family centered practice in the innovation sites and modify as appropriate. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 5)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By June 30, 2010, the Department will establish a plan to phase-in family centered practice model statewide. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy B, Action Step 8)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

### **3. Improving and Expanding Family Centered Practice Statewide**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Foster Care and Other Permanent Living Arrangements
- The Task Force on Fostering Success
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment
- Title IV- E Waiver
- SACWIS

#### **Benchmarks:**

By June 30, 2010, the Department will provide leadership development training on family centered practice. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 1)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By June 30, 2010, the Department will provide training to investigators, caseworkers, supervisors, managers, and legal services on family centered practice. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 2)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By September 30, 2009, the Department will provide family centered practice principles to the Office of Court Improvement. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 3)

- The draft family centered practice framework document was provided to the Office of Court Improvement on September 18, 2009. The Office of Court Improvement replied that the approach was consistent with the direction being taken for the Court Quality Improvement efforts.

By June 30, 2010, the Department will compile practice tools relating to caregiver and child involvement in court proceedings and disseminate statewide for local use. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy C, Action Step 5)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By 2012, the Department will continue to advance the 2012 Strategy: Safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care by 50%. (Strategic Direction 2009-2011)

- The Department has continued advancing the 2012 Strategy: Safely reduce the number of children in out-of-home care by 50% by 2012. As of September 30, 2009, the number of children in out-of-home care represented a reduction of 33% from the 2006 baseline.

Continue to use the flexibility afforded by the IV-E waiver to build a comprehensive continuum of individualized services.

- When comparing state fiscal year (SFY) 2008-09 to SFY 07-08, the average number of children in out-of-home care decreased steadily from 24,754 in SFY 07-08 to 21,020 in SFY 08-09. For the SFY 08-09 exit

cohort the average percentage reunified within 12 months of their latest removal was 64.8%. This is a significant increase when compared with the SFY 07-08 exit cohort. For the SFY 08-09 exit cohort the average percentage who were adopted within 24 months of removal was 41.9%. Although the analysis shows no significant difference between the number of children adopted in a timely manner in the SFY 08-09 cohort and the 07-08 cohort, Florida continues to exceed the national standard of 32% performance measure.

- Other trends examined from the pre-Waiver year (SFY 05-06) through SFY 08-09 show that the spending on front-end services increased from 3.3% to 5.9% of total expenditures, and that spending on licensed out-of-home care decreased from 26.31% to 21.2%.
- The reduction in the proportion of children who entered out-of-home care after receiving services is consistent with the practice where the majority of community based care lead agencies have expanded their array of prevention and diversion services available to children and families that are involved in an allegation of abuse or neglect. Based on these two measures, it seems as if these preventive efforts aimed at providing supports and services to the families and keeping children safely at home have been successful.

Ongoing progress will establish further benchmarks for statewide implementation of family centered practice.

- The Department has continued to work closely with the Innovation Sites around implementation of family centered practice. Several sessions on family centered practice approaches and applications were offered at the 2009 Dependency Court Summit. A series of train-the trainers

sessions across the state were offered September and October 2009, and all materials posted for statewide use. Family centered practice philosophy and techniques have been integrated into the core curriculum for child welfare staff, including those in the innovation sites.

- Please refer to Chapter 2, On-going Collaboration section, The 2009 Dependency Summit.

#### **4. Improving Placement Stability and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Foster and Adoptive Parents Recruitment
- Title IV- E Waiver

- SACWIS
- Licensing

**Benchmarks:**

By December 31, 2009, the Department will conduct a special statewide quality assurance review focusing on placement stability. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 3)

- This benchmark was achieved. The QA managers' special review of Placement Stability was published in August 2009. It included an assessment of service intervention to avoid disruption, the effect of frequency and quality of visits on disruption, and the reasons for placement changes.

By March 31, 2010, the Department will ensure training curriculum places importance of the worker's relationship, frequent and quality contact for child and family visits. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 2)

- This benchmark was achieved. A number of video teleconferences and training have been conducted focusing on family engagement and quality visits with families (through family centered practice initiatives). Selected events were recorded and are available through the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice website, as are related materials.

By March 31, 2010, the Department will develop and implement a statewide action plan to address root causes for placement instability based upon the special review and assistance from the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 5)

- A high level action plan was developed and distributed to the field. Local areas were directed to review status on placement stability using various data sources including the quality assurance special review and to revise local quality improvement plans as necessary.

Ongoing, the Department will continue to collaborate with Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation to provide technical assistance to selected lead agencies to recruit quality foster families to meet the needs of children in care. The best practices for recruitment and retention will drive additional benchmarks statewide. (Long Range Program Plan 2009 -2010 through 2013 -2014)

- Please refer Chapter 1: Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment

By September 30, 2009, we will request technical assistance from the National Court and Child Welfare Collaborative on courtroom practice and placement stability. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 6)

- Completed. The National Court and Child Welfare Collaborative held a technical assistance and planning meeting on 12/28/08. This meeting and subsequent collaborative effort resulted in a Florida Collaborative Targeted Technical Assistance Plan that was signed by all parties during February, 2009.

