Department of Children and Families
Office of Family and Community Services

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan

June 2011

David E. Wilkins, Secretary  
Rick Scott, Governor
# Florida’s Child Abuse and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan

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Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan

The Department of Children and Families continues its commitment to the prevention of abuse, neglect and abandonment by implementing strategies that support goals for all levels of prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary).

It is paramount that children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. The Florida Department of Children and Families continues to be the designated agency for administering CAPTA grant funds. The Department is also the designated agency for the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) federal grant and the Children's Justice Act (CJA) grant. Program oversight includes technical assistance to the field for implementation of evidenced-based best 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.

The State continues to develop, strengthen and support child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention services in the public and private sectors to prevent the occurrence and reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect.

Florida's 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.

In accordance with section 106(b)(1)(A) of CAPTA, Florida will target the following five program areas described in section 106(a):

- Intake, assessment, screening, and investigation of reports of abuse and neglect (106(a)(1)).
- Case management, including ongoing case monitoring, and delivery of services and treatment provided to children and their families (106(a)(3)).
- Enhancing the general child protective system by developing, improving, and implementing risk and safety assessment tools and protocols (106(a)(4)).
- 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 (106(a)(5)).
- Developing, strengthening, and facilitating training (106(a)(6)).
Chapter 1
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
(CAPTA) Plan Requirements

Screening and Assessments
The Department on the release and associated training of a revised allegation matrix entitled the Child Maltreatment Index. The maltreatment index provides for clearer definitions of maltreatment types, examples of assessment factors and types of evidence and documentation recommended to provide a verified finding of abuse and neglect and, ultimately, more consistent application. Significant changes were made with regard to the revision of investigative closure disposition types from verified, some indicators, or no indicators to verified, not substantiated and no indicators. The Department is also focused on reviewing child-on-child sexual abuse through a workgroup established by the Task Force on Fostering Success; beginning work on updating the ‘Child Protective Investigations’ section of Florida’s Administrative Code; and significant changes to the Parent Needs Assistance/Special Conditions reports and assessment.

One strategic area of the casework process that was changed during this period concerned development and training related to the Child Maltreatment Index. Further, CFOP 175-28 was updated and both the instrument and the operating procedure guide critical decision making by both the Hotline counselors and child protective services investigators. Hotline counselors use the maltreatment index in determining whether the reported information meets the legal criteria for acceptance of a report. Child protective services investigators use the maltreatment index to assist in determining if the necessary documentation and sufficient evidence are present to support a finding of abuse, abandonment or neglect.

The Department also revised of investigative closure disposition types. The issue of investigative findings has been a topic of debate for a number of years and over the course of several administrations in Florida. Experienced and knowledgeable personnel from both the Department and contracted agencies have been divided on the classification of findings of child maltreatment. The feedback obtained from all stakeholders has been fully considered. After thoughtful review of the information and feedback, the Department announced that critical elements of the two major positions have been integrated into a solid plan for improving our work with families. A briefing paper submitted by the Office of Family Safety thoroughly explored the values of retaining, modifying or doing away with the Some Indicator maltreatment finding. The recommended approach was to modify the descriptor from Some Indicators to Not Substantiated. The Not Substantiated investigation disposition is used and determines that there is not sufficient evidence under State law or policy to conclude that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of being maltreated.
This approach aligns with the family centered practice model by reducing the stigma to families involved with the Department while continuing to recognize concerns about established risk factors. The use of more neutral terminology will help orient both caseworker and family to identify a course of action leading to more positive outcomes.

This approach is designed to reduce the use of the middle-tier finding through development of more stringent criteria, and guidelines for its application. The reduction in use will significantly increase the importance of the finding as a risk and safety indicator in identification of service needs.

The *Not Substantiated* finding will have specific criteria and guidelines defining the level of credible evidence required for use of the finding. This will eliminate the former practice of using the *Some Indicator* finding when some degree of credible evidence was present, however minimal. This focused application of the *Not Substantiated* finding will ultimately lead to a reduction in usage that will align Florida with other states using a multi-finding approach.

For implementation, the Department trained existing staff on the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type and parameters for use, incorporated the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type and parameters for use into the pre-service training curriculum for newly hired employees, communicated the modification to stakeholders involved in reviewing and interpreting findings of maltreatment, aligned current policy language to reflect the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type, and completed the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) change to implement maltreatment finding modification.

The Department also leads a series of web-based trainings on effective safety planning and related practice concepts of assessing risk and imminent safety threats.

**Mandated Reporters**
The Florida Abuse Hotline supports each judicial circuit service area with training material concerning mandated reporter information upon request.

**Family Involvement**
The Department coordinates with the University of South Florida Child Welfare Training Academy to produce a series of statewide trainings on *Teaming With Families*. This practice initiative is separated into two components. The initial trainings were ‘train-the-trainer’ sessions with the goal of expanding the number of certified trainers in the state with the capacity to train field staff on Family Group Decision Making, Family Group Conferencing, Family Team Conferencing, Team Decision Making and Permanency Teaming Process. Subsequent trainings are directed at child protective investigators and case managers and reinforced that “teaming” activities can and should occur throughout the life of the case and are not solely precipitated by major crisis events. Teaming should be a regular, integral component of various aspects of casework practice. Supervisors are encouraged to participate.
Florida’s Family Centered Practice Framework was finalized and disseminated statewide. Florida’s Family Centered Practice framework was developed in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, state and community-based care leadership, in consultation with national experts, including Casey Family Programs, and under the direction of the Child and Family Services Review subgroup of the Secretary’s Task Force for Fostering Success. Florida has completed significant training related to Family Centered Practice, including the development and implementation of the Family Centered Practice Training Series, a week-long intensive in-services training that is still be utilized by a variety of local community-based care providers and modification of its standardized pre-service curriculum to include the Family Centered Practice model.

Collaboration
Included in the revisions to the allegation matrix include an updated maltreatment finding to Not Substantiated from Some Indicators detailed further below. Additionally, the index created a separate section for Special Condition Referrals and provided additional guidance for the acceptance and assessment of these referrals. This was also a major change in current practice in Florida.

Feedback from all six regions, Community-based Care staff, law enforcement, the Child Protection Team, Children’s Legal Services, the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program offices and other partners from across the state were incorporated. The Child Maltreatment Index aligns with Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, and recognized best practice in child welfare practice.

The Department has worked cooperatively with field investigative staff and regional legal representatives on the development of 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 collaborative consultation. Over the past three years, the number of children in out-of-home care has been reduced by over 36% in Florida. The Department has had a parallel focus on family engagement. The goal has been to provide effective services tailored to each family’s needs on a case-by-case basis designed to help the family ameliorate concerning issues and allow them to safely care for their child(ren). In a family-preservation practice, robust legal staffings are recognized as more critical than ever and attorneys no longer simply make a call that there is or is not some minimum “legal sufficiency.”

Triage Procedures/Differential Response
In the spirit of family centered practice, the Department partners and works outcomes collaboratively with families and community stakeholders in achieving the safety To that end, the Department has expanded its definition of special conditions as a prevention referral handled as a Special Conditions report “Parent Needs Assistance (PNA).”

In January 2010, the Florida Department of Children and Families expanded its use of “Parent Needs Assistance” referrals accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline for follow-up at the community level. These “PNA” referrals were intended to provide an alternative to
acceptance of abuse reports for investigation in marginal situations with potential for maltreatment where no actual maltreatment was alleged.

