

---

***Office of Adoption  
and Child Protection***

---



**Annual Report  
2008**



*Executive Office of  
the Governor*



CHARLIE  
CRIST  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF FLORIDA

# Office of the Governor

THE CAPITOL  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0001

---

www.flgov.com  
850-921-2015  
850-921-0173 fax

December 31, 2008

To the People, Governor, Members of the Legislature, and Executive Department Heads of the State of Florida:

We are pleased to present to you this second Annual Report of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection. As directed in Florida Statutes, Subsection 39.001(7)(c)5 a-f, this report provides an update of the activities of the Office, as well as a summary of data pertaining to adoption rates and the issue of child abuse and neglect in our state. Also included are recommendations by state agencies for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families and the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The main objective of the Office is to connect our communities and empower families so we can strengthen Florida's children and prevent them from ever entering into foster care as a result of child abuse and neglect. If we fail to accomplish this, then our primary focus is to make certain that a child's time in our foster care system is as temporary as possible. With a sense of urgency, Florida's foster children must be safely placed with permanent families, either through reunification with their biological families or by placing them into loving and nurturing adoptive families.

Through their Legislature, the people of the State of Florida have determined that, "...the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect shall be a priority of this state." To this end, the Office convened the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council to embark on the development of Florida's 18-month statewide plan on prevention and permanency. Under the direction of Dr. Barbara Foster, our Deputy Chief Child Advocate, this 32 member Advisory Council, along with input from 20 local planning teams comprised of almost 600 individuals from across Florida, diligently constructed a proposal that focuses on a selection of realistic prevention and permanency objectives for our state coupled with aggressive funding goals. To ensure proper implementation, a monitoring component was created that delegates responsibility and tracks the progression of the goals and objectives of the plan. As required in statute, this 18-month statewide plan will be the precursor and launch point for an enhanced five-year plan on prevention and permanency.

This year we had the privilege of introducing statewide the Governor's "Explore Adoption" marketing campaign. This initiative highlights our children in state care, who are the hardest to place for adoption, through a wide array of marketing materials, including six PSAs in English and Spanish that were recently nominated for a regional Emmy award. There is also a 30-minute television special that is airing statewide. As a result of this effort, the inquiries to our adoption hotline (1-800-96-ADOPT) have been coming in at a record pace. In addition, our interactive and user friendly "Explore Adoption" website ([www.AdoptFlorida.org](http://www.AdoptFlorida.org)) is being visited by more and more people each and every month. Alongside our child-specific Heart Gallery partners, our targeted marketing campaign is being well received across Florida.

For fiscal year 2007-08, Florida achieved an all-time record of 3,674 finalized adoptions, almost 600 more than the previous year. This number is remarkable when you consider the fact that there are over 8,000 fewer children in state care than there was in January of 2007. This is due, in large part, to the Department of Children and Families prevention initiative to

safely reduce the number of children in foster care. As a result, Florida now leads the entire nation in the number of finalized adoptions as a percentage of children in out-of-home care. Notwithstanding, we are looking at another record year as our finalized adoptions to date are over 20 percent higher than they were last year at this time. Our Governor has raised the public's awareness of adopting our children in state care, and the Department has instilled a sense of urgency that permeates our adoption process. However, it is our community-based system of care that has rallied the multitude of Floridians who have answered the call and opened their hearts and homes to our children. They are the children's champions.

Finally, Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet, which is administered from the Office, has also made great strides this year with their pre-implementation of an interagency data and information sharing system which will promote increased efficiency among state agencies and improve service delivery to our children and their families. The Cabinet also began organizing a children's budget which will be merged with the child well-being framework being designed by a workgroup of the Cabinet. When finished, efficiencies will be identified and taxpayer dollars will be better aligned to effectively support the healthy growth and development of Florida's children and families.

Florida has made respectable progress in many areas of child welfare and we can have a sincere discourse on our successes. While there are fewer state resources with which to work, Florida now has an array of tools and structures in place that will allow us to move forward on behalf of our children. If we enable and empower Florida's families to do what they could and should do for their own children, then our children will have the unobstructed opportunity to reach their goals, live their dreams and realize their unique purpose in life. With the continued support and direction of the people of Florida, great things can and will be accomplished.

The staff of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection is to be commended for all their hard work not only to produce this report, but for their selfless efforts to help make Florida a better place for our families and children. Our gratitude goes out to our Governor Charlie Crist for his dedication to and support of the vision that Florida is a place where families and their children can thrive. We also appreciate those citizens, Florida's taxpayers, who will take the time to review this report in order to more effectively participate in the decision-making process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Kallinger", with a small dot at the end of the signature.

Jim Kallinger  
Chief Child Advocate



**Annual Report 2008**

**Table of Contents**

**Part 1 – Office Activities**

Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection ..... 1  
Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council.....1  
Local Planning Teams.....5  
Cooperative Planning Teams.....7  
Children and Youth Cabinet.....9  
Explore Adoption..... 10  
Faith-Based Adoption Initiative ..... 12  
Heart Gallery of Florida Initiative..... 13  
Chief Child Advocate..... 13  
Other ..... 15

**Part 2 – Status of Child Maltreatment and Adoptions in Florida**

Vision, Mission, Overarching Goal and Desired Results for the State Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009 – June 2010.....16  
Summary of Child Maltreatment Data..... 17  
    Status of Child Maltreatment in Florida ..... 17  
Summary of Adoption Data..... 18  
    Adoption Data Reported by the Department of Children and Families to the Federal Administration for Children and Families via the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) ..... 18  
    Timeliness of the Adoption Process for Children Adopted from within the Child Welfare System..... 21

**Part 3 – Recommendations and Requests**

Agency Policy Recommendations ..... 24  
    Agency for Enterprise Information Technology .....24  
    Agency for Health Care Administration .....24  
    Agency for Persons with Disabilities ..... 25  
    Department of Children and Families..... 25  
    Department of Community Affairs.....25  
    Department of Health, Children's Medical Services ..... 25  
    Department of Juvenile Justice .....26



## Part 1 – Office Activities

### Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection

During the 2007 Legislative Session, HB 1309, sponsored by Representative Bill Galvano and Senator Rhonda Storms, was approved and sent to the Executive Branch for signature. On June 12, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed into law the bill creating the Office of Adoption and Child Protection, effective July 1, 2007. The duties and responsibilities of the Office are enshrined in Florida Statutes Chapter 39, entitled Proceedings Relating to Children. The Office was created, within the Executive Office of the Governor, for the purpose of establishing a comprehensive statewide approach for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families and prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. The Office has a dedicated staff of four, including Jim Kallinger (Chief Child Advocate), Barbara Foster (Deputy Chief Child Advocate), Jennifer Diaz (Special Projects Manager) and Jackie Barksdale (Program Assistant).

### Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council

The Office established a Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council comprised of thirty-two (32) child and family welfare experts gathered from across Florida. In order to better serve the people of Florida, the membership exceeds the minimum requirements for representation as set forth in Florida Statutes. The following table provides for the membership and the areas of representation on the Council as of December 2008.

AREA OF REPRESENTATION	COUNCIL MEMBER
<b>1. Chairman/ Convener</b> Executive Office of the Governor	<b>Jim Kallinger</b> , Chief Child Advocate and Director, Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Executive Office of the Governor
<b>2. DCF – Dept. of Children and Families</b>	<b>John Cooper</b> , Acting Deputy Secretary of Operations, Florida Department of Children and Families
<b>3. DOC – Dept. of Corrections</b>	<b>Tina Hayes</b> , Director of Department Initiatives, Florida Department of Corrections
<b>4. DOE – Dept. of Education</b>	<b>Iris C. Wilson</b> , Deputy Chancellor for Student Achievement, Florida Department of Education
<b>5. DOH – Dept. of Health</b>	<b>Michael “Mike” Haney, Ph.D., NCC, LMHC</b> , Division Director for Prevention and Intervention, Children’s Medical Services, Florida Department of Health
<b>6. DJJ – Dept. of Juvenile Justice</b>	<b>Andy Hindman</b> , Assistant Secretary for Prevention & Victim Services, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
<b>7. DLE – Dept. of Law Enforcement</b>	<b>Terry Thomas</b> , Special Agent, Crimes Against Children Unit, Florida Department of Law Enforcement
<b>8. APD – Agency for Persons with Disabilities</b>	<b>Mac McCoy</b> , Deputy Director of Operations, Agency for Persons with Disabilities
<b>9. AWI – Agency for Workforce Innovation</b>	<b>Barbara Griffin</b> , Deputy Director, Agency for Workforce Innovation
<b>10. Parent with adopted child</b>	<b>Cyndee Odom</b> , Consultant
<b>11. Community mental health centers</b>	<b>Leonel “Leo” Mesa, Jr., Psy.D., LMHC</b> , President/CEO, Reflections Wellness Center
<b>12. Guardian ad Litem programs</b>	<b>Dennis Moore</b> , Acting Executive Director, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office
<b>13. School boards</b>	<b>Georgia “Joy” Bowen</b> , President-elect, Florida School Boards Association
<b>14. Local advocacy councils</b>	<b>Ken Littlefield</b> , Executive Director, Statewide Advocacy Council

