"Just as a house needs a foundation in order to stand firm, so does a person"  
- Jacquie McTaggart (Teacher and Writer)

DCF’s Northeast Region Headquarters  
5920 Arlington Expressway  
Jacksonville, FL 32211

DCF Mission  
Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and  
Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency
ENGAGING COMMUNITIES – WORKING TOGETHER AS ONE
We are putting a new emphasis on bringing communities together to build strong and long-term relationships.

DCF & COMMUNITY-BASED CARE – A TRUE PARTNERSHIP IN DELIVERING EXCELLENCE
Our commitment grows stronger every day.

ADOPTIONS OF TEENS IN FOSTER CARE – DCF IS RAISING THE BAR
Hundreds of children in Northeast Florida no longer have to live in the foster care system. See how DCF and our community-based care partners are working together to make dreams a reality.

IMPROVING HOW WE INVESTIGATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
We are committed to having the best possible child welfare system to ensure better child safety and outcomes.

DCF’s PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LEADS THE NATION IN ACCURACY…AGAIN
Florida has consistently ranked at or near the top for accuracy in processing food stamps for the past several years, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in the process.
Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The year 2013 was filled with challenges as well as many successes for the Department of Children and Families, both in our Northeast Florida region and statewide. While we serve more people in need than any other state agency in Florida, we know that we cannot do it alone. In an effort to help us better address our challenges, we enlisted the support of our local communities throughout our twenty county region. We are proud to say that they answered the call.

As you read through these pages, you will see, in compelling stories and in data and media quotes what the underlying factor is in our efforts: our outstanding workforce and their commitment to the children and families we serve in the Northeast Region. It’s a commitment that matters now more than ever. As the economy continues to improve and more companies come to Northeast Florida, it is vital that we have a system that prepares families to make strong communities. Research shows us that the skills needed to thrive in school, in business and in life – motivation, self-control, focus and self-esteem – are rooted in solid family foundations.

Through special programs like “Partners for Promise,” people in need were matched with people who could help. This goes beyond DCF funding to include the vast number of individuals and organizations who are working to help families succeed.

Local businesses, faith and non-profit organizations and individuals stepped up to help our children, seniors and families in need in order to help build stronger communities for us all. The events for the “Community of Hope Initiative – A Beacon of Hope and Family Well-Being” held in Jacksonville and Gainesville provided a spark that created a spotlight on alarming statistics of challenges in our communities. This helped raise awareness from the neighborhood level upward to create a new community commitment to change. Our ongoing efforts in Northeast Florida were nationally recognized by the country’s leading child welfare experts like Casey Family Programs in Seattle, WA and Chadwick Center for Children and Families in San Diego, CA.

Working with our community partners, we created opportunities for mentoring in career choices for teenagers in foster care in Volusia County, a massive outreach to help the homeless population and veterans in Alachua County, and a Safe Swim campaign for children in Gainesville. These are just a few examples of our quality initiatives. They raised our profile as a state that is committed to protecting the vulnerable, promoting strong and economically self-sufficient families and advancing personal and family recovery and resiliency.

While this increasing recognition of the work of DCF and our community partners in helping local children is flattering, we know that our true success lies in the lives that are being changed every day. Working together, we are helping families in need move more toward self-sufficiency and achieving the American Dream in all communities, not just a few.

Through our community-based care partnerships in the Northeast Region, we delivered excellence in finding
forever families to adopt children in foster care, preserving many more families who could be helped by prevention services, and ensuring quality placement in foster homes when necessary.

According to the most recent Right for Kids Rankings report, the Florida Department of Children and Families helped Florida’s child welfare system rank as one of the five best in the country. This commitment is reflected in the first priority of the Department of Children and Families: child safety. However, recognizing that good work can always become better, upcoming improvements to child protective investigations will include additional training and technology to help investigators better identify key risk factors that could impact a child’s safety. There will also be more comprehensive reviews of safety plans and decisions by investigators. Their scope will be enhanced to include closer analysis of family dynamics to determine possible future outcomes.

There are few greater concerns for parents than the care of their children outside of what they provide in their own homes. Thousands of children were well cared for in safe, healthy, positive and educational environments by trained, qualified child care staff due to the work of our Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening. More than half our licensing counselors are nationally certified investigator/inspectors.

National recognition in the Northeast Region has become the norm rather than the exception. For the sixth year in a row and during these challenging economic times, the work of our region’s employees helped Florida rank as one of the top states in the country for accuracy in processing food stamp applications. Implementation of more systematic methods of interviewing people who apply for assistance resulted in reducing the time needed to process these applications by nearly half. Our employees are committed to giving their maximum effort to help families who are struggling to find their next meal.

While the Sunshine State is commonly known for tourism, it also has the second largest elderly population in America. Our Adult Protective Services professionals take their responsibility of protecting the health and welfare of elderly and disabled adults very seriously. In addition to their protective role, they are also advocates. Their mission is to give adults with disabilities the independence to live in the community rather than in more costly residential or nursing home settings.

A desire to improve the efficiency and accountability of substance abuse and mental health services was the driving force for the legislatively supported Managing Entity concept. DCF’s oversight is accomplished by enforcing policies and regulations of the Managing Entity and subcontracted providers. Our office was instrumental in advancing recovery by improving the quality and availability of prevention, treatment and rehabilitative services.

With the same dedication that we bring to help Florida’s current citizens in need, we assist refugees who are seeking freedom from war, violence and religious persecution through our Refugee Services program. These newly arrived individuals receive assistance in getting acclimated to American culture and society and becoming economically self-sufficient.

We are continuing our commitment to investing in families. By doing this, we will ensure that the Northeast Region continues to serve as an example to others of what’s possible when we help families get ready and set for life!”

Best Regards,

David Abramowitz
**REGIONAL DATA***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circuit</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Persons Under 5 Years (%)</th>
<th>Persons Under 18 Years (%)</th>
<th>Persons 65 Years and Over (%)</th>
<th>Persons Below Poverty Level (%)</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circuit 3</td>
<td>192,911</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 Counties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit 4</td>
<td>1,148,576</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 Counties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit 7</td>
<td>870,760</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 Counties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit 8</td>
<td>377,604</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6 Counties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE Region</td>
<td>2,589,851</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>19,552,860</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2013 Data, Department of Economic Opportunity-Local Area Unemployment Statistics-2013 Annual Averages
The Department of Children and Families’ Northeast Region covers over 2.5 million people in 20 Northeast Florida counties including the Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, Gainesville and Lake City metropolitan areas.