The Department’s special condition referrals do not constitute willful abuse, neglect or abandonment as stated in Chapter 65C-30.001(132), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and are not investigations nor in any way should be used adversely against children and families. Extensive policy development, clarification and training is underway with regard to the Department’s prevention efforts for reports to Florida’s Abuse Hotline that do not meet the statutory criteria for abuse, abandonment, or neglect investigation.

Substantive Changes
There are no substantive changes in Florida Statutes that adversely affect the State’s eligibility for the CAPTA State grant.
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 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 practices, 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.

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, which represents one of the more critical partnerships for young children for the Department of Children and Families.

2009-10 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, the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Specialist has been presented for appointment. Confirmation was received in November 2010.

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 continued to address very young children receiving psychotropic medication.
Collaboration

Representatives from the Department of Children and Families, Family and Community Services 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 worked diligently on the interagency agreement regarding referrals to the Early Steps program.

Early Steps, as the designated lead agency, must provide assurances to the federal government’s Office of Special Education Programs that Florida’s state policy regarding consent for children in foster care is in compliance with the federal regulations specific to Part C of IDEA.

In some areas of the state it had been noted that child welfare case managers are providing consent for early intervention services in place of a parent which is a direct violation of Part C of IDEA. Part C of IDEA requires parents to provide consent for early intervention services.

Working in partnership with the Department of Health, Part C lead agency, the Department issued a policy memorandum to clarify federal requirements regarding appropriate individuals to give consent for services provided by Florida's Early Steps system.

In the context of family centered practice, the Department suggested both the birth and foster parents actively participate in the development of an IFSP if the child is in out-of-home care and if parental rights are intact. Early Steps will obtain a copy of the court order for children placed in foster care. In cases in which Department of Children and Families (DCF) is working toward reunification, every effort will be made to include the child’s parent or identified future caregiver in the development of the IFSP. If receiving consent by the natural parent and foster parent will delay service delivery, either signature will be sufficient for consent. If consent by either party is not achievable, child welfare case managers should notify Early Steps who will identify a surrogate parent.

Early Steps will depend on the expertise of the child welfare case manager to identify the most appropriate individual(s) to participate in the development of the Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) and provide consent on the “Informed Consent Parent/Guardian” section on Form H of the IFSP. The policies are intended to ensure that all eligible children and their families have a plan of supports and services that is based on shared assessment information and knowledge, meets the unique needs of each child and family, and is developed in an open forum that supports the collaborative partnership between parents and professionals.
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. The Department’s referral form is under revision.

Criminal Justice Act

Florida has been a Children’s Justice Act (CJA) grant recipient since 1997. These funds have allowed for the review, development and implementation of projects that should produce a greater impact on the child protection response system. Therefore, Florida’s child welfare system continues to benefit from CJA grant provided education, training and reform.

Florida has maintained a multidisciplinary task force since the initial award. The Task Force continues to provide a comprehensive review and development of overarching reforms to the child protection response system. Most critical are the issues or practice, training and the sharing of information between child protection and welfare stakeholders.

History of the CJA Task Force

The revised task force format established in July 2007 by former Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, Bob Butterworth, continued through January 2010. It began when the Secretary asked to examine child protection issues that were brought to light during media coverage of the Courtney Clark missing child case. The Secretary appointed a 23-member panel, designated as the Task Force on Child Protection and comprised of child protection professionals and other child welfare stakeholders. This task force initially focused on the gaps that exist in the system when responding, investigating and locating missing children. Since 2007, because of several high profile children’s deaths, special reviews of the system have been performed under the auspices of the task force.

The Task Force was re-established and renamed the Task Force on Fostering Success in December 2008. With extensive public comments and analysis of current case practice, the panel continued to recommend administrative, policy, legislative, education, and training efforts to be undertaken to ensure the safety of Florida’s children.

This task force recognized the need for statewide training and continued to annually sponsor a statewide Dependency Summit. The Task Force is pivotal in the planning and development of the annual Dependency Summit based on the identified needs of the Child protection and child welfare system. Task Force recommendations are
implemented through the training opportunity of the Dependency Summit. Task Force members serve as the planning committee for the summit.

2009-10 Update

2010 Dependency Summit

The Office of Family Safety in coordination with the Task Force organized and implemented the 2010 Dependency Summit in August 2010. The Summit is seen as the most significant force in driving improved practice by convening the broadest array of child protection stakeholders annually to renew a collective goal of protecting Florida’s most vulnerable children. This venue has served to advance standards of excellence in serving the child welfare community through

Innovation Sites: Family Centered Practices

As a component of Florida’s Program Improvement Plan, one of the statewide strategies to address deficiencies identified through the most recent Child and Family Services Review was to establish three "Innovation Sites." The objective of the Innovation Site project is to implement a family centered approach to services in all aspects of the child welfare system in three identified locales across the state.

Innovation Sites were selected through a competitive application process. The selection committee was comprised of Department and community leadership. Applicants authored proposals which included: discussion and summary of approach; readiness for change and strengths; and overcoming barriers to implementing family centered practice. Innovation Sites were selected based on attributes such as leadership and commitment to change and likelihood of success; Miami-Dade County’s inclusion as an Innovation Site was required due to its status as the largest metropolitan area within the state.

The three Innovation Sites are:
1) The 1st Judicial Circuit (Pensacola and the surrounding area);
2) The 8th Judicial Circuit (Gainesville and the surrounding area); and
3) The 11th Judicial Circuit (Miami).

Florida State University (FSU)- Supervised Visitation Programs: Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Florida State University (FSU) Institute for Family Violence Studies, Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation provides technical support, training, and expertise for supervised visitation programs, maintaining regular communication and networking with program directors, other agencies, and interested parties to help ensure the safety of children and their families during the supervised visitation process.
Accomplishments

2010 Dependency Summit
The 2010 Dependency Summit boasted a record attendance rate of 2059 child welfare professionals. Summit attendees were offered approximately 90 diverse workshops to increase professional knowledge and obtain in-service training hours. Several workshop sessions were video recorded and made available through the Florida’s Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice’s Website.

Attendees were also offered an opportunity to meet with their peers during professional breakout sessions and met twice within their judicial circuits to begin to address trauma informed care through the development of a local action plan.

Workshop content is currently archived on Florida’s Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice.
http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/videos/Pages/depend2010.aspx

Innovation Sites: Family Centered Practices - Phase I of the Innovation site has been completed and evaluated. An outside evaluation was conducted by the “Ounce of Prevention”. The Challenges to Family Centered Practice implementation noted across all data collection methods included:

- Working with families for whom no relative or family supports were available for child placements
- Working with families unwilling or unmotivated to actively participate in services
- Heavy caseloads that do not allow child welfare staff sufficient time with families
- Addressing situations where initial worker attitudes or behavior with a family during a CPS investigation are inconsistent with Family Centered Practice
- Communities that lack the resources and services families need to ensure child safety and well-being
- Inconsistent “buy in” to the Family Centered Practice philosophy among agency staff and contract agencies serving a family

Results of the evaluation provide that despite a variety of challenges, progress is being made toward implementing Family Centered Practice at the three innovation sites. Child welfare staff implementing Family Centered Practice noted that it resulted in a more coordinated working relationship between investigators and case management agencies, facilitated quality casework, led to a more positive community perception of the Department of Children and Families, and supported a shift in broader community beliefs and values toward respecting and preserving families.

Trauma-Informed Child Welfare
A Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Committee was established in 2010, to coordinate trauma informed care efforts within child welfare and to specifically address trauma as it relates to out-of-home child removals. This workgroup was initially formed to review the impact of traumas children experience when removed from their homes. This workgroup has begun to gather information and research to develop goals and
strategies in order to promote best practices to reduce trauma for children removed and placed into Foster Care.