<b>AREA OF REPRESENTATION</b>	<b>COUNCIL MEMBER</b>
<b>15</b> Child Abuse Prevention/ Office of Family Safety	<b>Johana Hatcher</b> , Prevention Manager, Department of Children and Families
<b>16.</b> Community-based care lead agencies: East Coast	<b>Patricia “Trish” Nellius-Guthrie</b> , CEO, Community Based Care of Brevard, Inc.
<b>17.</b> Private/ public programs with expertise in child abuse prevention programs	<b>Christie Ferris</b> , Director, PCA Florida, Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida
<b>18.</b> Private/ public programs with expertise in working with children/ families of children who are sexually, physically or emotionally abused, abandoned or neglected	<b>Andrea Raasch, LCSW</b> , Licensed Clinical Director, Camelot Community Care, Inc.
<b>19.</b> Private/ public programs with expertise in maternal and infant health care	<b>Donna Hagan</b> , Executive Director, Healthy Start Coalition of Jefferson, Madison and Taylor Counties, Inc
<b>20.</b> Multi-disciplinary child protection teams	<b>Mark Perlman, M.A.</b> , Founder and President, Center for Growth and Development
<b>21.</b> Child day care centers: Federal/State representation	<b>Lilli Copp</b> , Director, Head Start State Collaboration Office
<b>22.</b> Child day care centers: ECA representation	<b>Suzanne Gellens, M.S.</b> , Executive Director, Early Childhood Association of Florida
<b>23.</b> Law enforcement agencies	<b>Major Connie Shingledecker</b> , Investigative Bureau Chief, Manatee County Sheriff's Office
<b>24.</b> Circuit Courts	<b>Judge Daniel Dawson</b> , Circuit Judge, Ninth Judicial Circuit
<b>25.</b> Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection	<b>Barbara Foster, Ph.D.</b> , Deputy Chief Child Advocate and Director, Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Executive Office of the Governor
<b>26.</b> Child Advocacy/ Community Philanthropy	<b>Graciela “Graci” McGillicuddy</b> , Child Advocate and Community Philanthropist
<b>27.</b> Children's Advocacy Centers	<b>Julie Hurst</b> , Executive Director, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Inc.
<b>28.</b> Community Alliances	<b>Marilyn “Bunny” Finney</b> , Brevard County Community Alliance
<b>29.</b> Local Children's Cabinet	<b>Nancy Crawford</b> , Executive Director, Kids House of Seminole, Inc. Children's Advocacy Center
<b>30.</b> Medical Doctor, University Researcher, Children's Services Council	<b>Peter A. Gorski, M.D., M.P.A.</b> , Director of Program Impact and Innovation, Children's Board of Hillsborough County Professor of Public Health, Pediatrics and Psychiatry, USF
<b>31.</b> State Court Administration	<b>Sandy Neidert</b> , Senior Court Operations Consultant, Office of the State Court Administrator, Office of Court Improvement, Florida State Courts
<b>32.</b> Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council	<b>Sheila Hopkins</b> , Associate Director for Social Concerns/ Respect Life, Florida Catholic Conference.

Between November 2007 and December 2008, the Advisory Council met six (6) times:

- November 2007 – A focus on local planning and the state of the State.
- February 2008 – A focus on prevention.
- March 2008 – A focus on adoption promotion and support of adoption.
- May 2008 – A focus on planning.
- August 2008 – A focus on planning, part two.
- November 2008 – A focus on action planning and the state plan.

The Advisory Council members have been charged with:

- Serving as a research arm for the Office. (ongoing)
- Assisting in developing a plan of action for better coordination and integration of the goals, activities and funding pertaining to the promotion of adoption and support of adoptive families and the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect in order to maximize staff and resources at the state level. (completed November 2008)
- Assisting in providing a basic format to be utilized by the districts in the preparation of local plans of action in order to provide for uniformity in the district plans and to provide for greater ease in compiling information for the state plan. (completed November 2007)
- Providing the districts with technical assistance in the development of local plans of action, if requested. (completed June 2008)
- Assisting in examining the local plans to determine if all the requirements of the local plans have been met and, if they have not, informing the districts of the deficiencies and requesting the additional information needed. (completed August 2008)
- Assisting in preparing the state plan for submission to the Legislature and the Governor in December 2008. (completed December 2008)

The Advisory Council members have focused on developing a solid proposal based upon the strengths of past planning efforts and on the current status of adoption, the current timeliness of the adoption process, the status of child maltreatment prevention in Florida and testimony and reports about successful programs operating in Florida and nationally. The Council created a basic format to be used by the twenty (20) circuits in the preparation of their local plans of action and compiled a series of recommendations related to prevention of child maltreatment, encouraging child well-being, promoting adoption and supporting adoptive families. Each council member reviewed first drafts of at least three of the local circuit plans (collectively reviewing all 20 circuit plans) and provided feedback to the local circuit planning teams based upon their reviews.

In conjunction with the August 2008 Advisory Council meeting and the 2008 Dependency Court Summit held in Orlando, Florida, council members scheduled and met individually with representatives of local planning teams to provide guidance in the development of their prevention and permanency goals and action steps. From the written feedback and the guidance received from the Council, local planning teams revised and finalized their circuit plans.

At the November 2008 Advisory Council meeting, council members provided their feedback on the permanency and prevention goals and action steps of the state plan which were researched and developed throughout the year. In the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009-June 2010*, there are six (6) statewide goals for prevention and four (4) statewide goals for permanency. An additional goal for funding was created to directly support the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in the initiatives set forth in the prevention and permanency goals and in the monitoring of the progress of the plan. Each of these 11 statewide goals has a workgroup assigned with leadership or representation from the Advisory Council members.

**Prevention Goal 1:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have explored the feasibility, and if appropriate, have a blueprint for a family strengthening initiative (i.e., Strengthening Families + multi-media materials and supports) in Florida over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Prevention Goal 2:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have determined the feasibility of implementing the Whole Child Connection in selected areas of Florida or statewide. And, if found to be feasible, the State of Florida will have a proposal for making this happen in Florida over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.



**Prevention Goal 3:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have explored the feasibility, and if appropriate, have a blueprint for faith-based prevention initiative to promote protective factors in families for implementation over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Prevention Goal 4:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have explored the feasibility, and if appropriate, have a plan for the adoption and diffusion of Triple P – Positive Parenting Program within systems and programs that contribute to preventing child maltreatment (e.g., Substance Abuse Programs, Mental Health facilities, and Domestic Violence Shelters, Head Start Centers and others as appropriate) over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Prevention Goal 5:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have continued its level of support for Healthy Families Florida and developed a plan for increasing its availability and capacity to provide home visitation for families at high risk of abuse or neglect and in need of parenting education and support over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Prevention Goal 6:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have explored the feasibility, and if appropriate, have a plan for providing short-term, voluntary, time-limited post-partum home visiting services for families that improve the health and developmental outcomes of babies over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Permanency Goal 1:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have in place sustainable efforts to continue the *Explore Adoption* public awareness campaign through June 2015.

**Permanency Goal 2:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have explored the feasibility, and if appropriate, have a blueprint for a faith-based adoption initiative to promote adoption of foster children and to support adoptive families for implementation over the five-year period from July 2010 through June 2015.

**Permanency Goal 3:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have an operational statewide association of heart galleries.

**Permanency Goal 4:** By 30 June 2010, the State of Florida will have a customer service protocol in place for the assistance and retention of prospective adoptive families.

**Funding Goal 1:** By 30 June 2010, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection will have a blueprint for creating and funding a direct-support organization (DSO) and will have completed the steps for the DSO's establishment and ongoing administration. The DSO will be created to assist the state in carrying out its purposes and responsibilities regarding the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and support of adoptive families by raising money; submitting requests for and receiving grants from the Federal Government, the state or its political subdivisions, private foundations, and individuals; and making expenditures to or for the benefit of the office.

In January 2009, the Advisory Council will assist with implementation and begin monitoring the progress of the 18-month *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009-June 2010*, review the monitoring reports of the 20 circuit teams on implantation of their local plans, and assist and monitor the cooperative planning teams on the implementation of the education and law enforcement cooperative plans. Additionally, the Advisory Council will begin developing the Five-Year Plan on Prevention and Permanency and provide guidance to the local planning teams in the development of the circuit prevention and permanency plans.

