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Part 1 – SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF ADOPTION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection

On June 12, 2007, the bill creating the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection, within the Executive Office of the Governor, was signed into law. The duties and responsibilities of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection are enshrined in Section 39.001, Florida Statutes (§39.001, FS). The Office was created for the purpose of establishing, implementing, and monitoring a cross-agency comprehensive statewide approach for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families and prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. As of December 2012, the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection has a dedicated staff of two full-time employees including Zackary Gibson (Director and Chief Child Advocate), Christina Pacelle, MSW (Special Projects Manager), and one part-time employee, Frenchie Yon (Program Support). The Office also has two volunteer advocates Tanya Wilkins, RN, BSN, Volunteer Advocate for Foster Care and Adoption, and Deborah Polston, Volunteer Advocate for Human Trafficking. Together, this team has the passion and expertise to create efficiencies and achieve remarkable results.

Throughout 2012, the Office planned, staffed, and supported four Cabinet meetings and meetings of 7 different workgroups. The Office also has administrative responsibilities for the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council, which also held four meetings. The Office worked closely with the Appointments Office and other staff to ensure that the Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate President’s appointments were made to these entities in a timely manner.

Additionally, the Office is responsible for the plan implementation and monitoring for the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* and provided support and guidance to the leads of the 40 state objectives and the 20 local planning teams. The Office submitted a biennial revision of the plan to the Governor and Legislature. The Office continued to manage the award winning *Explore Adoption* and *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* public awareness campaigns.

Chief Child Advocate and Director

On matters that relate to the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect, the promotion of adoption, and the support of adoptive families as defined in §39.001(7)(b), FS the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Child Advocate and Director of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection include acting as the Governor’s liaison with state agencies and other state governments, working to secure funding and other support, developing strategic programs and funding initiatives, assisting in rule development, advising the Governor and Legislature, and developing public awareness campaigns.

The Director of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection serves as a member of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, Chairs the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council, and is also a member of the State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care. The Director leads the implementation and monitoring of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.

The Director of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection represents the Executive Office of the Governor on the Interagency Trauma-Informed Care Workgroup. Tasks undertaken by the workgroup include providing an entry level Trauma-Informed Care resource that educates, identifies consistent “Trauma Terminology” and can be enhanced to meet the needs of specific populations served in Florida.

Additionally, the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection represents the Executive Office of the Governor on the federally funded State Maternal and Child Health Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (ECCS) implemented by the Department of Health Statewide Multi-Agency Team. The purpose of ECCS is to build and integrate early childhood service systems that address the critical components of access to comprehensive health services and medical homes; social-emotional development and mental health of young children; early care and education; parenting education and family support. ECCS efforts involve a broad range of public and private agencies and organizations, parents and communities who share the goal of promoting the health and well-being of children from ages 0 to 5 and to strengthen families.

Highlighted Activities of the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection During 2012

The Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection is committed to ensuring that every child and youth in Florida grows up in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. The Director has participated in numerous roundtables, summits, conferences, and events this year including: Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and Forum for Youth Investment Roundtable on Post Secondary Education, Human Trafficking Awareness Summit, College Access and Success Summit, Children's Week Community Innovation Awards Luncheon and Advocacy Dinner and Reception, and Together we can Prevent Teen Dating Violence Youth Summit.

A number of events the Director attended throughout 2012 include: Guardian ad Litem Day, Child Abuse Prevention Month Kick-Off, National Day of Prayer event, Florida United Methodist Children's Home Prayer Breakfast and Groundbreaking Event, the 12th Annual Celebration of Reading, Walk in My Shoes Event, and the Florida Civil Rights Hall of Fame Dedication Ceremony. The Director also attended a Literacy Event, Miles of Smiles (a Holiday Carnival for foster and adoptive children) and adoption celebration events in Tavares and Tallahassee.

Additionally, the Director also presented at several conferences and meetings including: Ready by 21 National Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, Florida Department of Education Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council in Tallahassee, Florida, Governor's Cabinet in Tallahassee, Florida, Prevent Child Abuse America Conference in Jacksonville, Florida, Children's Cabinet Network Meeting in Washington D.C., Partnership Pilots on Disconnected Youth (a meeting with the White House Office of Management and Budget and Federal Agencies Meeting) in Washington D.C., a meeting with Congressional Senate Appropriations Staff in Washington D.C., Legislative Breakfast in Sarasota, Florida and Child Advocacy Expo in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Highlighted Activities of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection During 2012

Supported the First Lady's activities including the Heart Gallery exhibit at the Easter Egg Hunt, reception for adoptive families at the Governor's Mansion after a Governor's Cabinet meeting, taping of the First Lady's video message for National Adoption Month and congratulations letters for new adoptive families with the Governor.

Attended conferences, trainings, and events including the Department of Children and Families "Realizing Change" Child Welfare Conference, Adoption Information Center Conference, Human Trafficking Awareness Summit, National Faith Symposium and Guardian ad Litem Day.

Attended the Florida United Methodist Children's Home groundbreaking event for their new facility in Madison, Florida. Attended the kick-off event for Child Abuse Prevention Month led by Prevent Child Abuse Florida and the Department of Children and Families.

Submitted a biennial revision of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House. Led the five-year prevention and permanency plan implementation and monitoring and attended statewide workgroup meetings for the five-year prevention and permanency plan. Also planned and coordinated monthly calls with the Local Planning Team conveners for the local five-year prevention and permanency plans.

Hosted *Explore Adoption* exhibit booths and disseminated materials at numerous local and state conferences, events and trainings. Participated in press conferences and other media events promoting adoption. Witnessed adoption ceremonies in five different communities where multiple adoptions were finalized in the same day, and had the opportunity to meet with many new adoptive families and discuss their experiences.

Supported *29 Days of Amazing African American Children: Explore Adoption!* led by the Department of Children and Families in honor of Black History Month to raise awareness of the African American children in foster care that are available for adoption without an identified family. To celebrate National Adoption Month, led the *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* initiative via social media.

Spoke with many concerned citizens and local leaders from across the state to listen to their issues and ideas, and then conveyed those messages to appropriate state and interstate discussions.

Volunteer Advocates within the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection

In July 2012, Secretary Wilkins announced that Governor Scott had created a volunteer advocate position to work with the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, and would be creating additional positions within the next several months. The volunteer advocates would focus on specific topics related to the needs of children and youth in Florida.

Volunteer Advocate for Foster Care and Adoption

Tanya Wilkins, RN, BSN, was named the Volunteer Advocate for Foster Care and Adoption, within the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in July 2012. Mrs. Wilkins leads the Fostering Florida's Future Workgroup, whose goal is to recruit 1,200 new foster parents, retain the current foster parents, and to celebrate all of Florida's foster parents. Mrs. Wilkins has participated in many recruitment activities, including: Circuit 2 Super Saturday in Tallahassee, Women of Compassion Workshop in Tallahassee, Open Hearts Clergy Banquet in Ormond Beach, Back to School Fashion Show in

Tallahassee, United Way of the Big Bend Breakfast in Tallahassee, National Faith Symposium in Orlando, Capital City Kiwanis Luncheon in Tallahassee, Share Your Heart Luncheon in Miami, Circuit 14 Fostering Florida's Future Recruitment Pep Rally in Panama City, Ball Caps and Bagels Women's Group in Wildwood, and TriEagle Sales – Building the Team. Mrs. Wilkins also attended the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet meetings, and the Department of Children and Families "Realizing Change" Child Welfare Conference. She also participated in other press conferences and media events promoting foster care and adoption.

Volunteer Advocate for Human Trafficking

Governor Scott named Deborah Polston as the Volunteer Advocate for Human Trafficking in October 2012. Mrs. Polston works in collaboration with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Human Trafficking Workgroup to raise the awareness about human trafficking in Florida, specifically children who are victims of sexual exploitation. January 2013 is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and Mrs. Polston is working with various state agencies, as well as mayors and coalitions to issue proclamations throughout Florida, to raise the awareness about human trafficking. In addition, Mrs. Polston will assist in leading efforts with the Department of Education to develop teacher training and awareness within schools related to human trafficking.

Florida's Public Awareness Award Winning Campaigns

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 extensive research, statewide surveys and focus groups during the design phase, *Explore Adoption* was launched in May 2008. The campaign ran through December 2008, winning many state and national awards, including an EMMY and three ADDYs. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has continued to promote public adoption through *Explore Adoption* while utilizing social media. For more information, please visit www.adoptflorida.org or call 1-800-96-ADOPT.