Every day at DCF, we face the challenges of helping with people with different backgrounds who are in desperate situations, whether by their own doing or due to the bad decisions of others who were supposed to protect them.

“People are DCF’s ONLY concern and we deal with them at the lowest point in their lives...this is a job that can’t be done, but also can’t be abandoned” - Journalist Bill Cotterell.

### HOW WE SERVE YOU IN THE NORTHEAST REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoptions</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Protective Services Investigations</td>
<td>1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Screenings</td>
<td>25,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit Integrity Investigations</td>
<td>3,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse Hotline Investigations</td>
<td>30,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Facility Inspections</td>
<td>1,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of People Helped by Food Stamps or</td>
<td>706,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Cash Assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care Children and Youth</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid Clients</td>
<td>389,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Clients</td>
<td>53,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Services Clients</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Clients</td>
<td>25,991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Children and Families - 2013 Programs Data
Empowering People to Achieve

Families and communities, not systems, are best equipped to raise children. Working together, we can provide families with the support they need from a caring community to thrive.

In our communities, there are children and families who are struggling with major challenges and urgent needs in their lives. For example, nearly one in four children in Florida is currently living in poverty.

Government alone cannot solve all of the problems that we face. DCF recognizes that. Ultimately, the obligation to protect children extends beyond responding to child abuse and neglect that has already occurred. It also involves supporting innovative programs that help prevent maltreatment from occurring in the first place. To this end, DCF is taking steps to effectively engage communities and encourage people to become self-sufficient.

DCF engaged last year in several effective programs and initiatives in the 20 counties of the Northeast Region. Here are some highlights.

**Partners for Promise**

DCF has launched a program called “Partners for Promise” to bring people in need together with people who can help. We invite businesses, the faith-based and nonprofit communities and individuals to give of their time, talent, skills and resources. By doing this, they will help children, seniors and families in need. This will result in building stronger and more productive communities. You can read more about Partners for Promise at [www.flpartnersforpromise.com](http://www.flpartnersforpromise.com).

**Community of Hope Initiative— A Beacon of Hope and Family Well-Being**

In Jacksonville’s inner-city area, including the 32209 zip code, there are several alarming statistics regarding the lives of children and families.

Here’s how that zip code compares to the rest of the city:
- The average income is less than half of the city’s average income.
- More than twice as many teenagers have been getting pregnant.
- More than twice as many children live in poverty.
- The unemployment rate has been twice as high as the rest of the city.
- The rate of people suffering from bronchitis, asthma and diabetes is three times the rate in the rest of the city.
- Three times as many children are removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect.
This community needs help. If we want to have a safer community and help children have a better chance for success, the time to take action is now. Jobs and economic development are needed. Businesses can open locations in the area and become more involved in schools. Quality healthcare services and more nutritious food options can be created there.

Even though the needs of people in the 32209 zip code has been brought to the spotlight by DCF, we need a collective effort in order to make a difference. “The community is ready to bust, in a good way,” Region Director Abramowitz said. “They’re ready. They’re motivated...we’ve just got to do better for them.” With Community of Hope, DCF is bringing local residents and community leaders together and working with the nationally-known Casey Family Programs to build on the community’s assets and find solutions to its challenges.

In Gainesville, a similar initiative has been taking place in the community. Leaders of child welfare groups, including DCF, met at the Library Partnership resource center to recognize Northeast Gainesville as a "community of hope.”

The Library Partnership is a joint project of the Partnership for Strong Families, the Department of Children and Families and Casey Family Programs. It serves three Alachua County zip codes with some of the highest concentrations of children living in poverty.

**Camp for Champions**

DCF has been holding Camp for Champions events for the past several years. The camps give children and teenagers in foster care an opportunity to have a summer camp experience.

Former Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Mark Brunell teamed up with DCF, Family Support Services of North Florida and the University of North Florida to hold a “Camp for Champions” for nearly 100 local children and teenagers in the foster care system.

**Families in northeast Gainesville faring better - Northeast Gainesville has made significant progress in helping its children in the last five years, but there’s more work to be done, community leaders say—The Gainesville Sun, Sept. 12, 2013**

---

From left to right, Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center Director Marie Heath, Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, DCF Regional Director David Abramowitz and Edward Waters College President and former Jacksonville Sheriff Nathaniel (Nat) Glover during Community of Hope event on September 12, 2013.

**From left to right, Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center Director Marie Heath, Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, DCF Regional Director David Abramowitz and Edward Waters College President and former Jacksonville Sheriff Nathaniel (Nat) Glover during Community of Hope event on September 12, 2013.**

*DCF to lead push to help people of struggling 32209 zip code—The ultimate goal is for a plan of action, ranging from pushing for economic development to bringing in mentors for youth - The Florida Times-Union, Sept. 7, 2013.*

*Former Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Mark Brunell gives a motivational speech to teenagers during the “Camp for Champions” event.*
Chadwick Center for Children and Families

The nationally recognized Chadwick Center for Children and Families has selected Volusia County as one of six “Supercommunities” that will benefit from a grant to better identify and help child victims of abuse and neglect, as well as children who may lack some of the basic necessities of life.

There are many reasons why children and families in the Daytona Beach area need assistance. Volusia and Flagler counties continue to have some of the highest unemployment rates in the state.

There are more than 2,000 homeless children in Volusia County schools. In recent years, area homelessness has increased by more than 60 percent.

Career of Choice

Foster youth who are two years from independence are getting hands-on experience in different career opportunities.

The Career of Choice Program aims at providing youth with the exposure to career opportunities that are right for them in their local community. Every month a new business is chosen for partnership, opening their doors to hands-on teaching. Youth are then followed by independent living counselors, developing resumes, life-career maps and professional contacts. At this time Career of Choice has helped over 50 teens who fit the independent foster youth criteria. Mentorship in areas such as veterinary care, culinary arts, medical and real estate are among some of the career opportunities being targeted.

