



**Legislative Mandated Report
Progress on Providing Access to Judges
and Magistrates to Information in the
Florida Safe Families Network
Fiscal Year 2009 - 2010**

**Office of Family Safety
February 1, 2010**

Florida Department of Children and Families

2009 Report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives Regarding Progress on Providing Access to Judges and Magistrates to Information in the Florida Safe Families Network

Section 17 of the implementing bill to the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida) included a provision requiring a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding progress on providing access to judges and magistrates to information in the Florida Safe Families Network. The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirement of this section of the implementing bill. Section 17 of the implementing bill to the appropriations act for fiscal year 2009-2010 is included with this report as Attachment 1.

Background

On July 30, 2007, the first phase of the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) was successfully implemented statewide. This implementation resulted in the replacement of the Department's legacy child welfare system, and incorporated the functionality required to support the following:

- Capturing of abuse calls received by the Florida Abuse Hotline.
- The assignment of child and adult abuse investigations to protective investigators in each of the state's 67 counties, including the counties that rely on the county sheriff's office for protective investigations.
- The entry and management of child and adult safety assessments for protective investigations.
- The assignment of cases referred for services to statewide Community Based Care Providers.

Implementation of the first phase of FSFN also required the transition to an application capable of supporting a case-file based view of information and history for children and families while they are in the state system. This transition to a case-file based application positioned the operational child welfare environments within the Department, Sheriff Offices, and Community Based Care provider network for the implementation of a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) fully capable of supporting standardized case management functions that, up to this point, had not been implemented in Florida. The first phase of a statewide rollout of case management capabilities began May 12, 2008.

In order to prepare for the rollout of case management functionality, the Department, along with statewide child welfare experts from various circuit

offices, Sheriff Offices, Community Based Care providers, Office of the State Courts Administrator, Guardian Ad Litem Program, and Clerk of the Court representatives, engaged with the Department's SACWIS System Integrator to design case management and legal application functions targeted for deployment in FSFN. These design activities commenced in August 2007, and were scheduled to be completed mid-February 2008. In parallel to the design of standardized case management functions for FSFN, the Department partnered with the state courts system and Guardian Ad Litem representatives to define an approach and plan to enable FSFN access in a manner aligned with Florida law, as found in Chapters 2007-73, 2008-153 and 2009-82. This document describes the activities, approach, and plan necessary to meet the statutory requirements.

Summary of Activities

Members from the Department, Attorney General's Office, Guardian Ad Litem Program, and Office of State Courts Administrator convened to identify all areas of need within this new "Judicial Access Report," and to discuss other alternatives to allowing judiciary access to FSFN. This workgroup identified six key areas of access that all judicial officers should have to FSFN including:

- **Basic Demographics of a case:** relatives known, parents known, basic identification information for the child such as age and gender.
- **Placement History:** including a list of all placements the child has resided in since entering care, the length of time in each placement, and the type of placement (parent, relative, foster home, group home, etc.).
- **History of Abuse:** including all prior abuse reports as to minor children in care, list of maltreatments alleged in each report, Department findings as to each maltreatment, and ultimate resolution of each report such as services initiated or removal.
- **Legal history:** including an update on all disposition hearings, adjudicatory trials, judicial reviews, reunifications, and/or case closures.
- **Medical history:** including all known mental, emotional, and physical health diagnoses for each child, a list of all medical treatment for a child, a list of all current and prior medications prescribed to a child, and an update on all counseling and therapeutic needs for a child.
- **Milestone Status and Checklist:** including status of the approved Family Assessment, the court approved Case Plan, and history of completed Judicial Reviews contained within the FSFN case plan.

Current Progress and Status

Guardian Ad Litem

Representatives from the Department, Office of the State Courts Administrator, and Guardian Ad Litem Program, completed a series of tasks leading to the definition of FSFN access options and requirements. The requirements were communicated to the FSFN System Integrator. The FSFN System Integrator

developed the application to allow Guardian Ad Litem users to have access to the required data. A team of Guardian Ad Litem users then conducted pilot testing and reported that they had quicker access to information pertaining to where the child is placed and it speeds up the time it takes to see the child in a placement due to quick receipt of the information. Guardian Ad Litem access was turned on statewide in the fall of 2008.