**Child-on-Child (COC) Sexual Abuse and Children with Sexual Behavior Problems**

A Child-on-Child (COC) Sexual Abuse and Children with Sexual Behavior Problems Committee was established and charged to address several recommendations provided in the Gabriel Myers Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Report (see above). The workgroup began efforts to collaboratively develop strategies related to COC and children with sexual behavior problems and to develop strategies across agencies and for the community at-large.

**Florida State University (FSU)- Supervised Visitation Programs: Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation**

Continued funding from the Children’s Justice Act grant enables the Clearinghouse to provide comprehensive technical assistance to all of Florida’s supervised visitation programs. The Clearinghouse maintains a user-friendly website which hosts all of the training materials and other resources developed for supervised visitation programs. This material is also used by judges, child welfare staff, and other professionals who work with children and families. In addition, the Clearinghouse’s database on Supervised Visitation collects the data necessary to complete the State Access and Visitation annual data report. The website link for the Clearinghouse is [http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu](http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu).

Clearinghouse has developed other resources to further enhance the skills of supervised visitation program staff and volunteers. These included:

- “The Family Visitation Times,” an electronic newsletter for programs;
- “The Bar and Bench Visitation Report,” designed to inform judges about effective supervised visitation referrals;
- A statewide training on Family-Centered Practice, held in Miami in July of 2010;
- A statewide training on Family-Centered Practice held in Jacksonville in November of 2010; and,
- “Starting a Supervised Visitation Program: Frequently Asked Questions,” a booklet for members of the public interested in developing a supervised visitation program.

**Collaboration**

The Task Force by 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. All projects within the CJA grant and under the auspices of the Task Force are truly collaborations.
Program Support
Program Support is primarily provided by the Department of Children and Families Office of Family Safety both financially and through staff support. Other agencies are called upon for specific support when needed. Many other state and provider agencies participate in all Children’s Justice Act Activities. Each participant brings a level of expertise and represents the many different pieces and parts of the child welfare system.

COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM (CBCAP)

2009-10 Update

Florida received the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP) grant award of $1,368,787 based on Florida’s child population and matching funds through the state’s Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund. Close to $1 million of the previous grant award 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 close to 19,151 children, and approximately 11,000 caregivers, and other family members. Education and training designed to prevent child abuse and family violence reached more than 100,000 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.

As a committed partner in the State of Florida’s Five Year Prevention and Permanency plan, the Department has taken the lead as convener for Prevention Objective 3.2. Evidence-Based Parenting Programs. This objective will identify and infuse evidence-based parenting programs and services where feasible and appropriate. One of the five protective factors, Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development is a critical protective factor in the prevention of child abuse. It has the capacity of impacting two other protective factors – parental resilience and nurturing and attachment/social and emotional competence of children. The Department is leading the research efforts and creation of a listing of all evidenced-based parenting programs that also support the five protective factors and is making it available throughout Florida.

The Department’s Prevention Manager has partnered with members of the CBCAP network to provide training and technical assistance to local judicial circuits that are incorporating the five protective factors into their agencies, programs, materials, etc. Included are local planning team conveners and contacts, agencies, faith-based or community-based organizations. A Training and Technical Assistance Form was developed and shared with the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council members, the Local Planning Team conveners and contacts, and has been posted on the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection web site.
Chapter 3

CITIZENS REVIEW PANELS
Activities, Accomplishments and Future Plans

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.

The Task force was re-established in December 2008 by Secretary George Sheldon and has continued throughout 2010. With extensive public comments and analysis of current case practice, the panel continues to recommend administrative, policy, legislative, education, and training efforts to be undertaken to ensure the safety of Florida’s children.

2009-2010 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 24, 2010 - Orlando
- May 14, 2010 - Jacksonville
- February 25, 2010 – West Palm Beach
- November 19, 2009 - Tampa
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:

- The Subcommittee on Safe Families was established to On November 16, 2009, by Secretary George Sheldon as part of the Task Force on Fostering Success. The subcommittee was asked to assess the status of the department’s efforts to achieve safe reductions in the number of children in out-of-home care. Five components of Florida’s child protection system were analyzed by the subcommittee:
  - Hotline calls accepted and sent to the field for response that do not result in a formal child protection investigation with maltreatment findings
  - Hotline calls accepted for formal child protection investigation that result in a maltreatment finding (verified, not substantiated, no indicators) and either closure with no additional action, or non-court ordered or court-ordered interventions
  - Services provided to families that have led to reductions in the number of children in out-of-home care
  - Supports and resources available to families after the finalization of an adoption to minimize the possibility of a post-adoption dissolution
  - Child deaths called to the Hotline with allegations of abuse or neglect that are investigated by the department

Recommendations from the subcommittee were made to the Department and submitted to the Task Force that resulted in the implementation of several new strategies and practices.

- A Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Committee was established on February 25, 2010, to coordinate trauma informed care efforts within child welfare and to specifically address trauma as it relates to out-of-home child removals.

- Continued work on the Gabriel Myers case. A second Gabriel Myers’ workgroup was appointed and charged to determine the facts and sexual abuse 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 determined the contributing effects of alleged sexual abuse and child-on-child sexual abuse. The work group’s final report has been designated as the Task Force 2010 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 at the following Website:
A Child-on-Child (COC) Sexual Abuse and Children with Sexual Behavior Problems Committee was established on May 14, 2010, and charged to address several recommendations provided in the Gabriel Myers Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Report (see above). The workgroup began efforts to collaboratively develop strategies related to COC and children with sexual behavior problems for the upcoming year.

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 and its committees have 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.

2009-2010 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.

2009-2010 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:
  o Helping all parties achieve a greater understanding of the causes and contributing factors of deaths resulting from child abuse or neglect;
  o 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
  o 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:
  o Development and adoption of standardized guidelines and multidisciplinary approaches for the investigation of the unexpected deaths of infants and children.
  o 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.
  o 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.
o 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.

o Addressing reporting and consistency in child death findings through ongoing comprehensive data analysis that includes comparative data by circuit, potential under-reporting of maltreatment types, verification rates, and reporter types.

o 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.

Future Plans

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.
Chapter 4

TRAINING
Activities, Accomplishments and Future Plans

Activities

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 2009 and continuing into 2010, the Department, working in partnership with state and local subject experts and a team of instructional designers, developed the Integration of Services Training Series (ISTS). The ISTS was a week-long intensive in-services training curriculum that built on the Family Centered Practice Series and provided module specific instruction related to child welfare professionals working in partnership with medical/developmental, substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health professionals. Essential teaming strategies were included within the instructional content and woven through each of the content-specific modules. The ISTS was rolled out statewide in the Spring of 2010.

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.

Statewide Regional Trainings were also held on January and June 2010, in which day-long training seminars were held in all six Department operational Regions. Approximately 1,000 participates attended each of the two Regional Trainings (2,000 total participants for the year), in which a variety of workshops were made available ranging on topics from investigations, domestic violence, mental health, developmental issues, teamwork and family engagement, IL services, psychotropic medications and considerations and Florida Safe Families Network.

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.

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." Please refer to Chapter 5.
Future Plans

Future plans for training include:

- Continued implementation of the Integration of Services Training Series;
- Working in partnership with the Department’s Children’s Mental Health Program Training related to Trauma Informed Care;
- Ongoing training and professional development related to Family Centered Practices;
- Training related to safety planning and related risk assessment;
- Expanded library of web-based on-going or in-service training content;
- Continued implementation of the statewide Dependency Summit;
- Review and modification of required Child Welfare Training Academy structure and related pre-service training content; and,
Another requirement of the CAPTA grant is to address Florida’s five 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 benchmarks of the QIP and CFSR are outlined and updated in Chapter 7 of this report.