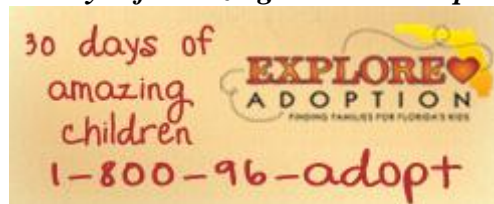
During 2012 the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection and the Department of Children and Families partnered together to continue to raise the awareness about foster care adoption in Florida and to expand *Explore Adoption's* social media footprint. In October 2012 the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in partnership with the Department of Children and Families redesigned and re-launched the *Explore Adoption* website. The new design features a streamlined and easy to navigate website. It also includes local resources for Adoption Recruiters and Specialists, Adoption Competent Licensed Mental Health Professionals, Post Adoption Services Counselors, and Adoption Support Groups, all with contact information, as well as a location sharing aspect (allows users to find the nearest resources to their current location) to be more user and mobile friendly. The new design also allows mobile users to access the website and information they are looking for with greater ease. In 2011, 26,521 visitors came to the *Explore Adoption* via mobile device – phone, tablet, etc. In 2012 the number increased to 73,771 visitors, or a 178% increase.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection hosted *Explore Adoption* exhibits at the 2012 Realizing Change Summit, National Faith Symposium, and Adoption Information Center Conference. *Explore Adoption* marketing materials and *Our Adoption Journey* handbooks were distributed to participants during the events. The Office also hosted the *Explore Adoption* exhibit at the National Day of Prayer in Tallahassee, and the Governor and First Lady's Easter Egg Hunt at the Governor's Mansion.

Florida has become a national model for public adoptions, collecting a total of more than \$21 million in federal adoption incentive awards for adoptions finalized during Federal Fiscal Years 2008 – 2011. Florida is poised to receive another incentive award in 2013 for the adoptions completed during Federal Fiscal Year 2012. The incentive awards received were the result of improving adoption performance throughout the state. Nearly 19,500 children have been adopted from Florida’s child welfare system in the last five years. Over 3,000 children in foster care have achieved permanency with an adoptive family for each of the last eight years.

Credit for Florida’s adoption successes is shared by many committed partners, including the *Explore Adoption* campaign, the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the Department of Children and Families, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Community Based Care Lead Agencies, local adoption providers, Adoption Information Center, Heart Galleries, and many others.

30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption! – National Adoption Month Campaign



2011’s National Adoption Month was a wonderful success. Four hundred and sixty children joined their forever families during November 2011. Florida featured over 100 children throughout November in videos and heart gallery pictures, which totaled to 13% of the children available for adoption without identified families. Nine months after the initiative, four children had been adopted and 25% of the children featured were matched with families.

During November 2012 the *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* campaign was launched. On November 1, 2012 First Lady Ann Scott launched a video message about National Adoption Month in Florida. This video encouraged Floridians to learn about the joys of adoption and to consider making a difference in the life of a child by becoming their permanent family. This video was viewed by thousands of people throughout Florida and the nation, and can be found on the *Explore Adoption* website and YouTube Channel. The First Lady also authored a blog post about foster care adoption that was published on the Department of Children and Families blog in November 2012. New adoptive families that finalized their adoption during National Adoption Month received a congratulations letter from Governor Rick Scott and First Lady Ann Scott on becoming a new family.



The Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection Director Zackary Gibson, Volunteer Advocate for Foster Care and Adoption Tanya Wilkins, Department of Children and Families Secretary David Wilkins, and Judge Peter D. Blanc kicked off National Adoption Month on November 1, 2012 in the West Palm Beach Court House. During the event, Florida unveiled the *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* 2012 campaign, a month-long initiative featuring daily videos and pictures of children in foster care available for adoption on the *Explore Adoption* website: www.adoptflorida.org. Over 13% of the children in foster care available for adoption without an identified family were featured on the website during November 2012. The Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection and a host of partner groups promoted the month-long *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* campaign with weekly emails, daily tweets via Twitter, website links and media coverage.

Due to strong public interest in viewing the personal messages of the children featured during the campaign, the *Explore Adoption* website had over 264,000 webpage views (by visitors from 93 different countries). Of these visitors 65% of the visitors to the site were new – they had not been on the *Explore Adoption* website previously. The number of pages per visit drastically increased from 6.86 pages per visit in November 2011 to 9.39 pages per visit in November 2012. Additionally, the length of time users were on the *Explore Adoption* website significantly increased from 5:10 minutes in November 2011 to 6:04 minutes in November 2012. The Adoption Information Center answered 710 calls, 459 calls regarding children in foster care. This is a 15% increase overall and a 31% increase in inquiries about children in foster care available for adoption from 2011. The *30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!* campaign was so successful that all of the children and pictures featured in November were also featured in December 2012. Over 400 adoption finalizations occurred throughout Florida during National Adoption Month. To celebrate, the Department of Environmental Protection donated free passes for every family that finalized during November 2012.

Operation Strong Families

In April 2012, the Director of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection received an email that originated from the Chief of Naval Operations and was sent to all naval administration. This email focused on child abuse prevention month, promoting protective factors to support resiliency and military families, and encouraged naval personnel to attend seminars and workshops. In May 2012, the Director read an article about the U.S. Marine Corps efforts to head off an anticipated spike in the number of child abuse and child neglect incidents associated with post-deployment stress and family reunification.

A connection between the military’s efforts to support resiliency and families by incorporating the *Strengthening Families* protective factors and the work associated with *Florida’s Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* was realized. This plan seeks to build the capacity for Floridians to prevent child maltreatment before it ever occurs. To do this, Florida’s child maltreatment prevention strategies focus on building resilience in Florida’s families through the protective factors to achieve the overarching goal of “All families and communities ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being.” This connection led to the creation of the Operation Strong Families initiative.

Operation Strong Families is a statewide initiative focusing on the strengths and connections within Florida’s families and communities. The goal of this initiative is to support military families beginning with the families of our American Heroes, the men and women of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, National Guard, Coast Guard, and Reserves, through coordinated efforts to build on protective factors and enhance community capacity. Community connections are the linchpins in supporting military families. Community and family resilience is influenced by strong informal networks that occur among friends, family members, work associations and neighbors. To help facilitate this, volunteers will be enlisted to serve as a Civilian Battle Advocacy Buddy (CBAB). CBABs will receive training and be a direct point of contact within their communities to assist families and individuals access services and receive support to ensure their long term welfare.

The Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council, the Florida Department of Children and Families and Prevent Child Abuse Florida are joining forces with the Florida Military Family and Community Covenant, Inc., other agencies and organizations statewide to build and sustain a network of connections to strengthen families. This network will promote protective factors known to increase the health and well-being of children and families, including our military families.

Constituent Support and Assistance

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has become well known to Floridians and as such is seen as a resource to those seeking help and assistance. The Office works with the Office of Citizen Services in responding effectually to these Floridians who have challenges and concerns about our child welfare system. The two offices work collaboratively to coordinate their resources and collective knowledge bases.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has assisted numerous individuals and/or families in 2012. Representative examples of the more prevalent cases include assisting:

- Families involved in the foster care system.
- Families engaged in the adoption process (including families outside of Florida seeking to adopt from Florida's foster care system) to navigate the system.
- Families within the foster care and adoption systems to resolve barriers.
- Grandparents of children within Florida's foster care system seeking ways to protect their grandchildren.
- Providing guidance about relative placement/adoption, services assistance, adopted children that were about to age out of the system, and more.

Through phone calls, letters and emails, these are some of the major issues that citizens reached out to the Office of Adoption and Child Protection with for guidance and assistance.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet



The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet was signed into law on July 11, 2007. The Cabinet is codified in §402.56, FS (Please see <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/>). The Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection serves as the administrative staff and support for the Cabinet.

The charge of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet is to promote and implement collaboration, creativity, increased efficiency, information sharing and improved service delivery between and within state agencies and organizations. The Cabinet’s strategic plan requires creative and aggressive action to:

- Align public finances, information technology and human resources to support the healthy growth and development of children.
- Empower families to provide a nurturing, healthy and safe environment for children.
- Engage families, the community, stakeholders and businesses to improve child and family outcomes.
- Ensure a long-term commitment to at-risk children and youth.
- Improve family and child outcomes related to the Cabinet’s vision for children.
- Invest in children’s health, safety, education and well-being.

As set forth in statute, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet consists of the membership below as of December 2012.

Table 1. Representation and Membership on the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

AREA OF APPOINTMENT, CABINET MEMBER, TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION
<p>Members based on state positions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David E. Wilkins, Cabinet Chairman, and Secretary of the Department of Children and Families • Alan Abramowitz, Statewide Executive Director of the Guardian ad Litem • Dr. John Armstrong, State Surgeon General and Secretary of the Department of Health • Elizabeth Dudek, Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration • Zackary Gibson, Director of the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection and Florida’s Chief Child Advocate • Barbara Palmer, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities • Pam Stewart, Interim Commissioner of the Department of Education • Wansley Walters, Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Justice • Vacant, Director of the Office of Early Learning
<p>Ex-officio Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative Gayle Harrell for the Speaker of the House • Justice Barbara J. Pariente for the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court • Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte for the Attorney General • Youth Commissioner for the Children and Youth in Florida • Vacant for the Senate President • Vacant for the Chief Financial Officer
<p>Governor’s Appointees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antonia Crawford, Chairman of the Early Learning Coalition of Duval • David Lawrence Jr., Education and Community Leadership Scholar at the University of Miami’s School of Education and Human Development; President, The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation; and Chair, The Children’s Movement of Florida • Dr. Judy Schaechter, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine • Steven J. Uhlfelder, Uhlfelder and Associates, PA • Vacant

Governor Rick Scott appointed Secretary David Wilkins, Department of Children and Families as the Chairman of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet in May 2011. Under the leadership of Chairman Wilkins, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet has made remarkable progress. Chairman Wilkins welcomed new Cabinet members in 2012 including:

- **Dr. John Armstrong**, State Surgeon General and Secretary of the Department of Health
- **Zackary Gibson**, Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection and Florida's Chief Child Advocate
- **Barbara Palmer**, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- **Pam Stewart**, Interim Commissioner, Department of Education

Florida is one of eight states that operate a Children's Cabinet supported by the Governor. Approximately 27 states have a council, committee, or group that works to coordinate services among state agencies. At a national meeting of cabinet administrators, Florida's relatively new Cabinet was also lauded for its remarkable progress in spite of the limited financial resources allocated to its efforts. In addition to adopting 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. Under Chairman Wilkins' leadership the Cabinet is working on seven workgroups and three initiatives through the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection with support from the Cabinet members, their staff and the State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care as workgroup leads.