More than 100 child welfare, medical and other professionals in the community attended the kickoff of a three-year project that will involve educating agencies in Volusia County on how to prevent child abuse and neglect and reduce trauma and psychological effects in children. The State Department of Children & Families has teamed up with Chadwick Center for Children & Families in San Diego to kick off the project. —Daytona Beach News-Journal, Aug. 6, 2013

15th Annual Breakfast and Homeless Fair

The homeless population in Alachua County has increased by more than 53 percent over the past five years. Because of our concern, DCF employees helped support the 15th Annual Breakfast on the Plaza and Homeless Fair. Hot breakfast was served to approximately 600 people who did not have a home. More than 40 organizations set up tables, including DCF staff who assisted people with applications for public assistance. Food and services were donated by Bread of The Mighty Food Bank, Olive Garden opened its doors to mentor our community’s youth and trained them on catering, restaurant management and customer service.

The Department of Children and Families wants teens in the foster care system to develop the skills and experiences to find employment as they enter adulthood. —Daytona Beach News-Journal, Jan. 16, 2013
hair stylists provided free haircuts, and donated items were collected to put together 400 care bags full of personal care items, snacks, books and reading glasses.

DCF also helped homeless veterans apply for public assistance at the Alachua County Veterans Stand Down. More than 250 veterans, many of whom were homeless, received services and supplies at the event.

**Swim Safety Campaign**

Drowning is now the leading cause of death for children aged 4 and younger. In one recent year, eight children drowned in Volusia, Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns counties. DCF teamed up with several local agencies to hold a Swim Safety campaign. For the past two years, this extensive campaign has included press conferences, newspaper and radio interviews, public service announcements, billboards, presentations at community events, distribution of pool alarms and more.

DCF has taken part in this campaign by having all Child Protective Investigators and community-based care case managers leave pool safety information and discuss pool safety with any family in their cases who has a pool. As a result, drowning deaths have dramatically decreased. Plans are for the Swim Safety Program to continue this year. Partner agencies include the City of Daytona Beach, the Daytona Beach Fire Department, the Port Orange Fire Department, the Volusia County Department of Health, the Volusia County YMCA, Florida Hospital Memorial Medical Center, and Safe Kids Volusia/Flagler counties.

Additionally, to promote water safety in Gainesville, DCF teamed up with the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County and the Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force to hold a free Summer Safety Splash and Learning Laps event.

**Inside DCF**

DCF employees care deeply about children and families in need. In the most recent Florida State Employees Charitable Contributions campaign, Northeast Region employees donated nearly $17,500 for a wide variety of charitable agencies.

Following a tragic car crash that resulted in two refugee families losing their fathers in the Jacksonville area, several employees purchased holiday gifts for the families and donated several hundred dollars’ worth of cash and gift cards to them. In this photo, Daria, daughter of a DCF employee, poses with the grateful family.

If you or your business is interested in partnering with the DCF to help children and families in need, our Circuit Community Development Administrators would like to hear from you.
COMMUNITY-BASED CARE PARTNERSHIP

Delivering Excellence

Working with our community-based care partners in the Northeast Region to handle adoptions, foster care and family preservation services.

Community-Based Care (CBC) is a comprehensive redesign of Florida’s child welfare system. It combines the outsourcing of foster care and prevention services to outstanding locally-based agencies with increased community involvement. This innovative statewide reform increases accountability, resource development, and system performance.

In the Northeast Region, DCF works with our CBC partner agencies to handle all prevention, foster care, adoption and independent living services to help children and families in the child welfare system. From December 2012 through November 2013, our region’s CBC partners were responsible for 715 adoptions of children from foster care. Additionally, the CBCs visited nearly 100 percent of the children in their care on a monthly basis to find out more about their needs and how they are doing. At the end of 2013, there were 2,357 children in foster care, down from 2,622 at the same time last year in the Northeast Region.

There are nearly 400 children who are waiting to be adopted in the Region. Teenagers make up close to half of this number.

DCF actively oversees contracted agencies for performance assessments and accountability.

All children in foster care should have the same level of care that you would want for your own children. DCF and its community based care partners are working toward that goal.

Two of the five CBC’s in the Northeast Region ranked among the top five of the 20 CBC’s statewide last year (Nov. 2012-Oct. 2013).
families in 13 North Central Florida counties. The agency marked its 10th anniversary during the year. Over the past ten years, PSF, with the support of DCF, has reduced the number of children removed from homes by 46 percent and has finalized 1,500 adoptions.

Since 2003, Partnership for Strong Families as provided child welfare services to more than 50,000 victims of child abuse and neglect. PSF also unveiled the agency’s vision for the future and the goals it hopes to achieve. These goals include preventing child abuse by promoting prevention and intervention programs focused on the 0 to 5 age population.

- The Gainesville Sun, Apr. 5, 2013
Family Support Services of North Florida

FSS achieved a major milestone during 2013. The agency had the lowest number of children living in foster care in its history. During a seven-year period, FSS safely reduced the number of children in its foster care system from 2,238 children to 605 children. This is because more children are able to stay in their own homes, thanks to services to prevent further abuse or neglect.

For the second consecutive year, FSS was the number one community-based care agency in the state for adoptions. More than 80 percent of FSS’ 310 adoptions were finalized within 24 months of children coming into care. This means that children did not linger in the foster care system. The achievement was realized due to the support of local judges and FSS’ case management organizations, which the agency subcontracts with to provide direct services to families. Additionally, FSS exceeded its goal to recruit new foster parents by 49 percent.

Through Family Preservation services, FSS helped about 4,000 families and 10,000 children. These services included in-home assistance through the Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (STEPS) program, help to promote healthier relationships within families, and intensive counseling services through the Family Assessment Support Team (FAST).

Kids First of Florida

More than 400 families were helped thanks to a variety of prevention services that Kids First of Florida (KFF) provided during the 2013 calendar year. The agency contracts with several community partners, including Clay Behavioral Health Center (CBHC), to provide in-home therapeutic services and in-home parent education and support. These services help prevent future maltreatment and allow children to safely remain in their own homes.

Additionally, KFF and CBHC operate a Neighborhood Resource Center in Green Cove Springs. This center provided information and referrals for community services and resources to help about 700 families and 1,200 children during the state fiscal year.

KFF has increased its community partnerships in several ways. This includes educating local churches and faith-based organizations about prevention services that the agency provides.

KFF is also working with the faith-based Mercy Network, which brings together organizations, churches, and human service agencies in an effort to coordinate local services and provide needed items and assistance to the community. About 20 families were helped through this program during a six-month period.
The agency also helped 76 families in need by assisting them with payments for rent, utilities, clothing and gasoline.