## Local Planning Teams

The Office initiated efforts to convene local planning teams in each of the twenty (20) circuits around the state. These circuits are aligned with the judicial and Department of Children and Families circuits. The representation on these local planning teams is consistent with the make-up of the statewide advisory council. To initiate the meeting process, Office staff members met with the top administration of the circuits and the leadership of the community based care agencies in September 2007. By October 2007, each circuit had established a local planning team that was convened by the circuit administrator and/or a key leader in the circuit's administration. Over 600 people around the state are working on local plans of action. At a minimum, these teams were reviewed by the Office to ensure that the requirements of Chapter 39 for team membership were met. The local plans developed by the circuit teams are incorporated into the 18-month state plan on prevention and permanency.

The conveners of the local planning teams include:

<b>CIRCUIT</b>	<b>POINTS OF CONTACT FOR EACH CIRCUIT'S LOCAL PLANNING TEAM:</b>
1 Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	Name: <b>Janice Thomas</b> Title: Circuit 1 Administrator
2 Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla	Name: <b>Walt Cook</b> Title: Circuits 2 & 14 Administrator  Nicole Stookey, Community Relations Consultant Manager
3 Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor	Name: <b>Melissa Walker</b> Title: Operations Review Specialist
4 Clay, Duval, Nassau	Name: <b>Jackie Green</b> Title: Community Relations Consultant  Diane Seymore, Program Management Director
5 Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter	Name: <b>Philip Scarpelli</b> Title: Community Relations Manager
6 Pasco, Pinellas	Name: <b>Lourdes Benedict</b> Title: Regional Operations Manager
7 Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia	Name: <b>Betsy Lewis</b> Title: Community Relations Consultant
8 Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union	Name: <b>Melissa Walker</b> Title: Operations Review Specialist
9 Orange, Osceola	Name: <b>Kristi Gray</b> Title: Community Relations Manager
10 Hardee, Highlands, Polk	Name: <b>Liesta Sykes</b> Title: Community Relations Manager
11 Miami Dade	Name: <b>Tom Franklin</b> Title: Community Relations Consultant  Imran Al, Children's Advocate
12 Desoto, Manatee, Sarasota	Name: <b>Brena Slater</b> Title: Acting Operations Manager
13 Hillsborough	Name: <b>Margaret Fender</b> Title: Regional Operations Manager
14 Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington	Name: <b>Walt Cook</b> Title: Circuits 2 & 14 Administrator  Nicole Stookey, Community Relations Consultant Manager
15 Palm Beach	Name: <b>Stephen Faroni</b> Title: Circuit Operations Administrator

CIRCUIT	POINTS OF CONTACT FOR EACH CIRCUIT'S LOCAL PLANNING TEAM:
16 Monroe	Name: <b>Tom Franklin</b> Title: Community Relations Consultant  Elena Herrera, Operations Manager
17 Broward	Name: <b>Kim Gorsuch</b> Title: District Operations Administrator
18 Brevard, Seminole	Name: <b>Margo Hyatt</b> Title: Project Coordinator/Family Services Specialist
19 Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie	Name: <b>Cheri Sheffer</b> Title: Community Relations Consultant
20 Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee	Name: <b>Kim Kutch</b> Title: Operations Manager

The Office with input from the Council developed the draft outline for the local planning effort. This outline was presented to the Council at the November 2007 meeting. As a result of Council deliberations, the outline was revised and distributed to the conveners of the local teams. The local planners were instructed to develop their plans in five parts:

- Part 1 Introduction to the Plan and Plan Update
  - I. Circuit transmittal information
  - II. Process used to develop the plan and plan update
  
- Part 2 18-Month Plan of Action for the Promotion of Adoption and Support of Adoptive Families
  - I. Status of adoption and children available for adoption
  - II. Current program descriptions
  - III. Comprehensive approach to services
  - IV. Local needs related to adoption promotion and support of adoptive families
  - V. Plan of action for the 18-month period, January 2009-June 2010
  
- Part 3 18-Month Updated Plan of Action to the existing 5-Year Plan for the Prevention of Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect of Children
  - I. Status of child maltreatment
  - II. Analysis of the priority strategies identified in the current five-year plan
  - III. Updated plan of action for the 18-month period, January 2009 – June 2010
  
- Part 4 Barriers to the Accomplishment of a Comprehensive Approach
  - I. Barriers related to the promotion of adoption of available children
  - II. Barriers related to supporting adoptive families
  - III. Barriers related to the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect of children
  
- Part 5 Recommendations for State and Legislative Action and Change
  - I. State program level recommendations
  - II. Legislative action recommendations

Along with the outline, existing prevention plans along with data sets developed by the Florida Department of Children and Families were made available to the teams. All information was provided via email and posted on the website for downloading at:  
[http://www.flgov.com/child\\_abuse\\_prevention\\_old](http://www.flgov.com/child_abuse_prevention_old).

Conference calls initiated in November 2007 to offer technical support were held monthly with the conveners of the local planning teams, Office staff, and DCF staff members to address questions and provide information that would assist with the planning process. Copies of the current state and local plans are also available on the Web site.

## **Cooperative Planning Teams**

The Florida Statutes also provide for workgroups of the advisory council to focus on cooperative planning efforts at the state level. Consequently, the Office established two planning teams.

- 1) **Education Cooperative Planning Team.** The first comprises representatives from the Office, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Department of Juvenile Justice with the charge of: Developing ways to inform and instruct parents of school children and appropriate district school personnel in all school districts on the detection of child abuse, abandonment and neglect, on the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and in caring for a child's needs after a report is made. Also, the team must work to enhance or adapt curriculum materials to assist instructional personnel in providing instruction through a multidisciplinary approach on the identification, intervention, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. They must also develop incentive strategies for encouraging all school districts to utilize the curriculum. The *Education Cooperative Plan* provides information about the work products of this team. It specifies four (4) goals:

**Education Cooperative Plan Goal 1:** By 30 June 2010, the Florida Department of Children and Families in collaboration with the Office of Adoption & Child Protection will:

- Propose amending §39.001(8)(b)2, FS to include “prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect”.
- Propose amending §39.001 (8)(b)5. FS to include Early Childhood Education.
- Propose amending §39.001 (8)(b)5. FS to reflect the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.
- Propose amending § 39.0015 (2), F.S., to add “other appropriate school personnel” as training recipients.
- Investigate the feasibility of amending §1003.428, FS to reinstate the one half credit in Life Management Skills (stand alone Health Education course) as a graduation requirement for all high school students.
- Investigate the feasibility of amending the Florida Statutes to require a stand alone course in Health Education in either 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Education Cooperative Plan Goal 2:** By June 30 2010, the Education Cooperative Planning Team-will develop and be ready to implement a five-year plan for the identification and development of parent-education resource materials and information, strategies for the instruction of parents, and methodologies for annual updates and dissemination to districts and schools.

**Education Cooperative Plan Goal 3:** By 30 June 2010, the Education Cooperative Planning Team will develop and be ready to implement a five-year plan for the development and dissemination of resource materials and information, and training of appropriate school personnel in:

- detecting child abuse, abandonment, and neglect,
- taking proper action in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect,
- caring for a child’s needs after a report has been made, and
- preventing child maltreatment before it occurs.

**Education Cooperative Plan Goal 4:** By 30 June 2010, the Cooperative Planning Team will identify model lessons, supplementary instructional materials, and examples of implementing content standards for instructional personnel to use in the classroom (appropriate for each grade, prekindergarten through grade 12) to educate students on child abuse prevention, identification and intervention and will develop and be ready to launch a five-year effort to encourage and assist districts, schools and teachers in the use of these materials.

**2) Law Enforcement Cooperative Planning Team.** The second team consists of members from the Office of Adoption & Child Protection, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Law Enforcement, the Department of Health, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. They are charged with developing ways to inform and instruct appropriate local law enforcement personnel in the detection of child abuse, abandonment and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment or neglect. The *Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan* provides information about the work products of this team. It specifies five (5) goals:

**Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan Goal 1:** By 30 June 2010, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission will specify in rule (under §943.17291, 17295, FS), the certification requirements for inservice trainers, the minimum number of hours (i.e., four hours), and how often (i.e., every four years) child abuse training is required for those areas (e.g., drug cops, detectives and investigators) that work child abuse cases.

**Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan Goal 2:** By 30 June 2010, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission will ensure that the existing preservice training provided for basic recruits covers:

- The Role of the Department of Children & Families – Protective Investigations and Dependency vs. Criminal Investigations and the differences in the standards of proof
- Child Abuse Hotline – What should be reported/What should not be reported; What information should be provided when reporting; and How to report
- The Role of the Department of Health – Child Protection Teams

**Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan Goal 3:** By 30 June 2010, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission will incorporate specific training for undercover drug officers and those who respond to drug-related search warrants and arrests where children are present and the judiciary and those that respond to drug busts where children are present.

**Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan Goal 4:** By 30 June 2010, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Health and the Department of Juvenile Justice will have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provides for cross training of employees who work child abuse cases.

**Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan Goal 5:** By 30 June 2010, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission will provide to local law enforcement agencies encouragement and support for the designation and training of detectives and investigators to work crimes against children investigations.

## **Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet**



On July 11, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed House Bill 509, creating Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet as a council within the Executive Office of the Governor. The legislation was sponsored by State Senator Nan Rich and State Representative Loranne Ausley. The Cabinet is charged with promoting and implementing collaboration, creativity, increased efficiency, information sharing and improved service delivery between and within state agencies and organizations. Every February 1, the Governor and the Florida Legislature receives an annual report detailing the Cabinet's progress.

About 20 states have a Children's Cabinet and at a national meeting of Cabinet administrators in the summer 2008, Florida's newly formed Cabinet was lauded for its progress despite the limited resources it has to work with. In addition to writing a strategic plan to better coordinate children and family services in Florida, the Cabinet has completed or begun work on all nine of its statutorily required duties and responsibilities. For example, the Cabinet has begun pre-implementation of a web-based, cross-agency data sharing system to help improve service delivery. The Cabinet is creating a children and youth budget structure for evaluating funding streams and aligning them with a framework of key child well-being indicators. Also, through the Cabinet, various agency heads have signed a celebrated agreement to improve interagency communication and cooperation.

In compliance with the Florida Statute, the Cabinet meetings are held in different regions of the state in an effort to provide an accessible and open forum for the public. The public has had opportunities to make comments or presentations before the Cabinet at every meeting. When and where feasible, Cabinet meetings are co-located with other related conferences and workshops around the state to enhance citizen opportunities and attendance. All meetings are published in the Florida Administrative Weekly and are documented by the Florida Channel and various news organizations including Florida Public Radio.

In order to ensure the public has complete access and up-to-date information, Cabinet staff has created a webpage at [www.flgov.com/youth\\_cabinet](http://www.flgov.com/youth_cabinet) that contains information about the Cabinet, its members, activities, work products and meeting dates and locations.

As set forth in statute, the Children and Youth Cabinet consists of 20 members including:

**Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp**, Chairman

**George Sheldon**, Secretary of the Department of Children and Families

**Frank Peterman, Jr.**, Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Justice

**Holly Benson**, Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration

**Jim DeBeaugrine**, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities

**Monesia Brown**, Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation

**Ana Viamonte Ros**, State Surgeon General at the Department of Health

**Eric J. Smith**, Commissioner of the Department of Education

**Dennis Moore**, Acting Statewide Director of the Guardian Ad Litem Office

**Jim Kallinger**, Florida's Chief Child Advocate

The five ex-officio members of the Children and Youth Cabinet, or their designees are:

- Senator Nan Rich** for the Senate President
- Representative Loranne Ausley** for the Speaker of the House
- Maureen S. Dinnen** for the Chief Financial Officer
- Justice Fred Lewis** for the Florida Supreme Court
- Deputy Attorney General Cynthia Guerra** for the Attorney General

Additionally, the Governor appointed five members from around the state who are representatives of children and youth advocacy organizations, but who are not service providers, including:

- Judy Schaechter**, physician and professor at the University of Miami, Mailman Center for Child Development
- David Lawrence Jr.**, President of the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation in Miami and “University Scholar for Early Childhood Development and Readiness” at the University of Florida
- Donna Gay Lancaster**, Executive Director of Juvenile Welfare Board, Children’s Services Council of Pinellas County
- Antonia Crawford**, Chairman of the Early Learning Coalition
- Dick Batchelor**, President of Dick Batchelor Management Group

## **Explore Adoption**



The 2007 Legislature appropriated funding to the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection for the purpose of initiating a statewide marketing campaign to promote the adoption of the children who are in Florida’s foster care system.

After a solicitation and evaluation process, Ron Sachs Communications was awarded the contract and held a needs assessment meeting with the Office late in 2007.

**January and February 2008** – Research and surveys of adoptive parents and potential adoptive parents were conducted and focus groups were convened to help develop messages, brand and logo for the campaign. “Explore Adoption” was selected as the name of the campaign.

**March and April 2008** – Campaign materials and new website are developed and partnerships are cultivated.

**May 2008** – The campaign to promote adoption statewide commences with a Press Conference launch featuring Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp and Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger in Jacksonville that also celebrated Duval County’s 400th Adoption this fiscal year.

**June 2008** – With record numbers to the Adoption Call-in Center and hits to the new website, Explore Adoption holds a press conference to launch the TV and Radio Spots and 30-minute TV program that features three adoptive families in Florida. Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, DCF Secretary Bob Butterworth and Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger participate. Chief Child Advocate Kallinger travels the state to meet with adoptive families and share their stories.

**July 2008** – Florida announces historic year for adoptions – 3,674 total. DCF Secretary Bob Butterworth and Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger hold a roundtable with reporters to discuss the Explore Adoption campaign and record adoption numbers. Chief Child Advocate Kallinger travels the state to meet with adoptive families and share their stories.

**August 2008** – Explore Adoption continues to form new and support existing partnerships and continues to get the message out. Explore Adoption and the 14 Heart Galleries of Florida unveiled an exhibit at the Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science in Tallahassee that features professional and candid photos of children waiting for a permanent family from all areas of Florida. The exhibit is a statewide showcase of pictures and biographies of children available for adoption, compiled from the 14 local Heart Galleries operating across Florida and ran from August 18 to October 15. Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger held a press conference on August 21 at the Museum. He is joined by representatives from all Florida Heart Galleries and adoptive parents.

**October 2008** – Continuing his commitment to helping foster children find loving and permanent homes, Governor Charlie Crist toured the first-of-its-kind Heart Gallery exhibit at the Mary Brogan Museum on October 8. The exhibit is part of the Governor's statewide adoption initiative, "Explore Adoption," and it comes as Heart Gallery organizers push for a Tallahassee Heart Gallery dedicated to local foster children. Governor Crist is joined by DCF Secretary George Sheldon, Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger, and Mrs. Deborah Polston, an adoptive mom of six boys.

Also in October, Governor Charlie Crist's Explore Adoption campaign, launched to raise the public's awareness of foster children in need of loving homes, was nominated for an Emmy Award. The Suncoast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences nominated five ads created for the Explore Adoption Initiative. Receiving the Emmy nomination was the Explore Adoption series of ads that show the point of view of adoptive parents who talk about how adopting a child or children from the public adoption system enriches their lives. There are six ads, including three produced in Spanish. The ads were developed and produced by Ron Sachs Communications in collaboration with Core Message and Evolution Media. Ads can be viewed on the "News" page of [www.adoptflorida.org](http://www.adoptflorida.org).

**November 2008** – On November 7, Governor Charlie Crist issued a proclamation recognizing November as National Adoption Month and congratulating families around Florida who have opened their hearts to children in need.

On November 24, Governor Charlie Crist, as part of ongoing celebrations for National Adoption Month, announced that Florida is on track to exceed last year's record-breaking adoption rate by 20 percent. He announced the numbers during a reception held at the Capitol to honor the many Florida families and adoption agencies that have joined to help achieve the administration's goal of finding loving, permanent homes for children in state care. Between July and October of this year, 1,103 children were adopted from state care, compared to 917 adoptions for the same period last year. That is an increase of 20 percent, and it puts Florida on pace to exceed last year's record 3,674 adoptions - up from 3,079 adoptions in 2006-07. At the reception, Governor Crist is joined by adoptive families, DCF Secretary George Sheldon, Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger, Acting Guardian ad Litem Director Dennis Moore.



## **Faith-Based Adoption Initiative**

In an effort to ensure every child in state care is adopted into safe and loving forever families, the Office began an initiative to reach out to the faith communities around the state and encourage them to make adoption a priority in their organizations. The Office is working in conjunction with the Governor's Faith-based and Community Based Advisory Council and the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council.

### Vision

All of Florida's children are living in loving, safe and permanent homes with the potential of becoming productive citizens.

### Mission

To engage Florida's faith-based community to promote the adoption of children in foster care to their congregations, and then enlist those same congregations to support their adoptive families as long as needed.

### Goals

If one family in every faith-based institution in Florida adopted one child, regardless of that child's special needs, or a sibling group, there would be no children in state care. The adoptive family's faith-based home would then collectively provide needed post-adoption support and types of care to help each family raise the adopted children.

The Governor's office will collaborate with Volunteer Florida and the Governor's Faith-based and Community-based Advisory Council (FBCBAC) to fulfill this mission. The One Church, One Child office, which has a focus on Florida's African-American churches, will also be invited to participate in this initiative.