In compliance with state law (§402.56, FS), four Cabinet meetings were held in different regions of the state including: Tallahassee, Gainesville, Panama City, and Miami 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 were co-located with other related conferences and workshops around the state to enhance citizen opportunities and attendance and were published in the Florida Administrative Weekly. When feasible, the meetings were 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 http://www.flgov.com/child_advocacy_cyc/ that contains information about the Cabinet, its members, activities, work products, workgroups, as well as meeting dates and locations.

2012 Meetings of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

Four meetings were held during 2012 as described below.

January 31 – Tallahassee. The Cabinet heard workgroup updates from the Technology Collaboration Workgroup, Child Death Review Teams Workgroup, Community Services Delivery Models Workgroup, and the Human Trafficking Workgroup. The Youth Commission and Child Screening Initiative also provided the Cabinet members with updates of their work. A presentation was provided on families in the court system, as well as how Florida is working with children who experience homelessness. The Cabinet also participated in a Human Trafficking Awareness Month Press Conference during the meeting.

April 26 – Gainesville. Several Cabinet workgroups provided updates to the Cabinet, including the Human Trafficking Workgroup, Child Death Review Teams Workgroup, Technology Collaboration Workgroup, Community Services Delivery Models Workgroup, Youth Collaboration Services Workgroup, and State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care. The Youth Outreach and Communication Committees of the Youth Commission also updated the Cabinet on their work. The Department of Children and Families presented the scorecard the agency uses for the contracted Community Based Care Lead Agencies. Additionally, the Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup was created to assist in streamlining and coordinating the process for children served by multiple agencies. The Cabinet voted to merge the Community Services Delivery Models Workgroup with the Administrative Flexibility Workgroup into one, as their goals were so similar.

July 31 – Panama City. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, Guardian ad Litem, and Office of Early Learning presented their scorecards to the other Cabinet members to show how their agencies are tracking their progress on specified indicators. An update was provided on how Florida is working to prevent human trafficking. The Youth Outreach and Communication Committees of the Youth Commission updated the Cabinet on their work. Workgroup updates also included: Children and Youth Collaboration Services Workgroup, State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care, Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup, Technology Collaboration Workgroup, and Interagency Background Screening Workgroup. A progress report was announced and shared highlighting many of Florida's successes throughout the state fiscal year.

October 31 – Miami. The Department of Health presented on the Florida State Health Improvement Plan to serve as their scorecard. The Child Death Review Teams Workgroup, State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care, and the Human Trafficking Workgroup presented updates to the Cabinet. An update was also provided on the Department of Children and Families is responding to the Safe Harbor legislation that was passed during the 2012 Legislative Session. The Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup provided an update, and then all of the agencies signed the Memorandum of Understanding that the workgroup created.

Strategic Planning

In December 2012, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet participated in a strategic planning session. The members used this session to discuss and assess what has been accomplished over the previous years as well as to see what direction and focus the Cabinet wanted to have in the coming years.

At the Strategic Planning Session, the Cabinet decided to restructure the way they approached the thirteen Headline Indicators. Instead of focusing on four indicators, Cabinet members will concentrate on each area of focus, and their corresponding indicators:

Chair	Area of Focus	Headline Indicators
Surgeon General John Armstrong Dr. Judy Schaechter	Every Florida Child is Healthy	1.1 Mothers beginning prenatal care in the first trimester
		1.2 Children with health insurance
		1.3 Children with a medical home
Mr. David Lawrence <u>Workgroup Members</u> Ms. Toni Crawford Ms. Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte Director Barbara Palmer Department of Education Office of Early Learning	Every Florida Child is Ready to Learn and Succeed	2.1 Births to women with fewer than 12 years of education
		2.2 Children who are read to by their parents or relative caregivers
		2.3 Children whose kindergarten entry assessment scores show they are ready for school
		2.4 Early childhood staff with bachelor's degree
Secretary David Wilkins	Every Florida Child Lives in a Stable and Nurturing Family	3.1 Children in poverty
		3.2 Children who are maltreated
		3.3 Teen births
Justice Barbara Pariente Mr. Steven Uhlfelder	Every Florida Child Lives in a Safe and Supportive Community	4.1 Domestic Violence
		4.2 Homeless children
		4.3 Children in supportive neighborhoods

Additionally, the Cabinet agreed to maintain one existing workgroup and create four additional workgroups for 2013. They include:

- Community Services Delivery Models Workgroup - Chaired by Director Alan Abramowitz, Guardian ad Litem;
- Prevention Investment Strategy Workgroup - Co-Chaired by Secretary Wansley Walters, Department of Juvenile Justice and Director Barbara Palmer, Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
- Effective Early Childcare Delivery Workgroup - Co-Chaired by David Lawrence and the Commissioner of the Department of Education;

- Crossover Children Workgroup - Co-Chaired by Secretary Wansley Walters and Representative Gayle Harrell; and
- Intervening in At-Risk Cycle Workgroup - Co-Chaired by Secretary Elizabeth Dudek, Agency for Health Care Administration and Dr. Judy Schaechter.

Workgroups of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (as of November 2012)

Child Death Review Teams Workgroup

The Child Death Review Teams Workgroup (CDRTW) was formed in August 2011 as workgroup of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet. Chaired by Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Elizabeth Dudek, the CDRTW will assist the Cabinet in its efforts to focus on the consolidation of possibly duplicative or unutilized child death review processes. The goal is to maximize use of those processes identified as most effective.

To fulfill its charge, the CDRTW considered existing state data sources regarding child death as a means to evaluate existing processes for child death reviews, discussed ways to improve communication and collaboration across agencies regarding the investigation of child deaths and proposed ways to improve the response to the investigation of deaths.

The CDRTW members have reviewed an inventory of state government data sources on child death, their suitability to death reviews and other technical details such as storage method and potential for connectivity. The workgroup discussed statutory and structural obstacles to child death reviews, including timely access to information and data and duplicative parallel reviews. It was agreed that a master record of all state and local contacts/interventions with families and children would be an “ideal” tool for reviewers. The workgroup focused on ways to identify and consolidate informational resources in order to expedite and streamline death reviews.

The CDRTW is planning to meet again in mid-January to complete the review of proposed statutory language which would address requirements for child death reviews, the scope of such reviews and how the results of these reviews are used. Secretary Dudek will present these findings to the Children and Youth Cabinet early next year with the anticipation of submitting legislation for consideration during the 2013 Florida Legislative Session.

Children’s Budget Workgroup

The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet established a Children’s Budget Workgroup to oversee this initiative. The purpose of the Children’s Budget is to build a mechanism that would provide a high-level view of the extent to which budgeted state dollars would impact the outcomes and indicators identified as critical by the Cabinet. A well-crafted Children’s Budget would assist the Cabinet with:

- Uncovering funding disparities system-wide and across state agencies.
- Revealing opportunities to strengthen outcomes in areas lagging in funding.
- Determining whether Florida is serving its children in the most effective way.

Previously, the Cabinet identified the four headline indicators as priorities associated with children and youth well-being and selected accompanying indicators to measure program success.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection assumed the lead of the Children's Budget Workgroup with support from the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget. The focus of the workgroup includes:

- Advance the crosswalk of programs and services offered by agencies, aligned to the outcomes and indicators identified by the Cabinet.
- Create a delineation of funding sources (e.g., state general revenue, federal funding source, match requirements and sources, private sources) which will provide clarity in total budget funding.
- Identify benchmarks/child outcomes currently used by state agencies/national sources.
- Provide a high level view of the extent to which dollars have been budgeted to desired outcomes.
- Work with state level agencies to form the best method to collect the data.

This is a long-term project that will require a period of years to refine the process, solidify the definitions and develop reliable and valid reporting on the funding of programs and services statewide. As a result of the Strategic Planning Meeting, the tasks associated with this workgroup will be infused with the new Prevention Investment Strategy Workgroup.

Community Services Delivery Models Workgroup

The workgroup was created at the request of Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Chairman David Wilkins in August 2011. Chaired by Guardian ad Litem Executive Director Alan Abramowitz, the workgroup is identifying more efficient ways for local organizations to work together to maximize state and local resources and produce better outcomes for children and families. This includes recommending a framework to implement the statutory charge of a "shared strategic vision and child outcomes for an integrated delivery of children's services" as stated in the 2007 Strategic Plan of the Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida.

The workgroup includes members of the business community, child advocates and representatives from state agencies that serve children. Other experts in child welfare, advocacy groups and agencies provide technical assistance, as needed.

The Collaboration Workgroup produced a Summary Report containing a recommendation with six sub-parts for consideration by the full Children and Youth Cabinet.