**Family Integrity Program**

The Family Integrity Program exceeded its goal for adoptions by 65 percent for the state fiscal year. FIP also surpassed its goal for the number of new foster homes by 57 percent during this period.

FIP is focusing its foster parent recruitment efforts on therapeutic, medical, and teenage foster homes. These recruitment efforts include increased community outreach. The agency implemented a 24 hour emergency on-call case worker to help foster parents and caregivers who have concerns or questions.

To better help teenagers in the foster care system, FIP is currently developing a mentor program that will focus on youth ages 13 to 17. All teenagers who were in FIP’s Road to Independence Program achieved either a high school diploma or a GED and are now enrolled full-time in a vocational school or college.

Eighty-nine percent of at-risk children serviced by FIP’s prevention programs were able to remain in their homes. Thanks to these services, more than 100 children did not have to be placed into protective custody.

**Community Partnership for Children**

During 2013, Community Partnership for Children finalized a record number of adoptions in its history. 191 children found new, permanent homes.

Tremendous progress has been made in reducing the number of children in out-of-home care by 350 during 2013. This was a result of teamwork from several agencies, including CPC, DCF and local judges. The achievement was reached by obtaining permanency for children in a safe and timely manner.

The agency received a Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Child Welfare Integration Pilot Grant. This grant allowed CPC to design and implement a seamless treatment system of care for its parents with substance abuse issues.

In 2013, CPC provided services to help more than 700 families and 1,100 children.

Community Partnership for Children said the number of local children being removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect has declined about 50 percent in the past six months. Community education efforts have led to less prescription drug abuse by parents, said Mark Jones, the agency’s CEO.

- Daytona Beach News-Journal, Jan. 4, 2013
Working Together to Make Dreams a Reality

Helping children and teenagers realize their dreams for a new loving and caring family born in the hearts of their adoptive parents.

We want to increase the number and the quality of foster homes in Florida, build stronger foster families for our children and ensure that our children have every chance at becoming successful adults.

There is a real need for more foster parents, especially for teenagers in foster care. There are about 18,000 children in foster care in Florida. Out of all children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted in the Northeast Region, nearly half of them are teenagers.

Call to Action

DCF continues to engage communities and educate the public about foster care and adoptions either through sponsoring or participating in many events throughout the region. DCF has kicked off a new initiative to recruit foster parents.

The main focus of the “Call to Action” initiative is to highlight the urgent need for high-quality foster parents and mentors for teenagers and sibling groups in foster care.

“There are about 475 children in foster homes in Jacksonville. These children were placed in foster homes through no fault of their own. They needed to be removed from their homes for their own safety, because they had been victims of serious abuse and neglect,” said DCF Northeast Region Director David Abramowitz. “But they also need to have nurturing foster parents who can help guide them, mentor them and put them on a path to a better adulthood. We want to encourage people in our community to consider becoming foster parents and mentors. By doing this, they will leave...
legacies of helping these children have better lives now and in the future.”

DCF and its community based care partners, including Family Support Services of North Florida, have improved the training process for prospective foster parents in order to better prepare them for having foster children in their homes.

People who aren’t ready to be foster parents can still support fostering. Other ways include mentoring, providing free services to children in foster care, or providing scholarships for camps or other events. They may also become a Guardian ad Litem, serving as a court-appointed advocate for children. For more information on how you can support the children and families in our community, please visit: www.flpartnersforpromise.com.

Why Adopt from Foster Care?

• Affordability - While private forms of adoption can cost upwards of $30,000, adopting from foster care costs little or nothing. Other costs associated with the adoption process may also be free.

• Legally secure - Children are not made available for adoption until a court has already terminated the parental rights of their birth parents. This form of adoption is very secure.

• Monthly financial support - Families who adopt may qualify for a monthly subsidy to help offset ongoing costs.

• Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoptions - Parents who adopt children with special needs may receive a $11,390 credit, even if actual expenses are less.

• FREE Health Care - All of the children who receive a monthly subsidy are eligible to receive health care through the Medicaid program until age 19 or 20 and in certain circumstances, up to age 26.

• PAID College Tuition - Florida’s children adopted from foster care are eligible for free tuition at any state university, community college or vocational school.

• Community Support - Free Orientation for new adoptive parents and 24-hour helpline.

Related News Stories

The Daytona Beach News-Journal, Aug 6, 2013

Volusia hopes to curb child abuse, neglect

Darred Williams spent most of his life thinking he was a mistake. When he was 1, he said his drug-addicted teen mom forgot him in his car seat on top of the car and drove off. He fell, suffering injuries to his face and head and within months was placed in foster care.

When he was adopted at 10, he thought “being a mistake was over,” but classmates teased him for being adopted. After succeeding in school and graduating from the University of Central Florida, the now 25-year-old realized “none of us in foster care are mistakes. Each and every one of us are here as miracles.”

DCF Northeast Region Director David Abramowitz said the decrease of the number of children in foster care is “largely due to a record number of adoptions” by Community Partnership for Children, which provides local foster care services for DCF. The agency saw 191 adoptions in Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties from July 2012 to June of this year.

“We will never decrease all the trauma, but we can do a better job,” said Abramowitz.
Helping Keep
Thousands of Children Safe

Ensuring that children are well cared for in a safe, healthy, positive and educational environment by trained, qualified child care staff.

The Department of Children and Families’ Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening is responsible for the administration of child care licensing and training throughout Florida. The purpose of this program is to ensure that children are well cared for in a safe, healthy, positive and educational environment by trained, qualified child care staff.

This program currently regulates licensed child care facilities, licensed family day care homes and licensed large family child care homes.

DCF’s Child Care Licensing program licenses and inspects more than 1,542 child care centers and family day care homes in the Northeast Region. These facilities have as many as 94,799 children in their care. During a recent 12 month period, DCF inspected these facilities more than 3,888 times in addition to investigating complaints. A total of 409 fines were levied for various violations.

In Jacksonville, DCF has established a media partnership with Action News. Each week on both CBS 47 and Fox 30, Action News anchor Mark Spain airs Kid Care reports based on the Department’s inspections of child care facilities.

DCF inspection reports of child care facilities can be viewed online at www.myflfamilies.com. Once there, click on “For Families” then click “Provider Search.”