Judicial Access

The elements necessary to provide judicial access have been developed, tested, and await deployment. Given the content of the judicial access component, deployment to judges needed to be aligned with the FSFN implementation plan. This approach ensures judicial access at the point where required information is implemented in FSFN, and roll-out to child welfare workers within the various judicial circuits has occurred. With the statewide deployment of Release 2b on August 10, 2009, FSFN users have started entering required legal and additional case management information for judicial access.

Next Steps and Access Implementation Plan

A team of judges will be assembled to pilot judicial access. After successful completion of pilot, statewide access will be provided. Training will be conducted in the same fashion as with the Guardian Ad Litem access.

Attachment 1- Section 17 of the Implementing Bill to the Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida)

Section 17. In order to implement Specific Appropriations 278A and 288A of the 2009-2010 General Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Family Services must ensure that all public and private agencies and institutions participating in child welfare cases enter information, specified by department rule, into the Florida Safe Families Network in order to maintain the accuracy and usefulness of the system. The network is intended to be the department's automated child welfare case-management system designed to provide child welfare workers with a mechanism for managing child welfare cases more efficiently and tracking children and families more effectively. The department shall coordinate with the Office of the State Courts Administrator to provide any judge or magistrate with access to information in the network relating to a child welfare case which is required to be filed with the court pursuant to chapter 39, Florida Statutes, by the date of the network's release during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The department shall report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by February 1, 2010, with respect to progress on providing access to the Florida Safe Families Network as provided in this section. This section expires July 1, 2010.

NOTICE OF FILING

Reporting Agency: Department of Children and Families
Recipient Agency: Governor, Senate President, House Speaker, Chairperson of the Appropriate Substantive Committees and Appropriation Committees
Subject: 2009 Report Regarding Progress on Providing Access to Judges and Magistrates to information in the Florida Safe Families Network
Report Due Date: February 1, 2010
Statutory Requirements: Section 17 of the implementing bill to the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida)
<p>Abstract: Section 17 of the implementing bill to the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida) included a provision requiring a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding progress on providing access to judges and magistrates to information in the Florida Safe Families Network. The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirement of this section of the implementing bill.</p> <p>Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida states:</p> <p>Section 17. In order to implement Specific Appropriations 278A and 288A of the 2009-2010 General Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Family Services must ensure that all public and private agencies and institutions participating in child welfare cases enter information, specified by department rule, into the Florida Safe Families Network in order to maintain the accuracy and usefulness of the system. The network is intended to be the department's automated child welfare case-management system designed to provide child welfare workers with a mechanism for managing child welfare cases more efficiently and tracking children and families more effectively. The department shall coordinate with the Office of the State Courts Administrator to provide any judge or magistrate with access to information in the network relating to a child welfare case which is required to be filed with the court pursuant to chapter 39, Florida Statutes, by the date of the network's release during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The department shall report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by February 1, 2010, with respect to progress on providing access to the Florida Safe Families Network as provided in this section. This section expires July 1, 2010.</p> <p>Copies of this report may be obtained by contacting:</p> <p>Department of Children and Families Office of Family Safety 1317 Winewood Boulevard Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700</p> <p>Attention: Joe Vastola (850) 922-2752; e-mail Joseph_Vastola@dcf.state.fl.us</p>

LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED REPORT – STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

REPORT TITLE	STATUTORY REFERENCE	SPECIFICATIONS
<p>2009 Report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives Regarding Progress on Providing Access to Judges and Magistrates to Information in the Florida Safe Families Network</p>	<p>Section 17 of the implementing bill to the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida)</p>	<p>Section 17 of the implementing bill to the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2009-2010 (Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida) included a provision requiring a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding progress on providing access to judges and magistrates to information in the Florida Safe Families Network. The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirement of this section of the implementing bill.</p> <p>Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida states: Section 17. In order to implement Specific Appropriations 278A and 288A of the 2009-2010 General Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Family Services must ensure that all public and private agencies and institutions participating in child welfare cases enter information, specified by department rule, into the Florida Safe Families Network in order to maintain the accuracy and usefulness of the system. The network is intended to be the department's automated child welfare case-management system designed to provide child welfare workers with a mechanism for managing child welfare cases more efficiently and tracking children and families more effectively. The department shall coordinate with the Office of the State Courts Administrator to provide any judge or magistrate with access to information in the network relating to a child welfare case which is required to be filed with the court pursuant to chapter 39, Florida Statutes, by the date of the network's release during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The department shall report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by February 1, 2010, with respect to progress on providing access to the Florida Safe Families Network as provided in this section. This section expires July 1, 2010.</p>