Recommendations:

Florida benefits from numerous advisory/coordinating councils and workgroups focusing on meeting a range of needs across populations. To best ensure these groups, either designated by statute or by community leadership, achieve desired goals the workgroup sets forth this recommendation to assist the Cabinet in determining next steps.

1. By using the indicators set forth by the Cabinet, communities will organize and demonstrate how they will collectively work toward desired outcomes by eliminating duplication and seeking efficiencies in service delivery using proven or promising practices driven by data.
2. The Cabinet shall create a Barrier Buster Workgroup comprised of staff from each of the Cabinet member agencies to be charged with providing support and guidance to communities on barriers to efficient and effective community planning including strategies for effectively integrating funding streams to expand services and identify efficiencies.
3. The Cabinet shall create a Florida Master Plan Workgroup comprised of staff from each of the Cabinet member agencies to be charged with developing the criteria for the creation of one comprehensive plan to be used by all local organizations that receive state and federal funds for children, youth and family support services that have reporting requirements mandated by the state through a back bone organization.

4. The Cabinet's statutory language shall be amended to grant the Cabinet the specific authority to issue waivers to community organizations to relieve the requirements of certain mandated state reports.
5. The Cabinet shall create a common identifier for children that is universal across all state agencies resulting in efficiencies including costs savings and streamlined processes of data collection and sharing.
6. The Cabinet shall identify innovation zones in communities across Florida to demonstrate the effectiveness of community planning in each of the following areas: prenatal to 8, age 9 through graduation and successful transition to higher education/employment/military service, and tertiary support systems.

The workgroup presents this recommendation for the full consideration by the Cabinet. Upon direction from the Cabinet, members of the merged workgroup stand ready to continue assisting in the development of the second phase of this effort. The merged workgroup is committed to the full realization of statewide cost-effective, efficient and streamlined community service delivery models through the application of the concepts presented in this framework approach.

Human Trafficking Workgroup

In August 2011, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Chairman David Wilkins selected Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Wansley Walters to lead a newly created Human Trafficking Workgroup. This initiative continues to be critical, considering that:

- Florida has the third highest call volume to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center;
- From January to October of 2012 alone, 546 Florida youth were reported as potential human trafficking victims to the Florida Child Abuse Hotline;
- From 2009-2011, more than 627 Florida children were reported as potential human trafficking victims to the Florida Child Abuse Hotline and 86 children were confirmed as victims.
- In the last half of 2011, 19 cases of child trafficking were confirmed in Broward County and 15 of those cases had some level of Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) involvement.
- 503 Florida children were charged with prostitution between 1998 and 2008, just in Miami.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery which affects children, adults, citizens, residents and foreign nationals alike. A complex issue, human trafficking is generally categorized as either sex trafficking or labor trafficking. This past year, the workgroup focused on the intricate issue of child sex trafficking in Florida. The workgroup hopes to expand this focus in the future.

On Monday, September 24, 2012, more than 250 concerned state and community leaders and advocates attended the first Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC) Human Trafficking Summit to learn about sex trafficking in Florida, what the state is doing to prevent it and what people can do to help victims in their own communities. Another 300 individuals participated in the live online webcast of the event. The CYC Human Trafficking workgroup is planning the second Summit, to occur in Fall of 2013.

In promotion of Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January 2013, the Workgroup is hosting an interagency public awareness campaign that will consist of a joint press conference, gubernatorial proclamation, and ribbon campaign at the Capitol. The Workgroup is partnering with the Florida League of Cities to assist mayors and local task forces in conducting their own public awareness campaigns and proclamations, mirroring the Capitol's efforts. Regional Department of Children and Families staff are meeting with local law enforcement agencies to discuss implementation of the Safe Harbor Act and develop coordinated responses in cases where law enforcement would deliver Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children victims to Department of Children and Families in lieu of arrest.

The Department of Juvenile Justice, in conjunction with Shared Hope International, provided full day trainings in Broward and Miami-Dade counties, which equipped attendees to recognize risk factors of exploited youth and properly use Shared Hope International's INTERVENE tool to identify victimization. To date, approximately 130 key Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families, and service provider staff have been trained. The third training will occur in Orange County in January 2013, and approximately 100 additional staff will be trained.

Between September and December 2012 three 3-day train-the-trainer sessions on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children were held; two in Miami and one in Tampa. Over 130 staff from the Department of Children and Families and its partner agencies were trained. These trainees are now certified to provide Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children training to others throughout the state. Participants included Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies and full case management agencies, mental health providers, and others.

Department of Children and Families Operating Procedure 175-14 – Intakes and Investigative Response to the Human Trafficking of Children was revised to incorporate requirements of the Safe Harbor Act. The operating procedure has been distributed to all parties involved in child investigations. Training is underway and will be completed by December 31, 2012. An update of the workgroup's activities will be presented to the Cabinet early next year with the anticipation of activities becoming operational within and amongst the state agencies.

Interagency Background Screening Workgroup

During 2012, the Interagency Background Screening Workgroup developed a legislative proposal coming from the recommendations that were in the report to the Governor. The recommendations were incorporated into HB 943 (SB 320 in the Senate), which was subsequently passed by the Florida Legislature. One of the main provisions of the legislation was the creation of a Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse to be housed at the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). This clearinghouse would allow certain social service agencies to share screening results. The clearinghouse is currently in the development stage. The work of the Interagency Background Screening Workgroup has been completed. AHCA and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement continue to work with agencies that will become part of the clearinghouse for its implementation.

Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup

In April 2012, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Chairman David Wilkins appointed Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte to Chair the Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup. The cross-agency workgroup included staff from each of the agencies represented on the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet. The workgroup developed an integrated process and framework to address needs of children who are served by multiple state agencies at the local, regional and state levels. An agreement was created and provides examples of agency responsibilities as they relate to community and residential services. The agreement was signed by all agency heads at the October 2012 Cabinet meeting in Miami, FL. Ongoing effort will focus on implementation and progress monitoring to be shared with the Cabinet throughout the course of 2013.

Technology Collaboration Workgroup

In December 2011, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Chairman David Wilkins appointed Director Mike Hansen, Agency for Persons with Disabilities to Chair the Technology Collaboration Workgroup. The cross-agency workgroup analyzed the status of information sharing in Florida and performed a feasibility study to provide direction to the Cabinet on the data and information sharing system.

The Technology Collaboration Workgroup determined that the system did not have the capabilities that the Cabinet agencies needed in order to track the children in their care. The proposal of the Technology Collaboration Workgroup for the Cabinet's approval was: 1) cancel the contract to the Northwest Regional Data Center (NWRDC), 2) refund any remaining dollars to the appropriate agency, and 3) set up an inter-agency data sharing agreement. The Cabinet approved these recommendations at their January 2012 meeting. The Technology Collaboration Workgroup continued to work with agencies to assess their data sharing needs. The Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup was created during the April 2012 meeting to be chaired by Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte. At the July 2012 Children and Youth Cabinet meeting Director Hansen made a recommendation to have the Technology Collaboration Workgroup become a sub workgroup of the Multi-System Children and Youth Workgroup. During the 2012 Strategic Planning Meeting, efforts of this workgroup will be infused into the Crossover Children Workgroup.

Initiatives of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

Headline Indicators on Child Well-being

The mission of the Cabinet is to improve the well-being of Florida's children and their families. Through the leadership of the Cabinet during 2012, Florida had established a priority focus on four headline indicators from the 13 key child well-being indicators that the Cabinet identified as most important. The Cabinet has made a commitment to target its efforts and resources in these areas in order to improve Florida outcomes related to these indicators. The four areas of focus and their headline indicators are:

1. **Every Florida child is healthy** as measured by the headline indicator of children with health insurance.
2. **Every Florida child is ready to learn and succeed** as measured by the headline indicator of children whose kindergarten entry assessment scores show they are ready for school.
3. **Every Florida child has a stable and nurturing family** as measured by the headline indicator of child maltreatment (abuse and neglect).
4. **Every Florida child lives in a safe and supportive community** as measured by the headline indicator of homeless children.

The Children's Summit Workgroup provided the Cabinet in 2009 with *The State of Florida's Child Report*, from which the 13 key indicators originated. The report provides an objective knowledge base to support the Cabinet in its mission to improve outcomes for our state's children and families, and provides data and information from which the Cabinet can move toward its stated goal of promoting increased efficiency and improved service delivery by all government agencies that provide services for children and their families in Florida. The baseline data in the report closely relates to indicators (or outcomes) shown by research to signify child well-being or improvement in child well-being. These indicators may be used to form a "results based" framework leading to shared goals and a cohesive vision for child and youth outcomes. Ultimately, the results framework can and should be linked to resources and state budgets. The report's organization intentionally aligns with the Cabinet's 2007 Guiding Principles.

The State of Florida's Child Report is a starting point, and the report provides a foundation for the Cabinet to focus state work and create the "cohesive vision" as stated in the Cabinet's strategic plan. The report is provided as a tool to help create meaningful ways to improve child well-being outcomes and evaluate results.

During 2012, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection lead the implementation of the action plan for "Every Florida child has a stable and nurturing family." In July 2010, the Office launched the five-year plan to prevent child maltreatment at the state and local levels. The five-year plan seeks to build the capacity for Floridians to prevent child maltreatment before it ever occurs. The plan is currently in its third year of implementation, and was revised in June 2012. Florida's five-year child maltreatment prevention strategies focus on building resilience in Florida families through *Protective Factors*.