Sixteen Child Care Licensing counselors in the Northeast Region have received a National Certification as an investigator/inspector. During the past year, the Region’s Child Care Licensing program has exceeded the 97 percent goal of conducting inspections within the required time frames. Thanks to the hard work of the counselors, the on-time inspection rate was nearly 99 percent.
Parent Resources

To obtain more information regarding the following:

- **Choosing a Child Care**
- **Provider Search**
- **Selecting a Summer Camp For School Age Children**
- **Know Your Child Care Facility**
- **Laws - Requirements**
- **Other Resources**
- **Recalls**

Please follow this link:

http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/parent-resources

---

**Related News Stories**

**First Coast News, WTLV (NBC) and WJXX (ABC), May 28, 2013**

*Daycare operator charged in Jacksonville toddler drowning death*

The operator of an unlicensed daycare center has been charged in the drowning death of a two-year-old at its facility. The center was ordered by the Florida Department of Children and Families to cease operations.

**The Florida Times-Union, May 27, 2013**

*Finding licensed child care centers is important*

State officials stress parents need to make sure a provider has a license from the Florida Department of Children and Families. State licensing doesn’t guarantee a child’s safety, but it does mean providers receive training for how to work with children, employees are given a background screening, and that family home centers are inspected two times a year while child care facilities are inspected three times a year.

**The Florida Times-Union, Apr. 9, 2013**

*Urban League suspended as manager of Head Start programs, cited 25 times over two years*

DCF said that over the past two years, Head Start programs in Jacksonville have been cited eight times for using physical discipline, nine times for inadequate supervision and eight times for security issues. Two days after DCF informed the federal Head Start agency of its concerns, the local agency that operated the program was suspended. A DCF spokesman called the number of citations “unacceptable.”
CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Refocusing
Our Commitment to Safe Children

Working in partnership with local communities to ensure the safety, timely permanency and well-being of children.

The first priority of the Department of Children and Families is child safety. Child Protective Investigators (CPI’s) respond to and investigate reports of abuse or neglect to determine whether any child in the family who has been reported to us has been abused or neglected.

Based on evidence and interviews, CPI’s determine if there are any threats to the safety of all children in the home. If threats are found, they determine whether the parents are willing and able to adequately deal with those threats to keep children safe. If the CPI’s conclude that children aren’t safe, they must take the children into protective custody.

In an abuse investigation, a CPI will interview family members and others who know the family to get enough information to make safety decisions.

Helping Children at Risk
The Department continues to make significant progress in helping ensure family safety. Over the past 12 months, CPI’s in DCF’s 20 county Northeast Florida region received more than 30,000 abuse reports, which is about the same number as the previous year. In the region, more than 99 percent of child abuse investigations were launched within 24 hours of the first report of abuse.

High Standards
The Florida Department of Children and Families helped Florida’s child welfare system become ranked as one of the five best in the country, according to the most recent Right for Kids Rankings report. Florida is one of the few states that meet the following standards:
- A 24-hour response to investigate reports of child abuse or neglect.
- Visiting the vast majority of children in foster care monthly.
- Quickly returning foster children home to their biological families when it is determined to be safe to do so.

Thanks to improved training and technology, along with an effective leadership approach in the Northeast Region, the average number of cases handled per CPI in our area at any one time has dropped by 42 percent from January 2012 to November 2013. This allows investigators to focus more on the needs of specific families.

DCF places children into protective custody only if it is absolutely necessary—if they are victims of serious abuse or neglect and would be in danger if they remained in our homes. In nearly 95 percent of the cases that we investigate in the Northeast Region, we find that the children are not in danger and can be kept in their own homes, with services provided to their families to keep them safe from future abuse. These prevention services include counseling, therapy, and assistance with parenting, budgeting and anger management.

We recognize that it is traumatic for a child to have to leave his or her own home, and numerous studies show that children do better in their own homes than they would in the foster care system.

Northeast Region
Child Removal Rate Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DEC 2006</th>
<th>DEC 2013</th>
<th>DEC 2006</th>
<th>DEC 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Removal Rate Per 1,000 Children In the NE Region</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>7.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Removal Rate Per 100 Abuse Reports Received In the NE Region</td>
<td>35.8% Decline</td>
<td>41.2% Decline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recently, it was reported that “nearly 300 deaths had been reported to the state’s child abuse hotline during the first half of the year.” Most of the children were less than 5 years old!

We as citizens of Alachua County have to work even harder to save our children. Alachua County has ranked in the top third of counties with the highest domestic violence rates in the state. Children often become victims of this violence and research shows that children exposed to violence in the home are 1,000 times more likely to become batterers as adults.
Improving How We Investigate

Following several high-profile cases in South Florida, DCF called for a thorough review of all child fatalities due to abuse and neglect where there had been prior involvement by the department. To conduct the review, we reached out to Casey Family Programs, which is one of the most respected child welfare agencies in the country and a national leader in child welfare policy.

We are now working to implement the recommendations that have been determined by Casey. The Casey review confirmed that the new methodology that DCF is developing for investigations does require that our investigators conduct a full assessment of family safety and risk.

Improvements to child protective investigations will include additional training and technology to help investigators better identify key risk factors that could impact a child’s safety. Additionally, there will be more comprehensive reviews of safety plans and decisions by investigators.

Child Protective Investigators will be trained to not only investigate allegations of abuse and neglect, but to thoroughly analyze the family situation and the parents’ ability to protect their children, based on evidence.

DCF has created a five-year child fatality trend analysis that will be used to help investigators better predict the needs of families in crisis. Florida is one of the first states in the nation to introduce predictive analytics into the practice of child welfare. The data will be used as a strategic tool in the field to determine possible future outcomes.

An independent review has determined that prevention services provided by DCF or our community-based care partners reduce the odds of child death by 50%.

Overcoming Challenges

Prescription Drug Abuse: An increasing number of child abuse and neglect cases involve drug use by parents. As a result, DCF’s investigators are receiving more training on how to identify signs of substance abuse in families and what local resources are available to the families.

Domestic Violence: Nearly half of all child abuse and neglect cases reported to DCF in Northeast Florida also involve domestic violence. As many as 70 percent of domestic violence cases are not reported to authorities, and one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. In a major new effort to help families and prevent future abuse, DCF held a first-ever Domestic Violence Summit. About 100 social services professionals, including DCF managers throughout Northeast Florida, domestic violence shelter directors, and statewide experts met to discuss ways to prevent repeat incidents of domestic violence.