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

The Family Safety Program Office focused on the release and associated training of a revised allegation matrix entitled the Child Maltreatment Index which provides for clearer definitions of maltreatment types, examples of assessment factors and types of evidence and documentation recommended to provide a verified finding of abuse and neglect and, ultimately, more consistent application. Significant changes were made with regard to the revision of investigative closure disposition types from verified, some indicators, or no indicators to verified, not substantiated and no indicators. The Department also focused on clarifying and developing guidelines for the release of child records for children in foster care; reviewing child-on-child sexual abuse through a workgroup established by the Task Force on Fostering Success; beginning work on updating the ‘Child Protective Investigations’ section of Florida’s Administrative Code; and significant changes to the Parent Needs Assistance/Special Conditions reports and assessment. These are explained in greater detail below.

Child Maltreatment Index

One strategic area of the casework process that was changed during this period concerned development and training related to the Child Maltreatment Index. Further, CF-OP 175-28 was updated and both the instrument and the operating procedure guide critical decision making by both the Hotline counselors and child protective services investigators. Hotline counselors use the maltreatment index in determining whether the reported information meets the legal criteria for acceptance of a report. Child protective services investigators use the maltreatment index to assist in determining if the necessary documentation and sufficient evidence are present to support a finding of abuse, abandonment or neglect.

Included in the revisions to the allegation matrix include an updated maltreatment finding to Not Substantiated from Some Indicators detailed further below. Additionally, the index created a separate section for Special Condition Referrals and provided additional guidance for the acceptance and assessment of these referrals. This was
also a major change in current practice in Florida and is described in detail below. As noted in the previous year’s Progress and Services Report, the updated index incorporated Human Trafficking as an allegation and additional field guidance and training ensued as a result.

Feedback from all six regions, Community-based Care staff, law enforcement, the Child Protection Team, Children’s Legal Services, the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program offices and other partners from across the state were incorporated. The Child Maltreatment Index aligns with Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, and recognized best practice in child welfare practice.

**Investigation Closure Disposition Types**

As previously noted, the Department also revised investigative closure disposition types. The issue of investigative findings has been a topic of debate for a number of years and over the course of several administrations in Florida. Experienced and knowledgeable personnel from both the Department and contracted agencies have been divided on the classification of findings of child maltreatment. The feedback obtained from all stakeholders has been fully considered. After thoughtful review of the information and feedback presented, the Department announced that critical elements of the two major positions have been integrated into a solid plan for improving our work with families. A briefing paper submitted by the Office of Family Safety thoroughly explored the values of retaining, modifying or doing away with the Some Indicator maltreatment finding. The recommended approach was to modify the descriptor from Some Indicators to Not Substantiated. The Not Substantiated investigation disposition is used and determines that there is not sufficient evidence under State law or policy to conclude that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of being maltreated.

This approach aligns with the family centered practice model by reducing the stigma to families involved with the Department while continuing to recognize concerns about established risk factors. The use of more neutral terminology will help orient both caseworker and family to identify a course of action leading to more positive outcomes.

This approach is designed to reduce the use of the middle-tier finding through development of more stringent criteria, and guidelines for its application. The reduction in use will significantly increase the importance of the finding as a risk and safety indicator in identification of service needs.

The Not Substantiated finding will have specific criteria and guidelines defining the level of credible evidence required for use of the finding. This will eliminate the former practice of using the Some Indicator finding when some degree of credible evidence was present, however minimal. This focused application of the Not Substantiated finding will ultimately lead to a reduction in usage that will align Florida with other states using a multi-finding approach.
For implementation, the Department trained existing staff on the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type and parameters for use, incorporated the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type and parameters for use into the pre-service training curriculum for newly hired employees, communicated the modification to stakeholders involved in reviewing and interpreting findings of maltreatment, aligned current policy language to reflect the *Not Substantiated* maltreatment type, and completed our SACWIS change to implement maltreatment finding modification.

**Release of Child Records for Children in Foster Care**

Another strategic area of the casework process that was changed during this period concerned development and training related to clarifying release of child records for children in foster care. Both staff and foster families participating in the Quality Parenting Initiative with Youth Law Center and Eckerd Family Foundation had expressed concerns about the lack of or inconsistent practice of information sharing. Children are the primary beneficiaries when their caregivers are fully informed. As such, the Department provided clarification related to release of child records for children in foster care as all of us are responsible for the well-being of children in the custody of the Department and as such, we undertake this responsibility in partnership, aware that none of us can success by ourselves. Children need normal childhoods as well as loving and skillful parenting which honors their loyalty to their biological family. In order to achieve these goals, partners must share information. Simple and concise guidance was provided statewide with the purpose of recognizing the above and to establish consistency with Florida law and administrative code. The general rule is that foster parents must receive records and information that relate to, or assist in, appropriately parenting their foster child except when expressly prohibited by law. Full disclosure or comprehensive sharing of information with the foster parent is required by Florida Law and Florida Administrative code. The benefits of sharing records with foster parents includes that being fully informed helps foster families provide high quality care for children. Further, sharing information helps to build and sustain meaningful partnerships between caseworkers and foster families, provides the foundation for supporting healthy relationships between foster families and biological families and helps to counter misconceptions and set realistic expectations about children and their biological families.

In 2009, the Florida Legislature added to chapter 39, a new section: s. 39.00145, FS, Records Concerning Children. This new section makes explicit the requirement that case records be maintained in a complete and accurate manner, and that the case record be provided, upon request and at no cost, to the child who is the subject of the case record and to the child’s caregiver, guardian ad litem, or attorney.

**Incarcerated Pregnant Women**

FYY 2009-2010 noted in the Department’s future plan the development of training for child protective investigators related to work with incarcerated pregnant women and their families. In October of 2009, the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC)
transferred their pregnant inmate population from Lowell Correctional Institution in Marion County to Broward Correctional Institution in Broward County. In response to this transfer, the DOC contracted with Kendall Regional Hospital, in Miami-Dade County for the birth of these children. Although the children will be in Miami-Dade County at the time of birth, Miami-Dade County and Broward County have developed a policy between the two counties to handle these cases and regional training commenced accordingly.

**Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal/Family Preservation Model: Collaboration and Training related to Child Protective Investigators and Children’s Legal Services**

In June of 2010, the Department worked cooperatively with field investigative staff and regional legal representatives on the development of 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 collaborative consultation. Over the past three years, the number of child in out-of-home care has been reduced by over 36% in Florida. Throughout this time, we have had a parallel focus on family engagement. Our goal has been to provide effective services tailored to each family’s needs on a case-by-case basis designed to help the family ameliorate concerning issues and allow them to safely care for their child(ren). In a family-preservation practice, robust legal staffings are recognized as more critical than ever and we can no longer utilize our attorneys to simply make a call that there is or is not some minimum “legal sufficiency.” Our Children’s Legal Services teams asked that the attorneys and everyone engaged in these decisions to “dig deeper” into the circumstances that warranted Department involvement with a family, to apply common sense and careful analysis as well as legal standards, and to make a determination of the safety and well-being of each child. Our attorneys are involved whenever they can contribute to resolving a difficult case, but are also clearly involved when court action seems warranted. Ultimately, the information directed to our teams is that it is not necessary to consult Children’s Legal Services when the child protective investigator and a supervisor have made a decision that legal intervention is not necessary or desirable, but that these services are available as a partner when needed.