As a result of the Strategic Planning Meeting, the Cabinet restructured the approach to the headline indicators. Instead of focusing on four headline indicators identified by the original Cabinet, the Cabinet decided to have Cabinet members lead each of the focus areas and their corresponding headline indicators. Progress will be communicated to the Cabinet throughout the course of 2013.

State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care

In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 et seq.), Congress authorized the Governor of each State to designate or establish a State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care (State Advisory Council). The overall responsibility of the State Advisory Council is to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness.

The purpose of the State Advisory Council is to lead the development of a high-quality, comprehensive system of early childhood education for children ages birth to five that ensures statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide array of early childhood education programs and services in the state, including Head Start, child care, and Pre-Kindergarten. Through partnerships across agencies and organizations that work on behalf of young children and their families, the goal of the State Advisory Council is that at the end of three years, Florida will have a stronger, more responsive, and more integrated early childhood system. Children and families will receive more coordinated, responsive services, and funding will support these priorities. To support Florida and other states in meeting established goals, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) solicited applications to carry out the activities of the State Advisory Council. The funding opportunity was a non-competitive, collaborative, three-year grant to assist states in establishing an Advisory Council and to initiate creative infrastructure improvement projects. Florida received a grant and has accomplished several milestones.

In addition to completing the federal requirements of the grant, the State Advisory Council serves as an advisory council to inform the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet on issues related to early care and education. The State Advisory Council met eight times in 2012, three meetings were in conjunction with Florida Children and Youth Cabinet meetings.

The following grant activities were initiated or completed in 2012:

The Early Education and Care Workforce Study Request for Proposal was procured and awarded in 2012. The final report will be completed by first quarter 2013. The overall goal of the Workforce Study is to make recommendations to improve professional development pathways and opportunities for teachers of young children. Results of the early education and care workforce study will be used to assess and develop policies and programs related to professional development initiatives. Results of the study will also help improve access and availability of training, education and career advising opportunities for teachers in their efforts to advance in the field. The collected information will become a critical component in ensuring that the Florida's early learning system is inclusive of, and accessible to, all types of providers offering a variety of programs.

The Early Education and Care Needs Assessment Request for Proposal was procured pending completed contract. Anticipated date to begin work is first quarter 2013. The Early Education and Care Needs Assessment will provide data that allows the state to identify gaps and opportunities and to make data-driven decisions to prioritize areas and develop recommendations to improve or sustain supports, services, and policies pertaining to Florida's early learning system.

Georgetown University Adaptive leadership training for State Advisory Council members and Children and Youth Cabinet members was held October 29th and 30th. The training addressed the framework, skills,

and tools necessary to support families and professionals in their roles as leaders in the adaptive work of systems change. Key topics covered during the training included:

- Re-engaging your sense of purpose and direction;
- Shaping a unifying vision in culturally diverse environments;
- Acting strategically by learning key leadership behaviors and effectively supporting the change process;
- Identifying leadership partners and building formal and informal leadership networks;
- Facilitating the alignment of diverse perspectives and achieving common ground;
- Understanding the distinction between authority and leadership and balancing risk with courage and resiliency;
- Fostering an environment for change by building a culture of trust and safety where differences emerge and conflicts are well managed;
- Developing a personal leadership action plan utilizing the Adaptive Leadership Framework and the Leadership Practices Inventory.

Parental Engagement initiative is in development. The goal of the initiative is to increase communication, networking, and support system enhancement between parents, early learning coalitions, and child care providers by building parent engagement through parent leadership initiatives within the early learning communities.

Obesity initiative in partnership with Nemours is in development with an anticipated start date of March 2013.

Funding was appropriated for the Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) project. The CLASS™ is an observation based program assessment instrument that measures teacher-child interactions in three broad domains: emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. It describes multiple dimensions of teaching that are linked to student achievement and social development. Research shows that the quality of teacher-child interactions has a direct and positive impact on child outcomes and the quality of early learning programs. The CLASS™ has been validated in thousands of classrooms and is used to support research, monitoring, evaluation, and professional development efforts nationwide. The CLASS™ is voluntary for providers in the State of Florida.

A Request for Proposal has been awarded to Teachstone Training, LLC., who was selected as the contractor to provide CLASS™ observer training, train the trainer training, in-depth CLASS™ assessment training with access to the CLASS™ video library for coaches, and observer calibration services for a two year period. The purpose of this contract is to create, support and sustain CLASS™ observers, CLASS™ trainers and CLASS™ coaches statewide in an efficient and cost effective manner. CLASS™ observers will be utilized by early learning coalitions and Head Start grantees to assess school readiness programs using the CLASS™ assessment instrument. CLASS™ trainers will be used to sustain Florida's CLASS™ observer capacity in a reliable and cost effective manner. CLASS™ coaches will be used throughout the state to provide technical assistance to school readiness teachers in need of improving CLASS™ assessment scores. Calibration services will ensure CLASS™ observers achieve and maintain reliability. Purchasing these services is expected to create a unified statewide program assessment system that will result in improved school readiness programs and positive outcomes for children.

Work has continued on professional development and training including:

- 57 Scholarships for the Florida Family Child Care Home Association conference held June 19-24, 2012 in Clearwater Beach Florida. The conference goal was to promote and encourage quality professional family child care.
- 309 Scholarships for the Partnering for Success Collaborative Symposium held November 14 – 16, 2012. The Symposium was a collaborative training event between Florida's Early Steps, Florida's Office of Early Learning, and Florida's Head Start State Collaboration Office.

The State Advisory Council's efforts build on Florida's focus on improving child well-being through enhancing investments in young children, developing systems that support children and families, and developing innovative strategies to improve opportunities for our youngest citizens. The State of Florida will continue to use grant funding to improve coordination and collaboration between state agencies, local organizations, and other stakeholder groups of the child well-being system in the state.

Youth Commission

The Youth Commission is made up of 12 young adults from around the state. The first of its kind in Florida, the first class of Youth Commissioners convened in October 2011, and began to lay the foundation for future Commissioners. This young group of individuals works closely with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection to ensure that the Commission advises the Cabinet on youth issues.

The Youth Commission's first appointed and completed task was to create and finalize a set of operational guidelines and bylaws that future Youth Commissions would follow. This task was completed by the Commissioners, with assistance from the Gubernatorial Fellows.

The Florida Gubernatorial Fellows is a partner with the Florida Youth Commission, and the Fellows believe that the best way to ensure Florida's greatness is to actively educate and cultivate its future leaders. The Fellows have taken on the Youth Commission as one of their projects for the current class and nine-month tenure, and have made the decision to keep the Youth Commission as one of their projects for future classes who come through the program.

The Youth Commission has collaborated with youth across the United States to set up the first Presidential Youth Council in the US. The Florida Youth Commission was recently recognized for its efforts and collaboration with national and state leaders for this accomplishment. The Youth Commission participated in the 2012 "Teens Only Town Hall" and Human Trafficking Awareness Press Conference with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet as well as attended and presented at three Cabinet meetings. They have developed logo and slogan to go along with the Youth Commission – "YC", "Youth Connected".

The Youth Commission also worked on engaging youth throughout Florida by as well as developed and maintained an active Facebook page – www.facebook.com/floridayouthcommission. They have drafted a Youth Advocacy Toolkit to be released in January 2013. The toolkit will be distributed online and is designed for students wishing to get involved in their communities and find opportunities and ways to make a difference in the lives of others. The Commissioners developed "Youth Surveys" designed to determine how easy it was for youth to "get involved" and "get connected" to advocacy and volunteer opportunities in their communities. They organized dozens of "youth leadership" meetings with youth leadership and key stakeholders who have existing youth leadership programs operating in Florida.

Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council was created in 2006 in Florida Statutes 14.31. State leadership felt increased involvement of faith-based and community organizations were not a substitute for necessary public funding of services to individuals, families and communities in need. They believed that public expenditures without the involvement of these groups limit the effectiveness of government investments. The cost effectiveness of public expenditures can be improved when government is focused on results and public-private partnerships are used to leverage the talent, commitment and resources of faith-based and community organizations. The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council shall consist of 25 members and is established and assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor. Members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House.

During the 2010 legislative session, the Sunset requirement for the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council was repealed through legislation sponsored by Senator Mike Bennett and Representative Clay Ford. In October 2011, the Executive Office of the Governor made a decision to move the administrative functions and support for the Council to the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection.

Below is a table of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council membership as well as their areas of representation as of December 2012.