Human Trafficking: In Florida, the number of reports of children who were victims of human trafficking has gone from 43 to 427 in two years. To address these concerns, Florida lawmakers approved the Safe Harbor Act. This new law allows human trafficking victims to get help from child welfare professionals, including DCF, rather than being placed in juvenile delinquency programs.
Important Facts Regarding Child Abuse

- National statistics indicate that one in three girls and one in six boys are victims of sexual abuse. But some experts believe that the problem may actually be much bigger.
- Child abuse results in permanent changes in the brain that may lead to depression or drug addiction as adults.
- Research has shown that child abuse may reduce a person’s life expectancy by up to 20 years.

Northeast Region: Number of Child Abuse Investigations
Launched within 24 Hours from First Report of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Target: 99.5%</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>29,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 30,220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signs of Child Abuse

Signs of child abuse include frequent bruises, broken bones or absences from school, lack of personal hygiene, unexplained changes in behavior and more. More information on the signs of child abuse can be found at dontmissthesigns.org. However, what some people may not understand is that allegations of bad parenting or questionable decisions made by relatives may not meet the legal definition of abuse or neglect.

According to national studies, only one out of four cases of child abuse are reported to authorities. But in Florida, anyone who suspects that children or vulnerable adults are being abused, neglected, or exploited is required by state law to report it to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873 or at floridaabusehotline.com. The hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Related News Stories

Daytona Beach News-Journal, Jan. 4, 2013
Child abuse, neglect deaths triple in Volusia
The number of children who have died from abuse or neglect in Volusia County during a recent year tripled from the previous year while statewide the numbers have decreased. But DCF says that many of these deaths were preventable. The children’s deaths were due to either drowning due to a lack of supervision by parents, or co-sleeping, where a parent slept with a child and rolled over on top of the child.

The Gainesville Sun, Feb. 6, 2013
New laws prompting more reports of child abuse
Reports of suspected child abuse in Alachua County and the state have climbed in recent months since new reporting laws went into effect, and the Florida Department of Children and Families is attributing that jump to the laws.
"Now we have one of the toughest laws in the country on this. The public is required to report abuse if they think a child is being hurt. There is no way we can find out about it if it is not reported," said a DCF spokesman.
A Community Responsibility

Adult Protective Services helps protects the health and welfare of elderly and disabled adults.

Through investigations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, DCF’s Adult Protective Services program helps prevent further harm to vulnerable adults. The program also aims to give adults with disabilities the independence to live in the community rather than in more costly residential or nursing home settings.

Florida has the second largest elderly population in America. Adult Protective Investigators in the Northeast Region responded to more than 6,200 reports of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation from January 2013 through December 2013, an increase of five percent compared to the previous 12 months.

The county in Northeast Florida with the biggest increase in abuse reports was Taylor County, which had a 54.7 percent increase compared to the previous 12-month period. Other counties with double-digit increases were Suwanee County, with a 13.3 percent increase in reports, and St. Johns County, with a 12.8 percent increase.

Investigators saw more than 95 percent of victims within 24 hours of abuse being reported, which is the same percentage as last year. Experts estimate that for every incident of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation that is reported, as many as 14 other incidents may not be reported.

Most of the victims that our investigators see have the mental capacity to decide whether they want to accept or reject assistance. If we determine that the victim has mental capacity, and if the victim rejects services, then we must back away, per state laws.

About half of the cases that our investigators see involve a person who has neglected themselves. In 90 percent of adult abuse
cases, the offender is a family member of a victim who is financially dependent on them. The most common perpetrators of elder abuse are spouses.

In the Northeast Region, 1,135 adults were served by Adult Protective Services programs that helped them avoid placement in a nursing home or institution. These programs include Home Care for Disabled Adults, the Aged and Disabled Adults Medicaid Waiver Program, and more.

The oldest baby boomers are starting to retire and the number of senior citizens nationwide is skyrocketing. No state will see more growth in its senior population than Florida.

2013 Northeast Region
Adult Abuse and Neglect Reports Received

Here are a few ways you can help:

- If you suspect an elderly or disabled adult is being physically abused or ripped off, call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873 or report it online at www.FloridaAbuseHotline.com.
- Visit older friends, neighbors and family members regularly.
- Volunteer with local organizations that serve vulnerable adults.

Related News Stories

The Florida Times-Union, Apr. 24, 2013
Jacksonville attorney accused of exploiting her elderly wards for more than $100,000
The Department of Children and Families alerted the State Attorney’s Office after conducting a three-month investigation into the activities of the attorney’s activities, a DCF spokesman said. The attorney is accused of using the bank accounts of her wards to make purchases of items that include furniture, cars and even a house.

The Associated Press, Apr. 26, 2013
Aging U.S. in denial about long-term care need
A new poll shows that two-thirds of Americans aged 40 and over have done little to no planning for long-term care when they get older. But government figures show nearly 7 in 10 Americans will need long-term care at some point after they reach age 65.

The Florida Times-Union, Feb. 21, 2013
He’s blind and almost deaf, but Jacksonville man making his own life
Rodney Robinson gets help from many, including Florida Department of Children and Families agents who coordinate his care.
A Life in the Community for Everyone

Advancing recovery by improving the quality and availability of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitative services.

Managing Entity (ME)

To improve the efficiency and accountability of substance abuse and mental health services, legislators supported the Managing Entity concept. A Managing Entity oversees the operation of local substance abuse and mental health services. This change will lead to improved supervision of the contracts that taxpayers pay for.

This strategy is proving to be particularly effective, as the new Managing Entity has the ability to better manage these contracts with additional resources, while the local DCF Substance Abuse and Mental Health program office is able to focus on better performance of the system of care. DCF’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health programs throughout the state are switching to this structure, which has already been in place for several years in the Tampa Bay area.

DCF’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program is responsible for the administration of a statewide system of care to help children and adults who have serious mental illnesses or substance abuse disorders. The system is tailored to help them achieve well-being, safety and self-sufficiency through prevention, treatment and recovery services.

DCF’s oversight is accomplished by enforcing policies and regulations through designation of Baker Act facilities, licensing of substance abuse programs and oversight of the managing entity and subcontracted providers.

Northeast Region Needs

From December 2012 through November 2013, 18,678 adults and 7,313 children in the Northeast Region were served by substance treatment providers funded through DCF.