**Child on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Referrals and Special Conditions Prevention Referrals**

Child on Child Sexual Abuse refers to any sexual behavior between children which occurs without consent, without equality, or as a result of coercion, as defined in Chapter 39, Florida Statutes. These behaviors range from non-contact sexual behavior such as making obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and the showing or taking of lewd photographs to varying degrees of direct sexual contact, such as frottage, fondling, digital penetration, rape, fellatio, sodomy, and various other sexually aggressive acts.
The Secretary’s Task Force on Fostering Success recognized the need for additional information on the subject of child on child sexual abuse. The Department has committed to a review of policy and practice and to develop reforms on this subject. The first activity is a needs assessment to examine the breadth and scope of child-on-child sexual abuse for children involved in the Dependency System. Assessment includes factors relating to the context, frequency, impact, treatment effects and recovery from such abuse. Along with assessment, the Department will review evidenced based strategies. Recommendations for additional policy, training, and other actions will follow.

In May 2009, the Department, worked in conjunction with the Justice Research Center, and 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.

However, based on the legal definition of caregiver, a child on child sexual abuse situation does not meet the criteria for acceptance as an intake for investigation, because we would have no jurisdiction over the alleged perpetrator. However, Chapter 39, F. S. mandates that Hotline counselors assess any call of child on child sexual abuse that is received. Based on the alleged child offender/aggressor’s behaviors and age, Hotline counselors may accept a special conditions child on child sexual abuse prevention referral and other special conditions prevention referrals to include parent needs assistance. 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 all types of accepted prevention referral activities and will continue to closely monitor the effects.

In December 2009, extensive policy development, clarification and training was been conducted with regard to the Department’s prevention efforts for reports to Florida’s Abuse Hotline that do not meet the statutory criteria for abuse, abandonment, or neglect investigation but the Hotline counselor identifies the family may be in need of services, many of which include the special condition of child-on-child sexual abuse. The Department’s special condition referrals do not constitute willful abuse, neglect or abandonment as stated in subsection 65V-30.001(132), F.A.C. and are not investigations nor in any way should be used adversely against children and families.

Child on Child Strategic Planning Committee and Initiative

As continuation of the aforementioned concern related to child on child sexual abuse, the review of child-on-child sexual abuse established by the Task Force on Fostering Success was accomplished successfully. There were 84 recommendations specific to child on child sexual abuse outlined through the Task Force. Service provision areas of
impact included family centered practice, trauma informed care, and quality parenting initiatives. Practice areas of impact included child protective services, case management, quality assurance and improvement, and Department policy. Other partner state agency practice and policy impacts included the Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Education, Department of Health, and Agency for Health Care Administration. A strategic planning committee has been formed and subgroups are actively working on a number of objectives and measurable outcomes related to these recommendations and this important issue. Two overarching goals were outlined to address the issue of child on child sexual abuse and children with sexual behavior problems through both accountable interagency coordination and communication and professional education and training. These two goals are woven into the eight objectives that include caregiver and direct care providers, assessment/referral and treatment standards with benchmarks, treatment professional education, school-based personnel prevention, education and training, community education and awareness, agency coordination and communication, establishing guidelines and standardize terminology and address gaps in identification, documentation, and service delivery to this population of children. This is an ongoing effort and initiative that will be included in the future plans for FFY 2010-2011.

Future plans

Initiatives are:

- file a Notice of Rule Development to create a new rule section in Ch 65C, Florida Administrative Code. The new administrative rule will combine, clarify and enhance requirements relating to the home studies and criminal and background screening procedures from currently implemented code under investigations, out of home care, adoptions, licensing, and ICPC.

- file a Notice of Rule Development to revise Chapter 65C-29, Florida Administrative Code relating to Child Protective Investigations. The purpose of the rule revision will be to align the rule with recent statutory and policy changes.

- updating operating procedure and provide training related to outlining criminal background screening, storage, dissemination, and security of information for investigations, placement and releases.

- development of training for child protective investigators related to safety planning.

- remote data capture development and implementation.

- structured decision making piloted instruments in innovation sites.

- child-on-child sexual abuse strategic planning committee and workgroups to implement training, policy, and practice recommendations where appropriate.

- evaluate the child protective services investigations units workloads with the goal of improving child welfare practice.
• tribal-state interagency agreement development in areas of child protection investigations, transfer of cases to the Tribe, abuse hotline report, acceptance and routing, and database access.

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

Family Team Conferencing (FTC) has continued to be Florida’s primary practice model for engaging families in effective service planning. Nineteen of twenty-two community-based care lead agencies are implementing or utilizing principles of Family Team Conferencing,

During the previous reporting year, a statewide work group was convened by the Secretary of the Department to make recommendations for addressing child-on-child sexual abuse. The recommendations of the Gabriel Myers/Child on Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup Report were presented to the Task Force on Fostering Success and to the Department during spring 2010. Implementation of these recommendations is ongoing.

The Subcommittee on Safe Families presented its findings and recommendations to Task Force on Fostering Success during 2010. This statewide committee analyzed current child protection processes and made recommendations for reform, including improvements to child death review, family preservation services and post adoption services. The recommendations have been completed or are currently being implemented.

Accomplishments:

The Department is collaborating with the Department of Health on training to support Trauma Informed Care. Each of the twenty judicial circuits in Florida has developed local strategies for implementing and integrating the principles of trauma informed care into child welfare practice in their communities.

The twelve month Permanent Connections Project was formed to improve permanency outcomes for children by focusing strategies on more effective case planning for children with the goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). Ten community-based care agencies have joined this effort, which is also supported by technical assistance and collaboration with the Casey Family Foundation.

Statewide implementation of the Remote Data Capture (RDC) functionality enables case managers to document case notes and other documentation, child photographs and Global Positioning System (GPS) based geographic verification and validation through electronic case management resources utilized onsite during home visits. The RDC devices gather data entered by the case managers and upload it directly into the case record in the FSFN system.
Future Plans:

The recommendations of the Gabriel Myers/Child on Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup Report as presented to the Task Force on Fostering Success will continue to be implemented over the coming year.

The Remote Data Capture process will continue to expand functionality to include other case management and investigations features over the coming months. This technology remains under development.

The Departments of Children and Families and Juvenile Justice are currently working with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute (CJJR) to institute the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM). Currently there are three sites in Florida engaged in this project which include Miami-Dade, Broward and Dade Counties. This practice model utilizes specific practices that need to be in place within a jurisdiction in order to reduce the number of youth who crossover between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the number of youth entering and reentering care, and the length of stay in out of home care. The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) infuses work values and standards; evidence-based practices, policies and procedures; and quality assurance processes. It provides a template for how states can immediately impact how they serve crossover youth and rapidly impact outcomes.

Future plans are to expand and further develop this approach over the next year by utilizing the three Florida CYPM sites to build capacity through the development of peer-mentoring and technical assistance within Florida.