### Measurable Objectives

A set of measurable objectives, including deadline dates, need to be set in order to properly implement, track and adjust the initiative. These objectives should include the following results, but not be limited to:

- 18-month plan with achievable benchmark dates.
- Number of faith-based partners recruited.
- Realistic yet limited budget and fundraising goals.
- Number of children adopted out of foster care.
- Number of families receiving post-adopt support.

### Critical Supports

- Explore Adoption Initiative Collateral materials including:
  - Education Brochures and One-pagers
  - Marketing Kits
  - DVDs
  - Posters
  - And more.
- Interactive Website with usable downloads: [www.adoptflorida.org](http://www.adoptflorida.org).
- Faith-based Information Clearinghouse.

Currently, the Governor's Faith-based and Community-based Advisory Council is working on an 18-month plan and pilot for this effort in conjunction with the Office and Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council.

## **Heart Gallery of Florida Initiative**



In conjunction with the Governor's Explore Adoption Campaign, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection is lending support to the Heart Gallery of Florida initiative.

Florida's Heart Galleries play a vital role in recruiting forever families for children in state care and are a valued partner of the Explore Adoption Campaign. The Heart Galleries of Florida work with agencies in their areas and professional and student photographers to help recruit homes for specific children by creating compelling, personal portraits that capture the children's unique personalities and interests.

Representatives from the Heart Galleries are forming an executive board and are working on the legal aspects of forming an association. An association of Heart Galleries would allow the galleries to pool resources, share ideas and best practices and create a statewide community in which to recruit forever families for children in all parts of the state. On September 4 and 5, 2008, the 15 Heart Galleries participated in a workshop in Tallahassee to discuss these goals.

As part of the association initiative, all 15 Heart Galleries are currently showcasing two or three photos in the statewide exhibit of children waiting to be adopted. Much like the individual community exhibits, the statewide exhibit allows participants to experience the power of photography to tell a child's story and explore the public adoption option through the faces and stories of Florida's children.

The exhibit debuted at the Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science in Tallahassee on September 4, 2008 and ran through October 15, 2008. Governor Charlie Crist visited the gallery on October 8, 2008. Currently, the gallery is on display at the Daytona Beach Library. The complete gallery will move to the Capitol Rotunda for the 2009 Legislative Session.

## **Chief Child Advocate**

On July 1, 2007, former State Representative Jim Kallinger was appointed as Florida's first Chief Child Advocate. On matters that relate to the promotion of adoption, the support of adoptive families and the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect, the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Child Advocate include assisting in rule development, acting as the Governor's liaison, working to secure funding, developing strategic programs, advising the Governor and Legislature and developing public awareness as defined in Florida Statutes, Subsection 7(b).

The Chief Child Advocate is the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection and the Chairman of the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council. He also serves on the Department of Children and Families' Task Force on Child Protection and is a member of Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet. In April 2008, the Chief Child Advocate was appointed by the Governor to serve as a member of the Guardian Ad Litem Qualifications Committee to submit to the Governor a list of candidates for the position of Statewide Director of the Guardian Ad Litem Program in the event of a vacancy.

In 2008, the Chief Child Advocate:

- Participated in the National Governor's Association Policy Academy on Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care. Florida was one of six states that met throughout the year to discuss ways to maximize state resources and implement best practices to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their home, and to achieve timely permanency for those children currently in state care. The Policy Academy set a benchmark for the participating states to commit to safely reducing the number of children in state care 50% by the year 2020. In a bold move, Florida felt confident enough to set their goal of 50% by the year 2012.
- Led a field trip with other Advisory Council members to South Carolina in order to investigate the 5-year implementation of a positive parenting program to deal with child abuse and neglect. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control, this 5-year pilot project is indicating good outcomes in addressing and controlling the rate of child maltreatment through parent education and empowerment.
- Led a team from Florida at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Policy Institute hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures. The goal being to identify structures currently in place that coordinate across state agencies that strengthen youth policy, and enhancing those structures to empower families to protect children from becoming or continuing to be at risk of poor outcomes. This same group then met later in the year with representatives from the Center for the Study of Social Policy to discuss the use of evidence-based tools within other potential structures.
- Participated in many press conferences throughout the year, including:
  - The launch of the Governor's "Explore Adoption" marketing campaign in May with the Lt. Governor. This was the culmination of many months of research, development and planning by the Office and vendor Ron Sachs Communications.
  - Recognizing the historic number of finalized adoptions brought the DCF Secretary and the Chief Child Advocate together for a press conference to announce the good news.
  - The unveiling of Florida's Heart Gallery, a collection of Heart Gallery exhibits from around the state, took place with the Governor at the Mary Brogan Museum.
  - The launch of Children's Week during the 2008 legislative session.
  - Read Governor's proclamation in recognition of National Adoption Month and the adoptive families that have opened their hearts and homes at press conference and adoption reception with the Governor.
  - Participated in a press conference to acknowledge the contract renewal between Family Services of Metro Orlando and the Department of Children and Families. This was a testimony to the success of community-based care and how it has benefited the local community.
- Traveled around the state to visit various stakeholders involved with child welfare issues including non-profit organizations, community-based care lead agencies and service providers.
- Witnessed adoption ceremonies where multiple adoptions were finalized in the same afternoon.
- Met with many of our new adoptive families and discussed their experience with the adoption process.
- Interacted with many concerned citizens from across the state to listen to their issues and ideas, and then convey those messages into the appropriate discussions at the state level.
- Participated in an Adoption Focus Group hosted by the Children's Home Society of Florida in order to gain perspective from the experience of those who have adopted one or more of Florida's children.
- Presented the Governor's Points of Light Award to two individuals. These distinguished recipients have demonstrated outstanding volunteer service in their community with a compassion for their fellow Floridians.

## **Other**

The Office held a workshop to discuss the process of establishing a Children's Trust for the state of Florida. Representatives from the National Alliance for Children's Trust and Prevention Funds were brought in to give us clear direction and a framework for development. As a result, the Office began exploring the statutory authority that allows it to create a direct support organization (DSO) which potentially could be the repository for the Trust. The DSO, tentatively titled "The Governor's Trust for Florida's Children," will support the Office and all its initiatives and charges.

The Chief Child Advocate met with the Dean of Florida A&M University's (FAMU) College of Law to establish a clinic where the law students support the Office and its initiatives. A designated group of FAMU College of Law students assisted the Office with research into issues such as the fidelity of the Maintenance Adoption Subsidy and the implementation of the new Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. They also drafted proposed language for legislation that would create a tax incentive for Florida-based employers who develop adoption-friendly environments in their place of work.

The Office works with the Governor's Office of Citizen Services to better respond to Floridians who have issues and concerns about our child welfare system. The offices use a triage system that enables a more proactive response to those citizens who have the greatest need. The two offices continue to explore and discuss ways to better coordinate the resources and knowledge of the Office with the commendable efforts of Citizen's Services.

The Office conducted various workshops around the state to promote the work of and educate stakeholders on some Office initiatives.

- The Chief Child Advocate did a presentation on the "Explore Adoption" Initiative at the Adoption Journey Conference organized by Florida's Adoption Information Center.
- An explanation of the functions of the Office and duties of the Chief Child Advocate was delivered at a luncheon of the North Florida Chapter of Certified Public Managers.
- With the objective of unifying the faith community to embrace foster care adoption, the Adoption and Orphan Care Conference invited the Chief Child Advocate to give a presentation on the Governor's child well-being priorities and adoption initiatives including the "Explore Adoption" marketing campaign.
- At the DCF Dependency Court Summit in Orlando, the Office held a workshop presenting the Explore Adoption Initiative and "Triple P" – a Positive Parenting Program that deals with child abuse and neglect.
- At the Florida Coalition of Children Conference in Orlando, the Office conducted workshops on the Explore Adoption Initiative and on the issue of Infant Mental Health.

## Part 2 – Status of Child Maltreatment and Adoptions in Florida

### Vision, Mission, Overarching Goal and Desired Results for the State Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: January 2009 – June 2010

#### ***Vision***

Florida's highest priority is that children are raised in healthy, safe, stable, and nurturing families.

#### ***Mission***

To serve as a blueprint that will be implemented to provide for the care, safety, and protection of all of Florida's children in an environment that fosters healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

#### ***Overarching Goal***

All families and communities ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being.