Prescription drugs have been involved in more than 50 percent of law enforcement investigations in the Daytona Beach area.

Regarding the need for mental health services, one in eight high school students in Jacksonville have attempted suicide.
This transition has enabled 43,283 adults and 9,776 children to participate in a variety of community-based mental health services, including short term in-patient care, psychiatric care and intensive case management.

The Northeast Region has transitioned to a managing entity structure. LSF Health Systems was awarded the contract. For more Information, see their website at lsfnet.org.

Number of Children/Adults Treated for Substance Abuse in the Northeast Region

Total: 25,991

- Children: 7,313 (28%)
- Adults: 18,678 (72%)

Get Help

If you or someone you know is in need of substance abuse and/or mental health treatment services, our local managing entity can help you locate available programs.

To find more information please login at www.myflfamilies.com. Once there, click on “Services & Program”, “Local Resources”, select either “Mental Health” or “Substance Abuse” and click on the “Get Help” icon. From the drop-down list you may select the county and view local provider.

Suicide Prevention

If you know someone who is thinking about suicide, please call:

(800) 273-8255

Related News Stories

The Florida Times-Union,
Sept. 12, 2013
Letters: More mental health services needed to prevent suicide
The youth suicide rate for Duval County is almost twice the state average...more than 90 percent of youth who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder. Yet only 20 percent of these youth receive mental health services.

The Gainesville Sun,
Mar. 24, 2013
Crackdown on illegal pills showing results, experts say
The abuse of prescription drugs has been identified by police and health authorities as the top drug problem in recent years... Florida had become known as the “pill mill” capital of the U.S. because of the large number of pain clinics — particularly in South Florida — at which patients could easily get prescriptions.

Daytona Beach News-Journal,
Nov. 24, 2013 and Mar. 20, 2013
Stetson panelists: Funds needed for mental health care
About 18 percent of children and adolescents may have a mental disorder, with about 5 percent being severely emotionally disturbed. About one in four adults suffers from a diagnosable mental illness in a given year.
A Strong Record of Program Integrity

During these challenging economic times, the work of our region’s employees helped Florida rank as one of the top states in the country for accuracy in processing food stamps for the sixth year in a row.

CF’s ESS program processes and distributes food stamp benefits and temporary cash assistance, in addition to processing Medicaid applications. Florida has been the number one state in the country for accuracy in processing food stamps for several years now.

In the Northeast Region, 706,914 people were helped by either food stamps or temporary cash assistance in 2013. This is a 3 percent increase from the previous 12 month period. In some Region counties, about 40% of children were helped by food stamps at some point during 2013.

When families are struggling to find their next meal, we need to work efficiently to help them. We implemented a more systematic method of interviewing people who apply for assistance and a more efficient method of processing applications for food stamps and temporary cash assistance. As a result, we have reduced the time needed to process applications by 37 percent, from 12.4 days to 7.8 days.

While we are increasing our efficiency, we are continuing to stress accuracy, with the goal of keeping Florida as one of the top states for accuracy in the country.

2013 Annual Food Stamps Processing Error Rates

Source: USDA, FNS, 2012 FY SNAP-Quality Control Error Rates
Community Partners

The region’s ESS program has developed nearly 600 community partnerships with local agencies, churches and community outreach centers, where people can get help in applying for public assistance. Statewide, this system saves Florida taxpayers up to $83 million dollars a year, compared to the previous way of doing business.

My ACCESS Account

DCF has launched a new service for food stamp, Medicaid and Temporary Cash Assistance customers. The “My ACCESS Account” service allows customers to set up personal accounts to get important information about their cases. Once they sign up, people can use any computer with internet access to see their current benefits, when benefits become available and more.

Customers can sign up for this service and apply for assistance online at this website: myflorida.com/accessflorida

Additionally, DCF offers a service to help customers get important information without having to speak to a DCF representative. Customers can call the Automated Response Unit, then enter their case number or their Social Security number, to get the

Related News Stories

First Coast News, Mar. 21, 2013
Food stamps applicants processed quick by Florida DCF
Working at the food stamp processing center in Jacksonville isn't for the faint of heart. From open to close they're packed, with more than 400 clients a day coming in to apply and interview for public assistance. Employees work at a breakneck pace to try and satisfy the need.

DCF said their fraud investigators in Northeast Florida saved taxpayers $8.2 million dollars last year alone by recovering money from people who tried to rip off the system.

The Gainesville Sun, Oct. 30, 2013
EDITORIAL: Food on the table
Food stamps are hardly a lavish federal benefit. They provide individual recipients with about $4.50 a day. About 47 percent of food-stamp recipients are children and 8 percent are seniors, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

First Coast News, WTLV (NBC) and WJXX (ABC), May 14, 2013
Florida cracks down on public assistance fraud
Florida has developed a more effective way to safeguard billions of tax dollars from fraud. DCF is implementing new technology that’s expected to save the state more than $80 million a year.
information they need. This includes checking their case status, getting detailed case information, verifying that DCF has received documents that they have submitted, and findings information on recent case actions. The Automated Response Unit can be reached at 1-866-762-2237.

**Customer Call Center**

Improvements have been made at the North Florida Customer Call Center, where people who are receiving public assistance can call to report changes to their accounts or get questions answered.

It’s now easier to get through on the phones, and automated case information has been added. Often, our customers do not have to wait for a live person to get needed information.

**Public Benefits Integrity**

DCF has announced a new anti-fraud campaign in its public assistance program. Using the latest customer authentication and asset verification technology, the department is focused on stopping fraud before it happens.

Florida is the first state in the nation to implement customer authentication, a technology used to verify customer identity before benefits are delivered.

In Florida, we are committed to protecting taxpayer dollars and ensuring that benefits only go to those in need.


---

**Facts About Food Stamps**

- 76% of food stamp households included a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person. These vulnerable households receive 83% of all food stamp benefits.
- Food stamp benefits don’t last most people the whole month. 90% of food stamps are redeemed by the third week of the month.
- The amount of food stamp benefits a person receives is determined by household income and the number of people living in the household.
- Food stamp benefits are funded by the federal government. Florida, like other states, must follow federal guidelines in processing food stamp applications and operating the state’s food stamp program.
- Food stamps are meant to be a temporary benefit. They are not meant to replace income from work. The average length of time a new participant stays on the program is eight to ten months.
DCF’s Refugee Services Program coordinates and oversees many of the services provided to refugees and entrants in Florida to help them become economically self-sufficient.