Table 2. Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council Membership	
Governor’s Appointees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Lukasik, 4KIDS of South Florida, Chairman, Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council • Sheila Hopkins, Florida Catholic Conference, Vice Chair, Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council • Pastor Kirt Anderson, Naples Community Church • Charles Bender, Place of Hope • Julie Boyd, Florida Baptist Children’s Home • Reverend Stephen Hogan, Chets Creek Church • Dr. Leonel Mesa, Reflections Wellness Center • Matthew McCluskey, GoTo Nations • Imam Muhammad Musri, Islamic Society of Central Florida • Cherron Newby • Rabbi Schneur Oirechman, Chabad of the Panhandle • Pam Olsen, International House of Prayer • Pastor Carl Reeves, Greater Mount Lily Baptist Church • Vacant • Vacant • Vacant
Senate President Appointees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbi Sholom Ciment, Chabad-Lubavitch of Greater Boynton • Elizabeth Barbella, House of Hope • Vacant • Vacant
Speaker of the House Appointees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaplain James Perry Davis, Christ to Inmates • Jay Polachek • Samuel Sipes, President, Lutheran Services Florida, Inc. • Pastor Reno Zunz, Idlewild Baptist Church

Although Federal officials are creating a more supportive environment for public/private partnerships, challenges remain on both sides. Many faith-based and community organizations lack access to information about availability of public funding. Since local agencies are responsible for most of the outlay of resources, there is a need to facilitate better communication to organizations at a local level. Many faith-based and community organizations lack the administrative capacity to effectively partner with public agencies. Many state agencies are not aware of the resources that faith-based and community groups can utilize to improve the effectiveness of local service delivery. Complex accounting, financial and program reporting overwhelm the administrative capacity of these smaller organizations. Uncertainty of the “uncharted territory” has led some faith-based organizations to fear collaboration with public agencies. State leadership continues to be necessary to facilitate better collaborations between government and these organizations.

2012 Meetings of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

Four meetings were held during 2012 as described below.

March 29 – Enterprise. The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council heard updates on the 2012 Legislative Session, as well as Governor Rick Scott and First Lady Ann Scott’s initiatives. The Advisory Council discussed their 2012 Annual Report, which was included in the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection’s 2011 Annual Report to streamline efficiencies. Presentations were provided on the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council’s website as well as the Church United Project. The Department of Corrections also presented their initiatives and how the faith community supports the work of the department.

June 14 – Jacksonville. An update was provided by the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council’s Education Committee as well as the Department of Juvenile Justice on their annual faith symposium. The Department of Elder Affairs presented on their agency’s role and how faith communities can volunteer and support the elderly. The Youth Commission presented the history and overview of the Commission and what their initiatives are. Presentations were also heard regarding Safe Families, Florida’s Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan, Operation Strong Families, and *Explore Adoption*.

August 28 – Video Teleconference. The Advisory Council heard a presentation about the Department of Children and Families foster care initiative, Fostering Florida’s Future. An update was provided to the Advisory Council on the National Faith Symposium. Additionally, Operation Strong Families and *Explore Adoption* updates were presented to the Advisory Council.

October 23 – Orlando. Several presentations were made to the Advisory Council, including: upcoming legislative amendments, Operation Strong Families, Florida’s Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan, and National Adoption Month. The Advisory Council also discussed a proposed action framework and voted to hold a Strategic Planning Session in mid-January 2013 to assess and align the goals of the Advisory Council and its members with council duties as outlined in Florida Statutes.

Current Work of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

In September 2012, the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection began reaching out to each Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council member to schedule phone conference calls to see beyond written words and capture the true perspective of each individual.

Each conversation was focused to obtain their insight and feedback regarding the following topics:

- Accomplishments of the Advisory Council during the past year.
- The barriers/challenges faced by the Advisory Council.
- The focus of the Advisory Council moving forward.
- Willingness to lead a workgroup to accomplish one or more of the Advisory Council's priorities/initiatives.

The responses from the Advisory Council members that were able to speak to the Director were as varied as the members. A common theme throughout the conversations was that the Advisory Council seemed to lack focus and direction. All Advisory Council members stated they would be willing to lead a workgroup or would help in any way they can once there is a clear direction/purpose for the work the Advisory Council will perform.

In order to initiate action amongst the Advisory Council, a modified project management framework was proposed that can provide structure and organization to the Advisory Council. This framework establishes a point person, a project manager, who will be responsible for an initiative/priority (i.e.: project). The project manager will take ownership for the project and work with the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, and other Council members to establish goals, objectives, outcomes, and monitor project performance.

The project manager will also work with state and local agencies to engage faith organizations throughout the state to build relationships, share ideas and best practices, and develop a statewide network of support.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, along with the Advisory Council Leadership, will serve as the project sponsor. The project sponsor is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication with the project managers, providing strategies, and identifying resources to ensure the project is completed and successful.

At the October 2012 Advisory Council meeting, the Council voted to:

- Keep Tom Lukasik as Chairman and Sheila Hopkins as Vice Chairman for 2013;
- Have a Strategic Planning Session in mid-January 2013 to create direction and focus for the Advisory Council;
- Begin documenting ideas and strategies to be sent to the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in regards to the direction of the Advisory Council;
- Discuss the idea of conducting regional forums at the Council strategic planning session;
- Identify other faith and community leaders to possibly join the Advisory Council; and
- Include the annual report for the Advisory Council in the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection's annual report due by December 31, 2012.

The Council will continue to partner with the State of Florida by enlisting the assistance of faith-based and community-based organizations to volunteer with various state agencies and their service providers in an effort to help improve outcomes for Florida's children and families.

Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency

Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council

In accordance with §39.001(8)(b)1, FS, the Office of Adoption and Child Protection within the Executive Office of the Governor established a Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council. As of December 2012, the Advisory Council is comprised of thirty (30) child and family welfare experts gathered from across Florida. In order to better serve the people of Florida, the membership exceeds the minimum requirements of twenty-three (23) representatives as set forth in Florida Statutes. The following table provides for the membership and the areas of representation on the Advisory Council as of December 2012.

Table 3. Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council Membership

AREA OF REPRESENTATION	COUNCIL MEMBER
01. Chair/ Convener , EOG – Exec. Office of the Governor	Zackary Gibson , Director, Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Executive Office of the Governor
02. DCF – Dept. of Children and Families	Patricia Armstrong, LCSW , Director, Office of Child Welfare, Department of Children and Families
03. DOC – Dept. of Corrections	Jennifer Parker , General Counsel, Department of Corrections
04. DOE – Dept. of Education	Mary Jane Tappen , Deputy Chancellor, Curriculum, Instruction and Student Services, Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education
05. DOH – Dept. of Health	Peggy Scheuermann, MEd, CPM , Deputy Division Director, Prevention and Interventions, Child Protection & Special Technology, Children’s Medical Services, Department of Health
06. DJJ – Dept. of Juvenile Justice	Andy Hindman , Director, Faith and Community Based Partnerships, Office of Prevention and Victim Services, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
07. DLE – Dept. of Law Enforcement	Terry Thomas , Special Agent, Crimes Against Children Unit, Florida Department of Law Enforcement
08. APD – Agency for Persons with Disabilities	Mac McCoy, MA, BCBA , Operations Officer, Agency for Persons with Disabilities
09. OEL – Office of Early Learning	Lisa Billups , Director, State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care, Office of Early Learning
10. Parent with adopted child	Deborah Polston , Adoptive Parent
11. Community mental health centers	Leonel “Leo” Mesa, Jr., PsyD, LMHC , President/CEO, Reflections Wellness Center
12. Guardian ad Litem	Alan Abramowitz, JD , Executive Director, Statewide Guardian ad Litem
13. School boards	Georgia “Joy” Bowen, MEd , Past President, Florida School Boards Assoc.
14. Florida local advocacy council	(Vacant) <i>This function was defunded by the 2009 Legislature. The person filling this position left at the end of the 2009 – 2010 State Fiscal Year.</i>
15. Community-based care lead agencies	Patricia “Trish” Nellius-Guthrie, PhD , CEO, Community Based Care of Brevard, Inc.
16. Private/ public child abuse prevention programs	Anita Odom , Director, Prevent Child Abuse Florida
17. Private/ public programs working with children/ families of children who are abused, abandoned or neglected	Andrea Raasch, LCSW , Clinical Coordinator, Sexual Abuse Treatment Services, Children’s Medical Services, Florida Department of Health
18. Private/ public programs with expertise in maternal and infant health care	Donna Hagan , Executive Director, Healthy Start Coalition of Jefferson, Madison and Taylor Counties, Inc.
19. Multi-disciplinary child protection teams	Mark Perlman, MA , Founder and President, Center for Growth and Development
20. Child day care centers: Federal/State representation	Lilli Copp , Director, Head Start State Collaboration Office

AREA OF REPRESENTATION	COUNCIL MEMBER
21. Child day care centers: FLAEYC representation	Suzanne Gellens, MS , Executive Director, Florida Association for the Education of Young Children
22. Law enforcement agencies	Connie Shingledecker , Major, Investigative Bureau Chief, Manatee County Sheriff's Office
23. Circuit courts	Daniel Dawson, JD , Circuit Judge, Ninth Judicial Circuit
24. Office of Adoption and Child Protection	Christina Pacelle, MSW , Special Projects Manager, Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Executive Office of the Governor
25. Child advocate/community philanthropy	Graciela "Graci" McGillicuddy , Child Advocate and Community Philanthropist
26. Children's advocacy center	Julie Hurst, MPA , Executive Director, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. <i>(Also affiliated w/Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers)</i>
27. Community alliance	Marilyn "Bunny" Finney , Brevard Children's Services Council and Member, Brevard County Children's Cabinet, Brevard County Community Alliance, and the Brevard County Charter Review Commission
28. Local children's cabinet	Vacant
29. Medical doctor, university researcher, children's services council	Peter A. Gorski, MD, MPA , Chief Health and Child Development Officer, The Children's Trust
30. State court administration	Sandy Neidert, MSW , Senior Court Operations Consultant, Office of the State Courts Administrator, Office of Court Improvement
31. Faith-based and community-based efforts	Sheila Hopkins , Associate Director for Social Concerns/ Respect Life, Florida Catholic Conference, Chairman, Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

Statutory Charge to the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council

In accordance with §39.001(8)(b)1, FS, the Advisory Council members:

- Served as a research arm for the Office of Adoption and Child Protection.
- Assisted in the development of 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.
- Assisted 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 (circuit) plans and to provide for greater ease in compiling information for the state plan.
- Provided the districts (circuits) with technical assistance in the development of local plans of action.
- Assisted in the examination of the local plans to determine if all the requirements of the local plans have been met and informed the districts (circuits) of the deficiencies and requested additional information needed.
- Assisted in the preparation of the two sets of state plans for submission to the Legislature and the Governor in December 2008 and June 2010.

Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council Efforts

The *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* was submitted to the Governor, the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in June 2010, launched in July 2010, and revised and re-launched in July 2012.

The importance of a five-year plan for prevention of child maltreatment, promotion of adoption, and support of adoptive families is underscored by the great and increasing need of Florida's children for safe and stable families and communities. The plan was prepared by the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, with the input and guidance of the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency

Advisory Council, local planning teams representing Florida's 20 judicial circuits, and hundreds of professionals and stakeholders from across Florida. The plan has identified mechanisms and systems for implementing predominately low-cost and no-cost strategies to:

- Increase the stability and resiliency of Florida families through the infusion of *Protective Factors*.
- Better support the needs of the thousands of families that have adopted and will be adopting Florida's most vulnerable citizens.

Local Planning for Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency

In September 2007, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection initiated the local planning process in each of the twenty (20) circuits with leadership from the state level. These circuits are aligned geographically with the judicial and Department of Children and Families circuits. The representation on these local planning teams was consistent with the make-up of the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council. At a minimum, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection ensured that the team membership requirements of §39.001, FS were met. Over 600 people around the state worked on developing the local plans of action. The local planning teams developed their five-year plans based on the *Five-Year Local Planning Process Outline, VI.2* developed by the Office with input from the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council. The five-year local plans developed by the circuit teams are incorporated into the state's five-year state plan the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. The Governor's website provides electronic copies of the current state and local plans: http://www.flgov.com/child_advocacy.

Monthly Local Planning Team Convener Meetings via Conference Call

Conference calls were initiated in November 2007, and were held monthly through December 2012. Those participating on the calls included: the planning team conveners, key contacts, all interested members of the local planning teams, Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection staff members, Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council members, State Objective Leads and their staff, and Department of Children and Families staff members. These monthly meetings were to address questions and discuss information that would assist with the plan implementation. During the conference calls the local planning team conveners shared treasures from their community, best practices, and innovative ways to reach out and partner with their communities through their five-year plan implementation. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection provided those on the conference call updates on the work of the Office, including: the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and its workgroups, the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council, Operation Strong Families, *Explore Adoption*, and work with the Forum for Youth Investment.

In addition to the monthly conference calls with the local planning team conveners, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection also provided individual technical assistance and support when requested by the local planning team conveners. The points of contact for the local planning teams as of December 2012 are provided in the following table.

Table 4. Local Planning Team Leadership and Key Contacts

CIRCUIT	POINTS OF CONTACT FOR EACH CIRCUIT'S LOCAL PLANNING TEAM
1 Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	Janice Thomas , Circuit 1 Administrator, DCF Randall N. Fleming , Relations Consultant, DCF Circuit 1 Kathy Guy , Manager, DCF Circuit 1 Phyllis Gonzalez , Consultant
2 Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla	Jeanna Olson , Circuit 2 Community Development Administrator
3 Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor	Janet Romero , Community Development Administrator, DCF Circuits 3 & 8 Morgan Rockey , Community Relations Consultant, DCF Circuits 3 & 8
4 Clay, Duval, Nassau	Bryan Hensley , Operations Manager, DCF Circuit 4 Jackie Green , Community Relations Consultant, DCF Circuit 4
5 Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter	Philip Scarpelli , Acting Regional Community Development Director, DCF Central Region Ann Doyle , Program Director, Devereux Kids
6 Pasco, Pinellas	Lourdes Benedict , Regional Operations Manager, DCF Circuit 6 Kelly Rossi , Prevention Supervisor, Eckerd Community Alternatives
7 Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia	Arnold Anderson , Community Development Administrator, DCF Circuit 7 Clay LaRoche , Community Relations Consultant, DCF Circuit 7 Betsy Lewis , Operations Manager, DCF Circuit 7 Danielle McBee , Program Operations Administrator, Community Partnership for Children
8 Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union	Janet Romero , Community Development Administrator, DCF Circuits 3 & 8 Morgan Rockey , Community Relations Consultant, DCF Circuits 3 & 8
9 Orange, Osceola	Kimberly Grabert , MPA, CPM, Community Development Administrator, DCF Circuit 9 Stacey Dano , Director of Operations, Family Services of Metro Orlando Joy Chuba , Exec. Director, Children's Advisory Council for Osceola County, Inc.
10 Hardee, Highlands, Polk	Julia Hermelbracht , Community Development Administrator, DCF Circuit 10 Kim Daughtery , Chief Community Relations Officer, Heartland for Children Kathy Graydon , Director of Education and Community Relations, Heartland for Children
11 Miami Dade	Antonio Wagner , Community and Resource Development Director, DCF Circuit 11
12 Desoto, Manatee, Sarasota	Brena Slater , Regional Operations Manager, DCF Circuit 12 Maureen Coble , Director of Quality Management, YMCA Family, Inc. Andrea Mertyris , Quality Management Specialist, Sarasota Family YMCA
13 Hillsborough	Jan Gregory , Deputy Regional Director, SunCoast Region, DCF Brian McEwen , Associate Director, Child Abuse Council, Inc. Jessie Rogers , Diversion Supervisor, Hillsborough Kids Inc.
14 Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington	Courtney Peel , Administrator, DCF Circuit 14
15 Palm Beach	Marsha Guthrie , Child Abuse Prevention Manager, CSC Palm Beach County Toby Pina , Director of Clinical Services, Child and Family Connections
16 Monroe	Amy Baldree , Program Administrator, Child Protective Investigations and Adult and Aging, DCF Circuit 16 Joan Berni , Operations Management Consultant I, DCF Circuit 16
17 Broward	Monica King , Resource and Systems Manager, CSC of Broward County Yasmin Mendoza , LMHC, Specialized Adoption Supervisor, ChildNet
18 Brevard, Seminole	Heather Howlett , OPS Management Consultant II, DCF Circuit 18
19 Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie	Cheri Sheffer , Community Relations Consultant, DCF Circuit 19
20 Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee	Aaron Stitt , Operations Manager, DCF Circuit 20 Karen Turcotte , Director, Staff Development, Children's Network of Southwest Florida

Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

The central focus of *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* is to build resilience in all of Florida's families and communities in order to equip them to better care for and nurture their children. In accordance with the State law (§39.001, Florida Statutes), the five-year prevention and permanency plan provides for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families.

The plan was developed with the guidance and input of 166 planning partners representing 107 organizations and agencies, the 33 member Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council and the Local Planning Teams for the 20 Florida Circuits. The vision, mission, overarching goal and desired results of the plan are:

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 Population-Level Results of Plan Implementation

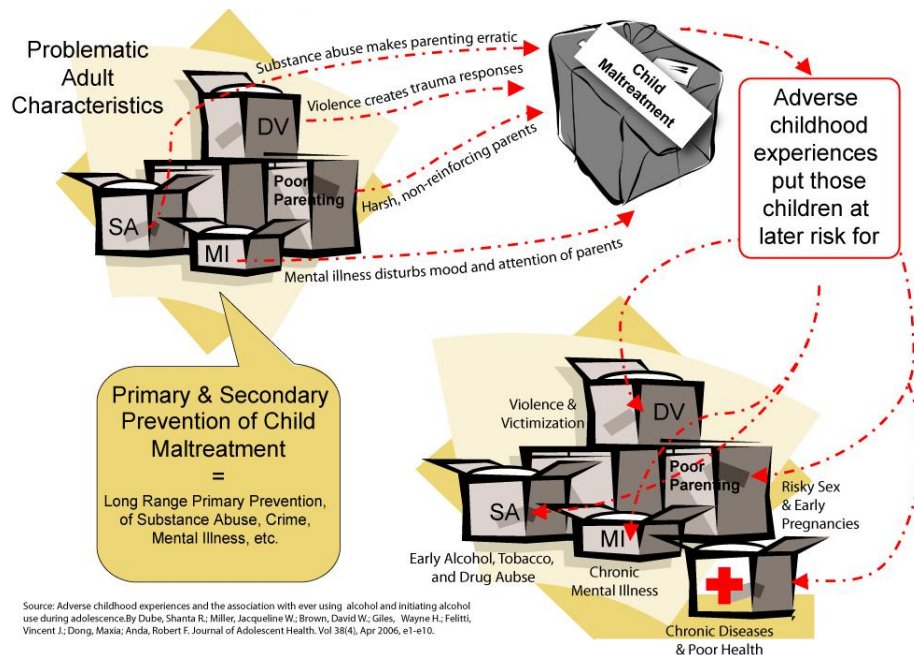
- 1. Child Maltreatment Prevention** – By June 30, 2015, the verified findings of child abuse rate will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 statewide rate of 10.94 per 1,000 children.
- 2. Promotion of Adoption** – By June 30, 2015, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 66.4 percent.
- 3. Promotion of Adoption** – By June 30, 2015, 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 State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 53.19 percent.
- 4. Support of Adoptive Families** – By June 30, 2015, the annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 number of 98.