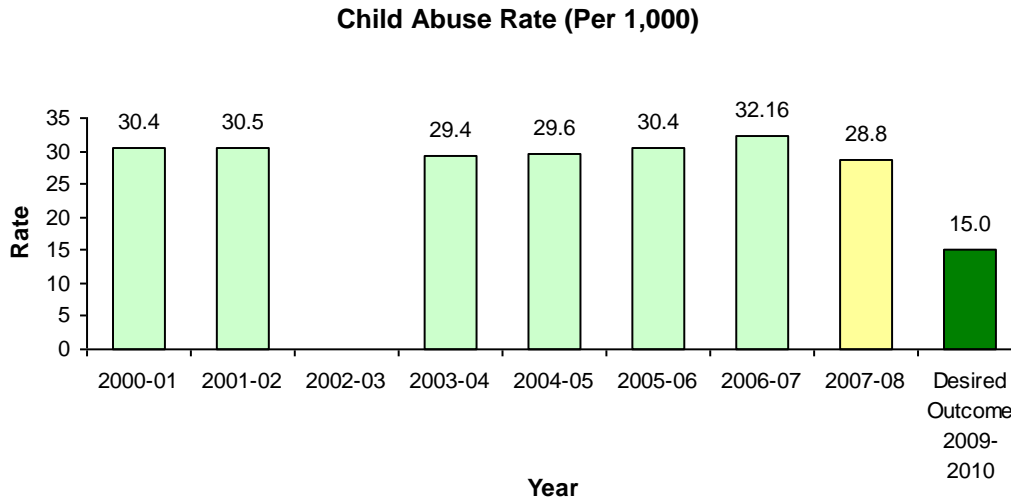
#### ***Desired Results of Plan Implementation***

1. ***Child Maltreatment Prevention*** – By 30 June 2010, the child abuse rate will be reduced from the fiscal year 2007-08 statewide rate of 28.8 to 27.5 per 1,000 children.
2. ***Adoption Promotion*** – By 30 June 2010, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the 2007-2008 rate of 68.3 percent to 70.00 percent.
3. ***Adoption Promotion*** – By 30 June 2010, the percent of children legally free for adoption who have been waiting for adoption since the date of termination of parental rights (TPR) for more than 12 months will be reduced from the June 2008 rate of 51.4 percent to 46.0 percent.
4. ***Adoption Support*** – By 30 June 2010, the annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) will be reduced from the June 2008 number of 155 to less than 120.

## Summary of Child Maltreatment Data

Child maltreatment is an all inclusive term for child abuse, abandonment and neglect. Data were provided by the Department of Children and Families to the Executive Office of the Governor in October 2008 for Fiscal Year 2007 through 2008. These data and information have been aggregated in order to describe the status of child maltreatment in Florida.

**Desired Result – Child Maltreatment Prevention.** By 30 June 2010, the child abuse rate will be reduced from the fiscal year 2007-08 statewide rate of 28.8 to 27.5 per 1,000 children:



## **Status of Child Maltreatment in Florida**

The *incidence* of child maltreatment is the estimated number of maltreated children in Florida, regardless of the number of children reported as abused. Data from the 3rd National Incidence Study (NIS-3, to be released by the end of 2008) suggests that only about 30 percent of all maltreated children were actually investigated. Thus it would be expected that reporting and investigation rates would be low, conservative estimates of the actual abuse incident rates in Florida.

Florida's Abuse Hotline is the central toll-free (1-800-96-ABUSE) statewide access point for reporting suspected child maltreatment. Based upon the unduplicated data provided by the Florida Department of Children and Families in October 2008, during SFY2008 (State Fiscal Year July 2007 – June 2008), the hotline received calls concerning **243,579 alleged victims of child maltreatment**. This is a **statewide reporting rate of 58.7 alleged victims** per 1,000 children (birth - 17) in Florida. Of these, **119,751 (49%) were found to be substantiated** with findings of verified child maltreatment or some indication of it. This results in a **statewide victimization rate of 28.8 maltreated children** per 1,000 children (birth – 17) in Florida.

Since SFY2004, the number of alleged victims has increased by over 21,000 children with a substantial increase of almost 12,000 children from SFY2005 to SFY2006. During this same four-year period, the number of substantiated victims has remained relatively steady with a spike of 121,202 substantiated victims in SFY2006 and has decreased to 119,751 for this past year. This represents a slight increase from the SFY2007 total of 117,795.

The Department of Children and Families' *Florida Safe Family Network* data system recorded the primary reasons for removal of the children entering into foster care. If a child was moved twice in the year, both sets of reasons are included in this analysis. Of the 15,755 children entering foster care in the twelve month span from July 2007 – June 2008, 16,959 reasons for service were reported. These are shown in the table below.

**Reasons for Services Reported in July 2007 – June 2008**

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Percent of 15,755 Children</b>	<b>Removal Reason</b>
7,629	48%	Parental Drug & Alcohol Abuse
3,769	24%	Inadequate Supervision, Medical & Physical Neglect
2,785	18%	Inadequate Housing
2,628	17%	Child Alcohol & Drug Abuse
2,567	16%	Domestic Violence
2,404	15%	Physical Abuse
2,208	14%	Emotional Abuse & Neglect
1,994	13%	Incarceration of Parents

As shown in the table above, parental drug and alcohol use was the most often cited reason for 48 percent of the children entering care. As a result, the second most cited service reason for care was neglect, represented 24 percent of the children taken into care.

**Summary of Adoption Data**

***Adoption Data Reported by the Department of Children and Families to the Federal Administration for Children and Families via the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)***

On January 23, 2007, The Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) published new federal child welfare outcome measures, including five measures related to the timeliness of adoptions from foster care. For each of the five measures, Florida set targets based on FFY2004 national 75<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles in order to achieve substantial conformity on the January 2008 Child and Family Services Review. As described below, ***Florida has exceeded its target for all of the five measures for FY2007-2008.***

Performance on these and other new measures will be used in the January 2008 Child and Family Services Review. Performance information is based on the 12-month period from July 2007 to June 2008, using the most recent available data for this review. It should be noted that for the information provided below, comparisons will be made using prior federal fiscal years (FFY) which span the months October through September. For example, FFY2004 spans October 2003 through September 2004.

**Measure 1 – Percent Discharged in Less than 24 Months.** Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the period July 2007 through June 2008, **43.4 percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home.** The target was to reach the national 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for FFY2004 which is 36.6 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target.** Florida has made steady progress on this measure over the last several years, increasing from 23.9 percent in FFY2004 to 43.4 percent in the period July 2007 through June 2008. This measure is limited to children adopted during the period, so it does not address the likelihood that children presently in care will be adopted within 24 months. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. Of the 20 Florida circuits, 30% (6) did not meet the state's target.

**Percent Discharged in Less than 24 months (by Circuit)**

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
First Circuit	43.20%	Eleventh Circuit	37.70%
Second Circuit	35.06%	Twelfth Circuit	34.75%
Third Circuit	37.78%	Thirteenth Circuit	36.88%
Fourth Circuit	65.78%	Fourteenth Circuit	49.04%
Fifth Circuit	32.61%	Fifteenth Circuit	49.18%
Sixth Circuit	24.34%	Sixteenth Circuit	38.46%
Seventh Circuit	48.11%	Seventeenth Circuit	43.78%
Eighth Circuit	49.09%	Eighteenth Circuit	45.59%
Ninth Circuit	41.18%	Nineteenth Circuit	36.47%
Tenth Circuit	37.50%	Twentieth Circuit	30.23%

**Measure 2 – Median Length of Stay in Foster Care.** Of all children adopted from foster care during the period July 2007 through June 2008, the **median length of stay in foster care was 26.2 months from the date of latest removal from home to the date of discharge to adoption.** The target was to reach the national 25th percentile for FFY2004 which is 27.3 months. **Florida has exceeded this target.** This measure, like the first measure, is limited to children adopted during the period, so it only describes the length of stay of this particular group of adopted children. Florida's median has dropped for several years, from 35.1 months in FFY 2004 to 26.2 months in the period July 2007 through June 2008. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. Of the 20 Florida circuits, 50% (10) did not meet the state's target.

**Median Length of Stay in Foster Care (by Circuit)**

Circuit	Median LoS	Circuit	Median LoS
First Circuit	25.02	Eleventh Circuit	28.12
Second Circuit	30.86	Twelfth Circuit	28.11
Third Circuit	27.24	Thirteenth Circuit	30.18
Fourth Circuit	19.12	Fourteenth Circuit	24.71
Fifth Circuit	29.49	Fifteenth Circuit	24.33
Sixth Circuit	32.39	Sixteenth Circuit	30.50
Seventh Circuit	24.12	Seventeenth Circuit	25.06
Eighth Circuit	24.08	Eighteenth Circuit	26.16
Ninth Circuit	27.25	Nineteenth Circuit	28.23
Tenth Circuit	37.50	Twentieth Circuit	30.23



**Measure 3 – Finalized Adoptions.** Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 2007, and who had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, **26.6 percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption by June 30, 2008.** The target was to reach the national 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for FFY2004 which is 22.7 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target** for each of the last five federal fiscal years. This measure provides one way of looking at the likelihood of children being adopted who have been in care for a long period of time. It selects all children who were in care at the beginning of the period and follows up after 12 months to see whether they have been adopted. This measure excludes children who, by the last day of the period, have achieved permanency through reunification with parents or primary caretakers, living with other relatives, or guardianship. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. Of the 20 Florida circuits, only 10 percent (2) did not meet the state’s target.