By March 31, 2010, we will provide training or technical assistance to foster parents to help them better understand the dependency court system and empower them to properly advocate for children and assist in maintaining family connections. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 7)

- Achieved. Dependency court information was included in presentations at the statewide foster parent education conference in June 2009. This included a session on “Foster Parents and the Court” by Joanne Brown, consultant for the National Child Welfare Resource Center/ Legal Judicial. The Office of State Courts’ Administrator has published “A Caregiver’s Guide to Dependency Court.”

By March 31, 2010, the Department will provide guidelines for the development and revisions to local recruitment and retention plans for foster and adoptive homes, and other placement resources. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 9)

- Achieved. Foster parent recruitment and retention is embedded in an ongoing “Quality Parenting Initiative” that the Department and the CBC partners are implementing in collaboration with the Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation. Please refer to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment section

By June 30, 2010, the Department will provide training and technical assistance to lead agencies to recruit quality foster families to meet the needs of children in care. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 10)

- Achieved. As part of the “Quality Parenting Initiative,” a series of events related to foster parent supports and recruiting, or “branding” were held. These events are available online at the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice.

By March 31, 2010, the Department will issue a memorandum regarding local plans to implement or expand the 24-hour availability of supports for foster parents,

relatives, and other caregivers to avoid disruptions in placement and expectations on normalcy for licensed caregivers. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy D, Action Step 11)

- Achieved. A memorandum was issued that directed local areas to review and revise as necessary the appropriate local plan to ensure the inclusion of availability and access to 24-hour supports for caregivers.

## **5. Improving Appropriateness of Permanency Planning Goals**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Foster Care and Other Permanent Living Arrangements
- Foster and Adoptive Parents Recruitment
- Timely Home Studies - Reporting and Data
- Adoptions
- Title IV- E Waiver
- SACWIS

### **Benchmarks:**

By June 30, 2010, the Department will gather and disseminate best practices relating to permanency and concurrent planning for local use. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy E, Action Step 2)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By September 30, 2009, the Department will develop and implement a process for direct access into the Child Support information system to assist with diligent search activities. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy E, Action Step 3)

- Achieved. The child welfare program worked with the Child Support Enforcement agency (Department of Revenue) to provide field staff with access to the screens in the automated public benefits system (FLORIDA). A memo describing this effort and access/training detail was distributed to the field December 18, 2008 with job aids.

By September 30, 2010, the Department will develop and share best practice guidelines for identifying and locating parents and relatives for use by front-line staff, attorneys and the court. (QIP, Goal 1, Strategy E, Action Step 4)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By 2012, the Department will define a process that helps families plan to successfully and safely reunify, and ensures case managers establish with the family those post-reunification supports necessary for success.

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report



Ongoing, the Department will work to improve resources, processes, techniques enhancing diligent search, identification, and linkage with all potential relatives, especially noncustodial parent (father, mother, incarcerated). This includes adding knowledge and skill to pre- and in-service training. (Strategic Direction 2009 – 2011)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

### **Goal 3**

#### **Improve Service Array**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Title IV- E Waiver
- SACWIS

The Department has set the following objectives for this goal:

Objective 1: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children’s Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve needs and services of the child, parents, and foster parents. By June 30, 2011, the State’s objective is to reach the statewide target on the needs and services of the child, parents, and foster parents. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 17)

- Florida and the Children’s Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida’s QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children’s Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.

Objective 2: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children’s Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve child and family involvement in case planning. By June 30, 2011, the State’s objective is to reach the statewide target on child and family involvement in case planning. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 18)

- Florida and the Children’s Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida’s QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children’s Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.
- Please refer to Chapter 4: Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

Objective 3: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve caseworker visits with child. By June 30, 2011, the State's objective is to reach the statewide target on caseworker visits with child. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 19)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.
- Please refer to Chapter 1: Monthly Caseworker Visits.

Objective 4: By September 30, 2009, the state in concert with the Children's Bureau will determine a baseline and a target to improve caseworker visits with parents. By June 30, 2011, the State's objective is to reach the statewide target on caseworker visits with parents. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, CFSR Item 20)

- Florida and the Children's Bureau continue to negotiate the baselines and improvement levels. Florida's QIP was approved in June 2009 with the understanding that baselines and measures will be negotiated during the second quarter of the QIP implementation period. The measurement proposal was submitted in December 2009 to the Children's Bureau. Negotiations started in January 2010.
- Please refer to Chapter 4, Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

Objective 5: By the end of the five year period covered in this plan, the Department will build upon the interim progress toward meeting or exceeding any national standards or targets set in the Long Range Program Plan.

- Florida and the Children's Bureau reached consensus on the state's level of improvement specific to the national standards. At the time of the second round CFSR, Florida did not meet the two national standards for safety, nor two of the four permanency composites. Since then, Florida has met the improvement goals for one of the two safety standards and the two permanency standards. The remaining national standard for safety is on recurrence of maltreatment. Florida subsequently achieved the level of improvement for this standard as indicated in the Florida Data Profile- 2009, issued March 23, 2010.