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

The Department has initiated several major efforts in improving risk and safety assessment tools and protocols in Florida. These initiatives cover a broad spectrum of activities and multiple stakeholders or participants. First, in conjunction with the Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator Office of Court Improvement the Family Safety Program Office provided training to Florida Dependency judges at the Office of Court Improvement annual training college using the American Bar Association sponsored framework guide ‘Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorney’. Follow-up training with this guidebook, which supports the safety constructs currently contained in Florida’s safety assessment instrument, was subsequently offered to judges at the annual statewide Dependency Summit in August, 2010. This training was also offered to the general child welfare audience in attendance throughout the Summit, but was particularly designed to be of benefit to child protective investigators and case management staff.
A more narrowed focus, dealing specifically with reviewing Florida’s current ‘Child Safety Assessment’ instrument (child protective investigations) and the ‘Family Assessment’ instrument (case management) occurred throughout the year. Particularly, two of Florida’s Innovation Site’s community-based care agencies explored the use of a ‘Structured Decision Making’ model/instruments with the help of technical assistance arranged for through the Casey Family Programs. This initial work was expanded to include review and possible incorporation of the ‘Signs of Safety’ assessment features into Florida’s safety assessment framework for both case management and investigative functional activities. This effort and review remains a work in progress and more time is needed to fully assess what improvements will be actualized in Florida’s standardized safety and risk assessment processes.

(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 2010, in addition to implementing a number of enhancements to existing system functionality including mobility applications and upgrades to the legal module, the Department focused on the design, acceptance, and pilot testing of the remaining component of the SACWIS system - financial processing. 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, which is scheduled for completion by the end of July 2011.

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.

Future plans

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

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (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.

(6) DEVELOPING, STRENGTHENING, AND FACILITATING TRAINING

During 2009-2010, the Department, working in partnership with the Child Welfare Training Academy (University of South Florida) and its pre-service curriculum provider (Florida International University), as well as, its’ community-based care agencies and Sheriff’s Offices, implemented a new statewide Single Integrated Pre-Service
Curriculum. The Single Integrated Curriculum built upon the existing child welfare pre-service instructional content, however, Florida Safe Families Network (SACWIS System) navigational training was woven into the content throughout the relevant instructional modules. In addition to the FSFN related instructional content, curriculum materials related to Florida’s recently implemented statewide Family Centered Practice Model, family preservation services, and other strategic initiatives were included in the content. In order to support statewide implementation of the new curriculum, significant advance preparation work was necessary to construct a series of “gold standard” teaching cases in the training region of the FSFN system. The training region allows newly hired staff participating in pre-service training to complete a variety of “shell” or “dummy” case activities in a mock-FSFN system so that they may gain competence in system navigation and documentation requirements. Phase in of the new single-integrated curriculum occurred from January 2010 – October 2010, on a CBC-by-CBC basis according to the unique hiring and training schedules. A variety of ongoing technical assistance, data-entry workshops, consultant-based support and train-the-trainers events were completed in order to support statewide implementation.

During 2009-2010, 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 occurred two weeks after the end of this reporting period, becoming effective on October 14, 2010.

The Training and Certification Rule, 65C-33, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), codifies the training and certification process of Florida’s child welfare services staff, by carrying out the provisions of Section 402.40, Florida Statutes, regarding child welfare training, and the provisions of Section 402.731, F.S., regarding child welfare certification. The rule:

- Sets forth the minimum standards for Florida’s Child Welfare Professional training and certification process;
- Establishes the position classifications and certification designations requiring Child Protection Professional certification, and identifies specific casework and interpersonal skills (through Department-approved “Performance Assessments” included by reference in the rule) which must be successfully demonstrated by each candidate for certification in order to be certified;
- Provides for qualified individuals to maintain multiple certifications;
- 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 inservice training requirements for continuing professional development in the areas of Professional Ethics, Legal, and Practice Skills for the recertification of Child Protection Professionals.
These minimum standards ensure that each participant has successfully attained and continues to maintain and develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and priorities necessary to competently carry out his or her child welfare work responsibilities. In order to support the tracking of training and certification requirements of staff, Florida also completed a series of information technology enhancements to SkillNET its web-based learning management system.
Chapter 6

Florida’s
Child Protection Services and Workforce

Services
Screening and Assessments
The Department on the release and associated training of a revised allegation matrix entitled the Child Maltreatment Index which provides for clearer definitions of maltreatment types, examples of assessment factors and types of evidence and documentation recommended to provide a verified finding of abuse and neglect and, ultimately, more consistent application. Significant changes were made with regard to the revision of investigative closure disposition types from verified, some indicators, or no indicators to verified, not substantiated and no indicators. The Department is also focused on reviewing child-on-child sexual abuse through a workgroup established by the Task Force on Fostering Success; beginning work on updating the ‘Child Protective Investigations’ section of Florida’s Administrative Code; and significant changes to the Parent Needs Assistance/Special Conditions reports and assessment.

One strategic area of the casework process that was changed during this period concerned development and training related to the Child Maltreatment Index. Further, CF-OP 175-28 was updated and both the instrument and the operating procedure guide critical decision making by both the Hotline counselors and child protective services investigators. Hotline counselors use the maltreatment index in determining whether the reported information meets the legal criteria for acceptance of a report. Child protective services investigators use the maltreatment index to assist in determining if the necessary documentation and sufficient evidence are present to support a finding of abuse, abandonment or neglect.

The Department also revised of investigative closure disposition types. The issue of investigative findings has been a topic of debate for a number of years and over the course of several administrations in Florida. Experienced and knowledgeable personnel from both the Department and contracted agencies have been divided on the classification of findings of child maltreatment. The feedback obtained from all stakeholders has been fully considered. After thoughtful review of the information and feedback presented, the Department announced that critical elements of the two major positions have been integrated into a solid plan for improving our work with families. A briefing paper submitted by the Office of Family Safety thoroughly explored the values of retaining, modifying or doing away with the Some Indicator maltreatment finding. The recommended approach was to modify the descriptor from Some Indicators to Not Substantiated. The Not Substantiated investigation disposition is used and determines that there is not sufficient evidence under State law or policy to conclude that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of being maltreated.
This approach aligns with the family centered practice model by reducing the stigma to families involved with the Department while continuing to recognize concerns about established risk factors. The use of more neutral terminology will help orient both caseworker and family to identify a course of action leading to more positive outcomes.

This approach is designed to reduce the use of the middle-tier finding through development of more stringent criteria, and guidelines for its application. The reduction in use will significantly increase the importance of the finding as a risk and safety indicator in identification of service needs.

The **Not Substantiated** finding will have specific criteria and guidelines defining the level of credible evidence required for use of the finding. This will eliminate the former practice of using the **Some Indicator** finding when some degree of credible evidence was present, however minimal. This focused application of the **Not Substantiated** finding will ultimately lead to a reduction in usage that will align Florida with other states using a multi-finding approach.

For implementation, the Department trained existing staff on the **Not Substantiated** maltreatment type and parameters for use, incorporated the **Not Substantiated** maltreatment type and parameters for use into the pre-service training curriculum for newly hired employees, communicated the modification to stakeholders involved in reviewing and interpreting findings of maltreatment, aligned current policy language to reflect the **Not Substantiated** maltreatment type, and completed the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) change to implement maltreatment finding modification.

The Department also leads a series of web-based trainings on effective safety planning and related practice concepts of assessing risk and imminent safety threats

**Mandated Reporters**

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

**Family Involvement**

The Department coordinates with the University of South Florida Child Welfare Training Academy to produce a series of statewide trainings on ‘Teaming With Families’. This practice initiative is separated into two components. The initial trainings were ‘train-the-trainer’ sessions with the goal of expanding the number of certified trainers in the state with the capacity to train field staff on Family Group Decision Making, Family Group Conferencing, Family Team Conferencing, Team Decision Making and Permanency Teaming Process. Subsequent trainings are directed at child protective investigators and case managers and reinforced that “teaming” activities can and should occur throughout the life of the case and are not solely precipitated by major crisis events. Teaming should be a regular, integral component of various aspects of casework practice. Supervisors are encouraged to participate.
Florida’s Family Centered Practice Framework was finalized and disseminated statewide. Florida’s Family Centered Practice framework was developed in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, state and community-based care leadership, in consultation with national experts, including Casey Family Programs, and under the direction of the Child and Family Services Review subgroup of the Secretary’s Task Force for Fostering Success. Florida has completed significant training related to Family Centered Practice, including the development and implementation of the Family Centered Practice Training Series, a week-long intensive in-services training that is still be utilized by a variety of local community-based care providers and modification of its standardized pre-service curriculum to include the Family Centered Practice model.