More refugees settle in Florida than any other state in the union. Once they arrive, the Florida Department of Children and Families extends federally funded services to refugees to help them acclimate to American culture and society.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there were approximately 39 million refugees and internally displaced people in 2012 worldwide. Since 2009, more than 140,000 have found freedom from war, violence, religious persecution and government oppression in Florida. Eighty percent of all refugees worldwide are women and children.

DCF’s Refugee Services program offers help to immigrants who are fleeing oppression, persecution and violence. The services we provide are 100 percent federally funded and help refugees get started in a new country, and often to learn a new language. Refugees in Florida are eligible for cash assistance, job training, English classes, a legal and medical services. For more information about the events and programs provided by DCF’s Refugee Services, visit www.myflfamilies.com.
THE EMPLOYEES OF DCF’s NORTHEAST REGION: PROFILES IN QUALITY

Joy

For her deep dedication, Joy received a standing ovation from her co-workers at a DCF employee meeting. She recently donated an organ to her husband, and they are both recovering. Despite this, she did not miss any time in responding to budget questions from her colleagues. She helps Region leadership make responsible budget decisions. Joy also created a better method to track expenditures.

Sandy

Sandy has a stellar work ethic, integrity, and a commitment to customer service. She is a “behind the scenes” force who never hesitates to pitch in for the good of her team, DCF and the community. Sandy is a DCF certified trainer who keeps our staff and the public informed on the latest federal and state mandates. She has trained many people under tight deadlines.

Tuwana

Tuwana is an Adult Services Counselor who continually goes well beyond the standards of her job. She even started a lawn service for APS clients and enlisted her church members to help mow clients’ lawns. She is an outstanding advocate with true compassion.

Rick

Rick is recognized and respected by his co-workers as an expert on adoptions and out of home care. For several years, he and his son have put on a surf camp for local foster children. He maintains an outstanding relationship with our community-based care partners.

Shelda

Shelda was one of the first employees to meet all performance standards and maintain them since DCF’s ESS program redesigned how it processes applications for public assistance. She is consistently dedicated to teamwork and helping her colleagues when work is especially busy.
Rebekah

Rebekah is a Child Care Licensing Counselor. She responds quickly to complaints at child care facilities, and consistently has a positive attitude. When a new computer program was introduced, she worked through the challenges and helped her co-workers.

Christina

Christina is a Child Protective Investigator who recently helped one of her co-workers on a major case. It involved a teenage male who first appeared to be a runaway. As Christina and her colleague investigated, it turned out the boy was a victim of sexual trafficking and had been forced to steal. They worked with law enforcement to help them understand the seriousness of the situation. As a result, the boy was safely returned to his home state and has been receiving services to help him recover.

Joyce

Being a Child Protective Investigator for 27 years isn’t just a job, but a calling for Joyce. She works with her families, coaching and encouraging them. She has also been a foster parent for about 90 teens.

Davis Productivity Award Winners

Beverly and Donna are shown with their Davis Productivity Award. They were recognized for developing and implementing a structured volunteer and internship program for Child Protective Investigations. The interns come from the University of Florida. The volunteers are students or local residents who spend a few hours to find out what we are doing and help in any way they can.

DCF Child Protective Investigators

DCF Child Protective Investigators appeared on First Coast News’ evening newscasts on NBC-12 and ABC-25 to answer questions from viewers. They helped to clear up common misconceptions regarding Child Protective Investigations.
The Northeast Region is continuing to be a leader in providing vital services to Florida’s children and families. We are doing this by strengthening our community partnerships, establishing openness and transparency in our administration and by ensuring performance accountability in our own operations and in the services that we contract. We are committed to following the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.

Statewide, DCF has reduced its administrative costs by millions of dollars while adding critical front-line staff. We have streamlined our internal support processes by moving to a Shared Services model of administrative operations.
Client Relations

The Client Relations Team works to resolve customer service issues in a timely, fair and courteous manner to achieve the highest level of satisfaction from our customers. They handle contacts from citizens who are receiving services from the Department or from those who wish to receive services.

Due to increased demand for this service, people in the Northeast Region now have a single phone number to call. Whether clients live in counties located in Circuits 3 & 8 (Gainesville and North Central Florida, including Macclenny, Lake City and Live Oak), Circuit 4: (Duval, Nassau and Clay counties) or Circuit 7: (Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Volusia counties) they may call us at a toll-free number.

Northeast Region Client Relations:
1- 800-342-9004

RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

- The most convenient way for Food Stamp, Medicaid and Temporary Cash Assistance customers to get help is to set up a “My ACCESS Account.” This service allows customers to set up personal accounts to get important information on their cases. Once they sign up, people can use any computer with Internet access to view their current benefits, see when benefits become available and more. Customers can sign up and apply for food stamps online at myflorida.com/accessflorida

- Additionally, DCF offers a service to enable customers to get important information without having to speak to a person. They can call the Automated Response Unit, put in their case number, or Social Security number, and get the information they need, including checking their case status, getting detailed case information, verifying that DCF has received documents they have submitted, and finding information on recent case actions. The Automated Response Unit can be reached at 1-866-762-2237.
Connect With DCF Through Social Media

Social media provides opportunities to learn and share information through different media outlets. From Facebook and Twitter to YouTube and Pinterest, Florida’s citizens can access information on a variety of topics from parenting tips and family activity ideas to public events and violence survivors’ blogs.

Here is how to connect with us:

- facebook.com/MyFLFamilies
- youtube.com/user/MyFLFamilies
- twitter.com/MyFLFamilies
- blog.myflfamilies.com
- pinterest.com/MyFLFamilies

Important Contact Information & Online Resources

1-800-962-2873
- To report abuse or neglect of children, the elderly or vulnerable adults.

1-800-96-ADOPT
- Adoption information center.

1-866-762-2237
- People who are receiving food stamps and have question can contact the North Florida Customer Call Center.

www.adoptflorida.com
- Website with more information on adoption, resources including a "Heart Gallery" with photos of children waiting to be placed in homes.

www.fosteringflorida.com
- For more information on foster care and how to become a foster parent.

www.myflorida.com/accessflorida
- To apply for Food Stamps, Medicaid and Temporary Cash Assistance online.

For more Florida Department of Children and Families local resources, services & programs information:

www.myflfamilies.com