## **Benchmarks**

### **1. Individualizing Services for Family Members to Meet Their Specific Needs and Enable Families to Nurture Their Children**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Title IV- E Waiver
- The Task Force on Fostering Success
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment
- SACWIS

**Benchmarks:**

By September 30, 2009, we will develop and disseminate a memorandum outlining leadership intent about reducing the use of shift care for all children and eliminating it for children 5 and under. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 1)

- Completed. The Secretary's Strategic Direction for 2009-2011 for child welfare included eliminating shift care for children under five. On March 3, 2009 a policy memo to the field defined the Department's priorities in this area. This memo also began an ongoing process for continual tracking and review of this type of placements until the use of shift care for the identified population is eliminated.

By September 30, 2009, we will work to expand Operation Full Employment for youth in foster care, to support youth in their transition to independence. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 2)

- Beginning in 2008, a priority for the Secretary of the Department has been to support youth transitioning from foster care. Tools for the field were developed and posted online, and a February 25, 2009 memorandum detailed some of the successes and ongoing initiatives.
- Please refer to Chapter 1, Operation Full Employment.

By December 31, 2009, we will develop and disseminate information outlining when a multidisciplinary team staffing occurs, and other requirements for analyzing family

needs and linking families with appropriate services in a timely manner. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 3)

- A memorandum providing requirements and directing the development of local protocols relating to multidisciplinary team staffings was issued the field on December 14, 2009.

By June 30, 2010, we will identify and post best practices relating to service supports and placement stability. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 6)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By December 31, 2009 and ongoing, we will negotiate and execute an Interagency Agreement among the Department, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Education that focuses on the respective responsibilities for furnishing educational and vocational services and supports for children served by Florida child welfare agencies. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy A, Action Step 7)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

By December 31, 2011, we will integrate the service functions of Family Intervention Specialists and case managers to ensure a seamless delivery system for families involved in substance abuse, mental health, and child protection programs. (Strategic Direction 2009 – 2011)

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

Ongoing, continue and strengthen state-level and local coordination of educational services and sharing of information regarding education. (Strategic Direction 2009 – 2011)

In an effort to ensure children served by Florida Child Welfare agencies receive educational and vocational services and supports, the Department, Department of Education and Agency for Workforce Innovation plan to enter a three-way Interagency Agreement. The coordination of services and supports across agencies is critical to positive educational and meaningful life outcomes for Florida's children.

- Update will be provided in 2011 Annual Progress and Services Report

## **2. Improving Coordination of Physical Health Care, Dental Health Care, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services for Children in Out-of-Home Care**

Additional efforts and discussion can be found described in the following sections:

- Consultations with Physicians
- The Task Force on Fostering Success

## **Benchmarks:**

By December 31, 2009, the Department will develop and distribute a website address with names of providers for medical, dental, and behavioral health including Medicaid and Children's Medical Services providers. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy B, Action Step 1)

- Achieved. The website of the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice is the primary "knowledge base" for Florida's child welfare professionals and stakeholders. Resources for medical, dental and behavioral health are posted. The main page for these resources provides a wealth of links to items and other sites. For example, a map of behavioral health "prepaid program" contacts and a foster parent page with many resources, including a link to Children's Medical Services.

By September 30, 2010, the Department will develop and disseminate guidelines for use by frontline staff, supervisors, managers, children's legal services, and judiciary on the timely delivery, continuity of care, and developmentally appropriate behavioral health care for children in out of home care. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy B, Action Step 3)

- Please refer to Chapter 2, Health Care Services.

By March 31, 2011, we will develop and distribute materials for investigators, case managers, foster parents, caregivers, and judiciary on dental and physical health needs of children, to include identifying appropriate services. (QIP, Goal 3, Strategy B, Action Step 4)

- Memo sent March 19, 2009 announcing Health, Dental, and Behavioral Please refer to website for additional information:  
[http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/mhsa/MHSA\\_Phys\\_Dent\\_Resources/Forms/AllItems.aspx](http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/mhsa/MHSA_Phys_Dent_Resources/Forms/AllItems.aspx)
- Please refer to Chapter 2, Health Care Services.

Ongoing, continue implementation of the Interagency Agreement with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Health, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. This Interagency Agreement fully engages all agencies at the region, circuit, and county level to assure seamless casework solutions related to education, health, and other support services. (Strategic Direction 2009 – 2011).

- The Department of Children and Families, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Health, the Agency for Health Care Administration, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities signed an Interagency Agreement to work together to improve services to jointly served children. These five state agencies serving children and youth are committed to reducing unnecessary delays in assistance and services. The agreement requires each of the participating agencies to align their policies and procedures for clients receiving services from multiple agencies. The agreement identifies "champions" within each agency to ensure the coordination of services and improved communication among all agencies involved in a child's care.