Collaboration
Included in the revisions to the allegation matrix include an updated maltreatment finding to Not Substantiated from Some Indicators detailed further below. Additionally, the index created a separate section for Special Condition Referrals and provided additional guidance for the acceptance and assessment of these referrals. This was also a major change in current practice in Florida.

Feedback from all six regions, Community-based Care staff, law enforcement, the Child Protection Team, Children’s Legal Services, the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program offices and other partners from across the state were incorporated. The Child Maltreatment Index aligns with Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, and recognized best practice in child welfare practice.

The Department has worked cooperatively with field investigative staff and regional legal representatives on the development of 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 collaborative consultation. Over the past three years, the number of children in out-of-home care has been reduced by over 36% in Florida. The Department has had a parallel focus on family engagement. The goal has been to provide effective services tailored to each family’s needs on a case-by-case basis designed to help the family ameliorate concerning issues and allow them to safely care for their child(ren). In a family-preservation practice, robust legal staffings are recognized as more critical than ever and attorneys no longer simply make a call that there is or is not some minimum “legal sufficiency.”

Triage Procedures/Differential Response
In the spirit of family centered practice, the Department partners and works outcomes collaboratively with families and community stakeholders in achieving the safety To that end, the Department has expanded its definition of special conditions as a prevention referral handled as a Special Conditions report “Parent Needs Assistance (PNA).”

In January 2010, the Florida Department of Children and Families expanded its use of “Parent Needs Assistance” referrals accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline for follow-up at the community level. These “PNA” referrals were intended to provide an alternative to
acceptance of abuse reports for investigation in marginal situations with potential for maltreatment where no actual maltreatment was alleged.

The Department’s special condition referrals do not constitute willful abuse, neglect or abandonment as stated in Chapter 65C-30.001(132), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) and are not investigations nor in any way should be used adversely against children and families. Extensive policy development, clarification and training is underway with regard to the Department’s prevention efforts for reports to Florida’s Abuse Hotline that do not meet the statutory criteria for abuse, abandonment, or neglect investigation but the Hotline counselor identifies the family may be in need of services, many of which include the special condition of child-on-child sexual abuse.

**Juvenile Justice Transfers**

**2009-2010 Update**

Last year, the Department partnered with CBC Lead Agencies and the Department of Juvenile Justice (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. This data is exchanged between DCF and DJJ on a monthly basis.

The number of children active as a child welfare case who were in a DJJ facility or shelter as of September 30, 2010 was 291. This count includes any child who had an active placement in either a residential or detention facility during the month.

As outlined in the action plan for the SACWIS Assessment Review Report (SARR) finding #87, the department will continue to work with DJJ to incorporate data on DJJ/DCF “crossover” children into FSFN.

**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.

In addition, the Department and DJJ began a joint statewide review of dependent youth in foster care who had also been committed to a DJJ residential facility. The purpose was to assess case work practices overall, but with a focus on how well the agencies were working together to plan and prepare for the youth’s transition back into the community upon release.
Future Plans

During the next reporting period, the agencies will review the findings from those reviews, analyze the data collected, and jointly produce a written report with recommendations. 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.

Substantive Changes

There are no substantive changes in Florida Statutes that adversely affect the State’s eligibility for the CAPTA State grant.

Workforce

Florida’s child protective investigations units are responsible for receiving and responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. As required by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, child protective investigators must respond to reports of a child’s maltreatment, assess risk to the child, initiate removal or provide in-home services to ensure the child’s safety, and make a determination regarding the allegations of child maltreatment. Protective investigators perform these functions in partnership with several other entities such as local law enforcement, Child Protection Teams, Guardians ad Litem, Children’s Legal Services, the courts, and community-based care case management agencies.

The Department performs child protective investigations in 60 counties statewide through its organizational structure, which includes regional directors, circuit administrators, operational program administrators, program operations administrators, child protective investigation supervisors and child protective investigation units.

In 1998, the Florida Legislature passed legislation amending Chapter 39, Florida Statutes to allow the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to transfer the responsibility for conducting child protective investigations to a County Sheriff’s Office. The Manatee County Sheriff’s Office had been the first county in Florida to begin conducting child protective investigations on an experimental basis as early as 1997. The 1998 legislation specified Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties as the first counties where the transfer to the Sheriffs’ Office would take place. It also opened up the possibility that other county sheriffs could become responsible for these investigations as well. Sheriffs’ offices perform child protective investigations under grant agreements with DCF in the remaining seven counties: Broward, Citrus, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole. It is the Department’s intention to continue expanding the counties where the Sheriff Office conducts child protection investigations (CPI).
All child protective investigations, regardless of entity performing the function, must be done in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations. Specifically, the department and the sheriffs’ offices must:

- investigate all reports of child abuse, neglect, abandonment, and special conditions (e.g., child on-child sexual abuse);
- respond to all out-of-town inquiries on or requests pertaining to alleged child abuse;
- provide child protective investigations 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- begin investigations within 24 hours of report receipt;
- complete investigations within 60 days;
- use the department’s decision support tools for investigators;
- complete the paperwork necessary to determine a child’s eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding;
- provide testimony and support to enable judicial or administrative hearings;
- conduct supervisory reviews of all cases within established timeframes; and
- comply with legislative performance measures and standards.

The Department embraces a regional structure for its field operations and locates regional headquarters in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale and Miami. Services organized in areas consistent with the geographic boundaries of judicial circuits are due to the Department’s on-going and regular interaction with the State’s court system. The following websites provide more information regarding the geographic locations of each judicial circuit:


In a positive step toward reducing heavy caseloads, particularly in the Southern, SunCoast and Northeast regions, 80 new Child Protective Investigators (CPI), have just recently been hired. In an attempt to identify and interview well-qualified applicants, the Department has recently launched a new CPI Career Opportunities website and is proactively seeking new sources of potential employees through actions such as strengthening relationships with colleges and universities and reaching out to various law enforcement associations. The website may be located at:

http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/DCFJobs/

Education and Qualifications
Effective July 1, 2002, the State of Florida adopted a broadband classification system. These classification and compensation plans in conjunction with the new broadband system should be used for the purpose of classifying and compensating positions in the Career Service, Selected Exempt Service or Senior Management Service. Please refer to the Attachment section for copies of the classification specifications for each positions within the child protection system, intake, assessment and supervisory.

Education Requirements
A bachelor’s degree in any field from an accredited college or university is required for entry level child protective investigator positions and supervisors.
Other minimum qualifications are:

- Current valid driver’s license;
- 1 year child welfare related experience;
- Examples of child welfare related experience include: work in a community based agency, social service, child care or day care, child welfare agency, law enforcement working with child safety, school teacher or counselor, and others as deemed appropriate;
- Master’s degree in related service field can substitute for one year of experience; and,
- Child Protection Internship can substitute for one year of experience.

Advancement

Advancement opportunities exist for both child protective investigators and supervisors. Child protective investigators traditionally advance to supervisory roles and the supervisors have an opportunity to advance to specialist or program manager level. This is possible for both entities providing the services.