**Percent of Finalized Adoptions (by Circuit)**

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
First Circuit	38.81%	Eleventh Circuit	19.03%
Second Circuit	27.96%	Twelfth Circuit	29.48%
Third Circuit	26.92%	Thirteenth Circuit	23.61%
Fourth Circuit	38.03%	Fourteenth Circuit	32.16%
Fifth Circuit	35.28%	Fifteenth Circuit	24.43%
Sixth Circuit	27.14%	Sixteenth Circuit	24.32%
Seventh Circuit	31.72%	Seventeenth Circuit	22.84%
Eighth Circuit	25.14%	Eighteenth Circuit	24.52%
Ninth Circuit	23.92%	Nineteenth Circuit	20.62%
Tenth Circuit	32.84%	Twentieth Circuit	23.72%

**Measure 4 – Legally Free for Adoption.** Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 1, 2007/January 1, 2008, who had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, and who were not legally free for adoption prior to that day, **16.0 percent became legally free for adoption** by December 31, 2007/June 30, 2008, respectively. The target was to reach the national 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for FFY2004 which is 10.9 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target** for four of the last five federal fiscal years. This measure reflects how quickly Florida moved to obtain termination of parental rights (TPR) when it appeared that reunification was no longer a viable option. This measure excludes children who did not become legally free during the first six months of the period, but who, during that six-month period, achieved permanency through reunification with parents or primary caretakers, living with other relatives, or guardianship. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. Of the 20 Florida circuits, only 15 percent (3) did not meet the state’s target.

**Percent of Children Legally Free for Adoption (by Circuit)**

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
First Circuit	18.93%	Eleventh Circuit	11.84%
Second Circuit	14.52%	Twelfth Circuit	20.56%
Third Circuit	12.12%	Thirteenth Circuit	19.95%
Fourth Circuit	17.67%	Fourteenth Circuit	30.13%
Fifth Circuit	12.00%	Fifteenth Circuit	10.00%
Sixth Circuit	21.16%	Sixteenth Circuit	7.69%
Seventh Circuit	13.60%	Seventeenth Circuit	12.91%
Eighth Circuit	24.32%	Eighteenth Circuit	7.10%
Ninth Circuit	16.30%	Nineteenth Circuit	10.92%
Tenth Circuit	16.03%	Twentieth Circuit	9.68%

**Measure 5 – Adoption within 12 Months.** Of all children who became legally free for adoption during the preceding 12-month period, **68.3 percent were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free.** The target was to reach the national 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for FFY2004 which is 53.7 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target** for four of the last five reporting years. This measure reflects how quickly Florida finalizes adoptions after the termination of parental rights. Florida has made steady progress over the last few years, increasing over 20 percent, from 47.4 percent in FFY 2004 (October 2003 – September 2004) to its current level. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. Of the 20 Florida circuits, only 10 percent (2) did not meet the state’s target.

**Adoption within 12 months of TPR**

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
First Circuit	78.18%	Eleventh Circuit	61.19%
Second Circuit	64.86%	Twelfth Circuit	67.52%
Third Circuit	57.78%	Thirteenth Circuit	64.54%
Fourth Circuit	78.77%	Fourteenth Circuit	87.25%
Fifth Circuit	51.91%	Fifteenth Circuit	62.57%
Sixth Circuit	56.65%	Sixteenth Circuit	46.15%
Seventh Circuit	73.14%	Seventeenth Circuit	74.56%
Eighth Circuit	59.62%	Eighteenth Circuit	57.35%
Ninth Circuit	76.24%	Nineteenth Circuit	72.62%
Tenth Circuit	79.19%	Twentieth Circuit	55.95%

***Timeliness of the Adoption Process for Children Adopted from within the Child Welfare System***

In the state fiscal year July 2007 through June 2008 (SFY2008), 3,675 adoptions from the child welfare system were finalized in Florida. Of those adopted during SFY2008, adoptive parent group information is available for 3,411 children. Three-quarters of these adopted children were taken into the families of loving foster parents or relatives: **31 percent** were adopted by foster parents and **43 percent** were adopted by relatives respectively. The remaining **26 percent** of those children were adopted by families who were recruited for them.

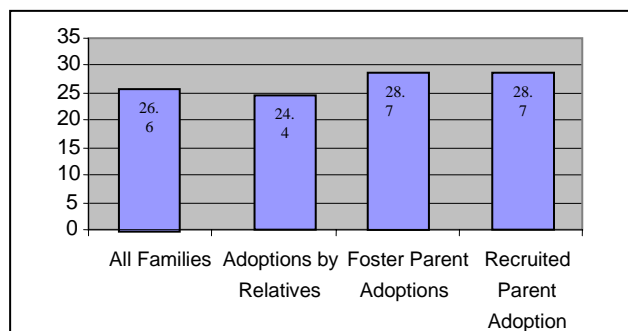
In order to assess the timeliness of the adoption process, the Department of Children and Families submitted three other types of data describing the timeliness of adoptions to the Executive Office of the Governor in October 2008.

- Data describing the median length of stay in care for children adopted in SFY 2008. The median was broken down by the time from removal to Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) and the time from TPR to finalization. The data were analyzed by the relationship of adoptive parents, including foster parents, relatives, and recruited families.
- Data describing the proportion of children available for adoption on July 1, 2007 who were adopted by June 30, 2008. The proportions adopted were broken down by age group and race group.
- Data describing the children available for adoption on October 1, 2008, including age group, race group and time in care.

**Measure 6 – Median Length of Stay in Foster Care (From Date of Removal through Date of Adoption Finalization).** Complete and verified data sets were available and provided for 3,476 of the 3,675 children who were adopted in SFY 2008, a 95 percent sample. Thus this section reports timeliness information based upon the sample of children for whom the data were complete.

Based on the sample of data, the statewide median for all children adopted by all adoptive parent groups was 26.6 months from removal to finalization; half had longer stays and half had shorter stays. As one might expect, the median length of stay was longest for those children who were adopted by parents that were recruited for them, and the shortest length of stay was for children who were adopted by relatives. **The national target of 27.3 months was met for those adopted by relatives. The target was narrowly missed for the other two adoptive parent groups – foster parents and recruited parents- with a median length of stay of 28.7 months for both.**

**Median Length of Stay (Months) for Children Adopted in Florida in SFY 2008**



Understanding where delays occur is useful for improving the process and shortening the time for removal to adoption. For example, it should be useful to know whether a long median length of stay is the result of delays in securing termination of parental rights (TPR) or the result of delays in recruiting an adoptive home, placing the child and finalizing the adoption. Three data points (i.e., removal date, termination of parental rights or TPR date and adoption finalization date) were used to break the median total length of stay into two intervals: Median length of stay from the point of removal through the date TPR was ordered, and Median length of stay from date of TPR through the date adoption was finalized.

As shown below, the median time from removal to TPR was 18 months for all families; with relative adoptions the lowest at 16.1 months and foster parents the highest at 20.0 months. The median time from TPR to adoption finalization was 7.8 months statewide with foster parent adoptions the lowest at 7.0 months and recruited parent adoptions highest at 9.5 months. That is, once the children were legally free for adoption, those who were adopted had their adoptions finalized within a median time period of 7.0 to 9.5 months, depending on the adopting parents.

**Median Length of Stay (Months) for Children Adopted in Florida in SFY 2008**

Adoptive Families	Median Time from Removal to TPR	Median Time from TPR to Adoption	Median Total Length of Stay
Relative Adoptions	16.1	7.5	24.4
Foster Parent Adoptions	20.0	7.0	28.7
Recruited Parent Adoptions	18.1	9.5	28.7
<b>All Families</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>26.6</b>

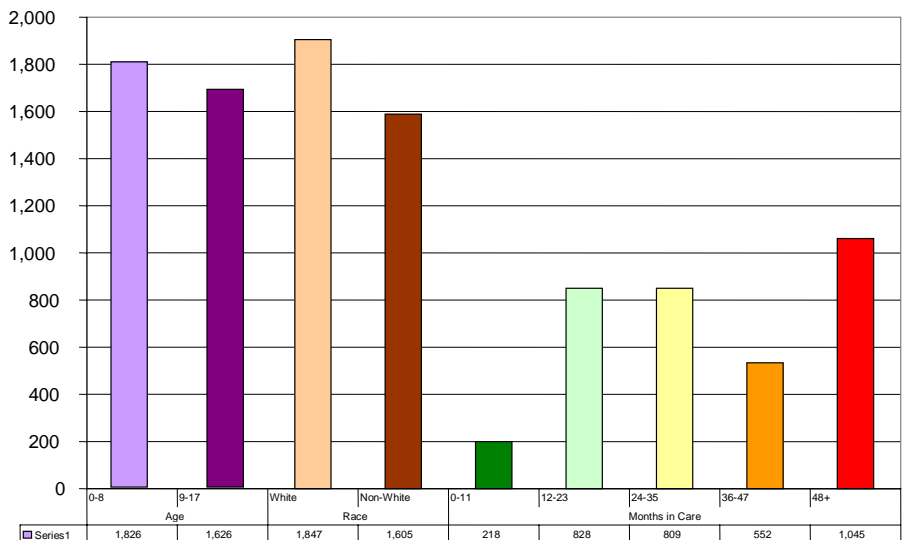
**Measure 7 – Likelihood of Adoption by Age Group and Race Group.** The Department of Children and Families provided data to describe the likelihood of adoption by age and race groups. Of the 4,790 children available for adoption on July 1, 2007, 2,057 (42.9%) were adopted by June 30, 2008. However, the proportions were very different for different age and race groups.