Caseloads

Chapter 20.19(5)(c), Florida Statutes, provides for the annual analysis of adequate personnel for child protective investigations. Each fiscal year, the Department in consultation with the relevant employee representatives, develop projections of the number of child abuse and neglect cases and includes in the department’s legislative budget request a specific appropriation for funds and positions for the next fiscal year in order to provide adequate staff. The law specifies for:

1. Child protection investigation workers so that caseloads do not exceed the Child Welfare League Standards by more than two cases; and

2. Child protection case workers so that caseloads do not exceed the Child Welfare League Standards by more than two cases.

Current Caseloads:

As of May 4, 2011, the average statewide caseload per child protective investigator is 20.38. This includes Child Protective Investigators employed by the Department of Children and Families and seven county Sheriff’s Offices. The Department is instituting a workgroup to review the current methodology for reporting caseload and how it corresponds to the statewide capacity level of Child Protective Investigators. The average number of child protective investigators for a supervisor is seven.

Training

As previously mentioned, 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."
The Training and Certification Rule, Chapter 65C-33, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), codifies the training and certification process of Florida's child welfare services staff, by carrying out the provisions of Section 402.40, Florida Statutes, regarding child welfare training, and the provisions of Section 402.731, F.S., regarding child welfare certification. The rule:

- Sets forth the minimum standards for Florida's Child Welfare Professional training and certification process;
- Establishes the position classifications and certification designations requiring Child Protection Professional certification, and identifies specific casework and interpersonal skills (through Department-approved "Performance Assessments" included by reference in the rule) which must be successfully demonstrated by each candidate for certification in order to be certified;
- Provides for qualified individuals to maintain multiple certifications;
- 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 in-service training requirements for continuing professional development in the areas of Professional Ethics, Legal, and Practice Skills for the recertification of Child Protection Professionals

These minimum standards ensure that each participant has successfully attained and continues to maintain and develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and priorities necessary to competently carry out his or her child welfare work responsibilities. In order to support the tracking of training and certification requirements of staff, Florida also completed a series of information technology enhancements to SkillNET its web-based learning management system.

Entry Level Training

**Pre-Service Training (Phase I):**
The pre-service training begins with a pre-test (to gauge the basic knowledge of incoming hires) and orientation. Both job classifications get trained together for some of the training, and then there are separate "tracks" that are more position-specific. For both tracks, the pre-service curriculum lasts about six weeks and includes classroom instruction, on-line learning, and also a field component. Although there are typically quizzes throughout the training, there is a post-test at the conclusion of the training which each trainee must pass in order to progress to the next step. Once the trainee passes, he or she may carry a caseload, etc.
Performance Assessment (Phase 2):
After approximately six–nine months from the date of passing the post-test, the individual is eligible for certification, which includes having the supervisor and an independent evaluator review one of the individual’s case records (“test case”) in order to gauge statutory compliance, appropriateness of decision-making, etc. At this time, the supervisor and independent evaluator must also assess the individual’s interpersonal skills, where they accompany the candidate to a home visit, in order to observe the individual’s ability to interact with clients in a professional manner. If, based upon the findings of both the individual’s supervisor and the independent evaluator (who is a certified individual at the level of supervisor or higher, who is not in the candidate’s chain of command), the individual has successfully completed both the casework portion and the interpersonal skills portion of this “Performance Assessment,” the individual becomes certified. Current policy requires that an individual become certified within one year from the date of hire, or the date of having passed the post-test, whichever is later.

Recertification (In-Service Training):
Once an individual becomes a Certified Child Protection Professional, his or her certification is valid for a period of three (3) years. The only requirements for recertification is for the individual to remain in good standing, and for him/her to complete a minimum of 48 hours of in-service, professional development training over the three-year period. An individual's minimum of 48 professional development training hours must include a minimum of four (4) hours of professional ethics; a minimum of six (6) hours of legal; and a minimum of 24 hours of practice skills training in order to be recertified.

Supervisory Training
The purpose of child protection work is to keep children safe. Supervision is the critical element of best practice and accountability in child welfare case practice. The primary goal of clinical supervision and consultation is to support caseworkers’ decisions and planning for child safety, permanency and well-being. Supervising for Excellence was specifically developed for the purpose of preparing supervisors for their role and responsibilities related to supporting caseworkers in their efforts to make sound decisions and plan for child safety, permanence and well-being.

This supervisor training is offered to all new supervisors in Florida’s child welfare system. It offers participants an opportunity to learn the skills and information necessary to transition into effective leaders in their new supervisory roles. Participants learn how to identify their leadership styles, build an effective work team, give constructive feedback, and steer their team's work toward the goals and outcomes necessary in order to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in Florida.
Key Learning Objectives include:

- Identify leadership/management style and develop a management approach consistent with that style.
- Develop and organize a time management plan to keep team working toward goals/outcomes necessary for effective case management.
- Utilize supervisory tools for case review and communicate expectations to staff in terms of projected outcome.
- Apply experience and historical knowledge of cases to assist staff in applying appropriate interventions and guiding the case toward permanency as quickly as possible.
- Identify team strengths and weaknesses and utilize strengths-based coaching techniques to create a highly functioning team.
- Discuss Florida’s child welfare system including the agencies involved and the laws governing them.
- Evaluate available resources and discuss utilizing and collaborating with various resources.
- Present the results of a self-directed project illustrating a supervisory core value.

Supplemental Training
Supplemental training for CPIs and supervisors is made available around the state. One example is training on the legal aspects of child protective investigations. This training as well as technical assistance is in coordination with law enforcement and the Department’s Children’s Legal Services.

The Department offers regional trainings on a variety of topics pertinent to the delivery of services. These training opportunities are available to the Sheriffs’ offices also providing investigatory services.

Sheriffs provide investigators with some of the same training provided to law enforcement officers. This training includes forensic interviewing and interrogation techniques, which enhances investigators’ knowledge and skills and thus may improve the quality of investigations. Some of these training opportunities are available to the Department.

Additional training resources, as well as for other child protection field staff, are available through the Center for Excellence. The Center supports Florida's child welfare professionals in achieving practice excellence and helping keep kids safe. It is funded by the Department of Children and Families for the distribution of relevant, accurate and consistent information and training that is easily accessible to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are dedicated web pages containing resources and information to improve the capacity of all supervisors within child welfare. The resources also provide supervisors with opportunities to share information and train staff on effective casework practices to improve the capacity of their team. Please refer to: http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/trsup/Forms/AllItems.aspx
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan
Assurances & Summary
DATA
1. The number of child protective services workers responsible for the intake and screening of reports filed in the previous year.

   192. This number is comprised of Hotline staff which includes 172 counselors and 20 supervisors. (Source: Florida NCANDS FFY 2010)

2. The number of child protective services workers responsible for intake, assessment, and investigation of child abuse and neglect reports relative to the number of reports investigated in the previous year.

   1940. This number is comprised of Hotline staff which included 172 counselors, 20 supervisors and field staff including 1090 child protective investigators, 190 child protective supervisors, 395 sheriffs' child protective investigators and 73 sheriff supervisors. (Source: Florida NCANDS FFY 2010)

3. The annual report containing the summary of activities of the citizen review panels of the State required by subsection(c)(6).

   Please refer to the Attachment section of the annual report.

4. 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.

   The number of children active as a child welfare case who were in a juvenile justice facility or shelter as of September 30, 2010 was 291. This count includes any child who had an active placement in either a residential or detention facility during the month. (Source: Florida Department of Children and Families, as hoc report)
Attachments