- 1,459 (66.9%) of the 2,182 children **ages 0-8** available for adoption on 1 July 2007 were adopted by 30 June 2008.
- However, only 598 (22.9%) of the 2,608 children **ages 9-17** available for adoption on 1 July 2007 were adopted by 30 June 2008
- 1,232 (49.5%) of the 2,490 **white** children available for adoption on 1 July 2007 were adopted by 30 June 2008.
- However, 825 (35.9%) of the 2,300 **non-white** children available for adoption on 1 July 2007 were adopted by 30 June 2008.

The significantly lower proportions for adoptions of older children and non-white children indicate that these groups present a greater challenge and should receive special attention in the future.

**Measure 8 – Children Waiting for Adoption.** The Department of Children and Families' data describe the 3,452 children available for adoption from the Florida child welfare system as of October 1, 2008. Age, length of time in care, and racial information were available for all children.

**Number of Children Available for Adoption by Age, Race and Months in Care**



As shown in the chart above, just over half (53%) of the children are between the ages of birth through eight and just under half (47%) are between the ages of nine through 17. Over half (54%) of the children are white and under a third (30%) have been waiting to be adopted for four or more years.

To better understand these children available for adoption, the Department of Children and Families provided analyses of their age groups and ethnicities by the length of time in care. Their findings are important and will be of assistance to the state in the recruitment of adoptive families for these children.

Children who become available for adoption often wait longer for a permanent home if they are older. Of the children awaiting adoption as of October 1, 2008, those who are 9-17 years of age are almost four times as likely to have been in care 48 months or longer than those who are 0-8 years of age.

Similarly, non-white children are over-represented in the group of children who have been waiting longest for adoptive parents. Of 2,407 children awaiting adoption as of October 1, 2008 who have been in care less than four years, 1,419 (59%) are white. However, of 1,045 children awaiting adoption as of October 1, 2008 who have been in care more than four years, 617 (59%) are non-white. That is, while the number of white children available for adoption exceeds non-white children for the first 47 months they are in care and waiting for permanent homes, by the 48th month, non-white children comprise the largest group of those children waiting to be adopted.

### **Part 3 – Recommendations and Requests**

The following is a summary of the policy recommendations from the various affected state agencies for the further development of services and programs for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families and prevention of child abuse and neglect. This summary is by no means to be considered all inclusive, by error or intent.

The agencies recommendations are not listed in any particular order, and they do not reflect in any way the priorities of the Executive Office of the Governor. This summary of agency recommendations may or may not even reflect the priorities of an agency, but it does show their level of commitment to these particular issues. By identifying the different, and sometimes similar, recommendations among the various state agencies, a dialogue will be created, duplicity of effort will diminish and better cooperation and collaboration between the agencies will be the result.

#### **Agency Policy Recommendations**

Seven (7) state agencies provided policy recommendations related to the prevention of abuse, abandonment and neglect. These recommendations are summarized below by state agency.

##### ***Agency for Enterprise Information Technology***

No specific recommendations regarding adoption or child abuse prevention programs at this time.

##### ***Agency for Health Care Administration***

1. Continue Medicaid eligibility through their 17th year.
2. Enhance access and treatment for eligible children prior to adoption through implementation of the Child Welfare Prepaid Mental Health Plan.
3. Partner with our sister agency, Department of Children and Families, to monitor quality of care issues for children prior to adoption.
4. Review and revise our Community Behavioral Health Handbook to increase provider qualifications and reorient the system of care to focus on resiliency in children.

5. Strengthen access to care by contractually requiring that Medicaid managed care plans offer timely access to providers specializing in adoptions and attachment, among other specialties.
6. Support the development of a system of infant mental health services for young children and their families in Florida.
7. Provide a process for recipients to extend care and exceed maximum service limitations through prior authorization.
8. Continue to allow adopted enrollees to maintain voluntary status in the managed care environment.

***Agency for Persons with Disabilities***

1. Continue and expand efforts to improve inter-agency coordination.
2. Ensure availability of appropriate and adequate behavioral services for children with developmental disabilities.
3. Provide resources to serve all children with developmental disabilities in the child welfare system through the Home and Community Based Services waiver.
4. Seek advice and assistance from parents who have adopted children with disabilities.

***Department of Children and Families***

1. Improve the timeliness of the adoption process for the older teens who are available for adoption.
2. Establish sufficient and accessible support groups for adoptive parents.
3. Establish sufficient and accessible support groups that are facilitated by experienced professionals for adopted teens.
4. Increase access to adoption-competent mental health professionals.

***Department of Community Affairs***

1. Improve coordination among the agencies at the federal, state, and local level that receive funding to help and support low-income families.
2. The programs administered by the agencies identified above are historically underfunded and there is evidence of further funding reductions.

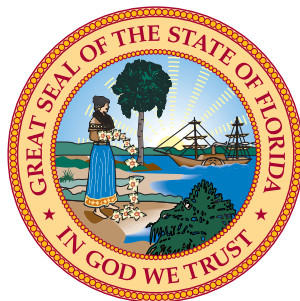
***Department of Health, Children's Medical Services***

1. Promote Child Maltreatment as an Essential Consideration for Public Health.
2. Designate the Department of Health, Children's Medical Services as the primary entity responsible for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment within the Department of Health.
3. Expand responsibilities of the Child Abuse Death Review Committee to include review of All Child Deaths (under age 18.)
4. Design and include child maltreatment course work/training to be available for certification and licensure for health care and social work professionals; and ongoing continuing education for health care, social work and related professionals.

5. Develop a strategy to inform the general public and targeted audience of ways to enhance positive interaction with children and within the family.
6. Establish a network of Family Resource Centers to provide an array of parenting education and family strengthening services.
7. Provide funding for 25 Family Intervention Specialists to link women who need substance abuse treatment and their families with that treatment; and reduce barriers to treatment.
8. Encourage all Medicaid health care providers to routinely screen women for depression.
9. Increase the number of physicians who use standardized developmental and psychosocial screening tools as a routine component of child health assessments.
11. Enhance CMS Child Protection Teams so that substance abuse, developmental screening and psychosocial assessments are a routine component of the assessment process.

### ***Department of Juvenile Justice***

1. The department is playing a key role in the development of the Faith-Based Adoption Initiative. In addition, the Faith-Based Adoption Initiative will be promoted through the department's Faith Community Network, the Chaplaincy Services program and the more than 600 Faith Partners statewide to provide mentoring and guidance to youth in our care.
2. The Department of Juvenile Justice is in the initial stages of a partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters to provide mentors to youth leaving the juvenile justice system that have aged out of the foster care system. The pilot project for this initiative will be implemented by March 31, 2009.
3. The Department of Juvenile Justice has a representative that serves as a member of the Governor's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council. The Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council provides advice and guidance to the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection.
4. The Department of Juvenile Justice promotes the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection's "Explore Adoption" campaign by posting its web link on the initial page of the department's website and distributing adoption information to its faith and community based partners.
5. Mother and Infant Programs: The DJJ has two Mother and Infant programs that are designed for and focuses exclusively on pregnant and postpartum delinquent girls. The focus of these programs is to keep the mother and infant together, the infant out of state care and to teach residents how to provide primary care for their own children with help from other residents and staff, which is a large part of the parenting skills component. Sarasota YMCA Character House and Women in Need of Greater Strength for Life (W.I.N.G.S.) South Florida Inc.



*Office of Adoption and Child Protection  
Executive Office of the Governor  
The Capitol, Suite 2002  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001  
Phone: (850) 921-2015  
Fax: (850) 921-0173  
[chiefchildadvocate@myflorida.com](mailto:chiefchildadvocate@myflorida.com)*