Research Guiding Plan Development

Recent research has identified the physical and mental conditions increasingly being associated with adverse childhood experiences, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Neurologic imaging and traumatology studies have delineated the chronic physiologic and structural changes that occur after chronic stress and abuse (De Bellis, 2005; Eluvathingal et al., 2006). Chronic stress and abuse are also associated with specific disease processes and poor mental health outcomes in adults. These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been associated with increased rates of teen pregnancy, promiscuity, depression, hallucinations, substance abuse, liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary artery disease, and identifiable permanent changes in brain structure and stress hormone function (Anda et al., 2002; Dube et al., 2003; Felitti et al., 1998; Middlebrooks et al., 2008). The National Research Council (1993) and others studied clinical conditions associated with abuse and neglect, including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and conduct disorders, all of which compound any direct physical injuries inflicted on individual children. Associated trauma and increased risk of low academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminology were also noted. Although treatment after the fact can improve mental and physical health and prolong life and productivity, the direct and indirect costs of child maltreatment for both children and adults in lost health, pain, and suffering themselves warrant our taking action to prevent child abuse and neglect.

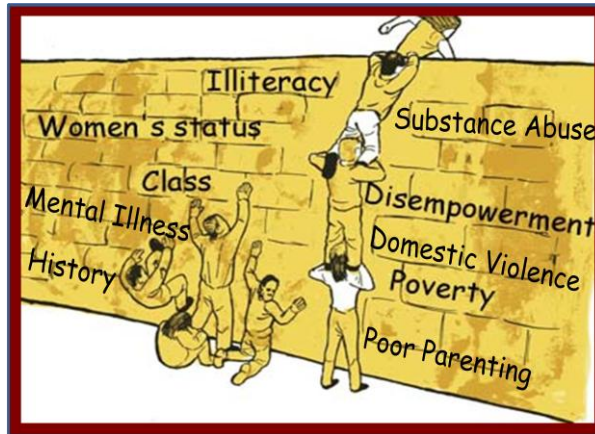
We as a nation, state, and communities are confronted with the problems of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. The Centers for Disease Control have declared child maltreatment to be the largest public health threat that we face today. Early adverse experiences put children at risk. Problematic adult characteristics may result in child maltreatment and these adverse experiences put those children at risk for poor child well-being which in turn predisposes them to engage in the very problematic adult characteristics that will put their own children at risk. The underlying causes are complex. They include such things as poor health, social isolation, poor academic performance, mental health issues, history of abuse or neglect, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness, poor parenting, and on and on. The federal government, state government, local governments and communities invest millions in response to these problems which, being complex and slow to eradicate will be with our communities, families and children for some time to come.

Diagram 1. Early Experiences Put Children at Risk



The means for building family resilience was developed through research and application efforts of the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The Center developed a research effort based upon the *Positive Deviance Premise* that in every community there are certain individuals whose uncommon practices and behaviors enable them to find better solutions to problems than their neighbors who have access to the same resources. As discussed in the peer reviewed *British Medical Journal* (Marsh et al., 2004), although most problems like these have complex, interlinked underlying causes, the presence of Positive Deviants demonstrates that it is possible to find successful solutions today before all the underlying causes are addressed.

Diagram 2. Positive Deviance



Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that there *Protective Factors* that make a difference for families. When families experience the stressors that are highly correlated with child maltreatment, some families maltreat their children and others do not. The Center found that in the homes that do not maltreat their children, although they are experiencing the same stressors, the difference in these homes is the presence of *Protective Factors*. These *Protective Factors* reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with what they need in order to parent effectively, even under stress. By building relationships with families, programs can recognize signs of stress and build families' protective factors with timely, effective help.

Strengthening Families – the intentional incorporation of the *Protective Factors* to prevent child maltreatment – has widespread support from social science researchers, state child welfare officials, early childhood practitioners, and policy experts. Currently, the Strengthening Families approach is being applied in 36 states, including Florida. This strategy for dealing with child abuse and neglect shows great promise because the *Protective Factors* have been demonstrated to work and are informed by extensive, rigorous research. Activities that build the *Protective Factors* can be built into programs and systems that already exist in every state, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.

The *Protective Factors* are:

- **Nurturing and Attachment** – A child's social and emotional development is highly dependent on the quality of a young child's primary relationships. How caregivers respond to children's emotional expression profoundly influences how they learn to process, understand, and cope with such feelings as anger, happiness, and sadness. Promoting positive behavior and responses in children could strengthen parent-child relationships.
- **Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development** – Extensive research links healthy child development to effective parenting. Children thrive when parents provide not only

affection, but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world, and motivates children to achieve.

- **Parental Resilience** – Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.
- **Social Connections** – Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support. Research has shown that parents, who are isolated, with few social connections, are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect.
- **Concrete Supports for Parents** – Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.
- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children** – Children's emerging ability to interact positively with others, self regulate their behavior, and effectively communicate their feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Parents and caregivers grow more responsive to children's needs and less likely to feel stressed or frustrated as children learn to tell parents what they need and how parental actions make them feel, rather than "acting out" difficult feelings.

Note: While the plan addresses ways to build the *Protective Factors* in Florida families through multiple avenues, it will be incumbent on the State's natural and specialized service systems to ensure that accessible quality concrete supports are available for Florida families in times of need.

Summary of the Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan

The focal point of the five-year plan is to build resilience in all of Florida's families and communities in order to equip them to better care for and nurture their children and become a more stable and strong workforce. In accordance with the state law (§39.001, FS), the five-year prevention and permanency plan provides for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families.

Through the implementation of 12 strategies with 40 objectives, the five-year plan is the most ambitious and comprehensive low cost/no cost effort in the country crafted to strengthen families and empower communities where children are raised in safe, nurturing homes that support well-being. It is comprehensive and cross-agency focused in all aspects of the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; the promotion of adoption; and the support of adoptive families. The prevention plan seeks to reduce the rate of verified child abuse findings. This plan also includes the two cooperative child abuse prevention plans: one for education and one for law enforcement. The promotion of adoption plan seeks to reduce the amount of time children wait for permanent and stable homes. The support of adoptive families plan seeks to reduce the number of adopted children who are returned to foster care.

Included in this report is a brief overview of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. For the five-year plan in its entirety as well as the first year monitoring reports for each objective, please visit www.flgov.com/child_advocacy.

Arrangement of the Plan

Three plans are incorporated within this *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. They are:

Prevention

1. *Florida Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.
The prevention plan also includes the:
 - a. *Florida Cooperative Education Child Abuse Prevention Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.
 - b. *Florida Cooperative Law Enforcement Child Abuse Prevention Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.

Permanency

2. *Florida Promotion of Adoption Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.
3. *Florida Support of Adoptive Families Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.

This configuration was adopted in order to comply with the requirements of §39.001(8)(a), §39.001(8)(b)2, §39.001(8)(b)3, and §39.001(8)(b)5, Florida Statutes. Please visit www.flgov.com/child_advocacy for the full language in §39.001, Florida Statutes.

Florida Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

The focus of the prevention plan of action is on primary and secondary prevention and universal and targeted strategies. These are defined as:

- **Primary prevention using universal strategies**
 - Primary prevention is geared to the general public to prevent child abuse, abandonment and neglect from occurring.
 - Universal strategies are activities accessible to anyone in the general population with the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect from ever occurring in the first place. Universal strategies are available to everyone, rather than targeting populations based on risk factors or specific characteristics. Examples include:
 - Broad-based public awareness campaigns on positive discipline.
 - Developmental screenings for children in primary health care settings.
 - Post-partum home visits for all parents of newborns.
- **Secondary prevention using targeted strategies**
 - Secondary prevention is geared to communities and/or families who are vulnerable and at risk of child abuse, abandonment and neglect.
 - Targeted strategies are those activities or services that are targeted to a group with specific risk factors with the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect from ever occurring in the first place within that target group. Risk factors correlated with child maltreatment include parent age, poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, or maternal depression. Examples include:
 - Intensive home visitation programs for first time low-income mothers who meet a particular threshold on a screening instrument.
 - Parent training for adolescent mothers.
 - Respite care for parents of children with special needs.
 - Parent support groups for single parents.

Over the five years covered by the plan, the prevalence rates for these risk factors that are correlates of child maltreatment can be anticipated to increase. Already, Florida hotlines, helplines and assistance call centers have seen an exponential increase in requests for help. Now, more than ever, Florida should take a concerted look at strategies that will help families become resilient when faced with multiple stressors due to economic and other challenges that are predicted. The plan seeks to build the capacity for Floridians to **prevent child maltreatment before it ever occurs**. To do this, Florida's five-year child maltreatment prevention strategies will focus on building resilience in Florida families.

The prevention of child maltreatment is one of the four critical areas that the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet has chosen as a focus. It adopted this five-year prevention plan as the array of strategies to be implemented for the prevention of child maltreatment in Florida. There are six overarching prevention strategies within the plan that endeavor to:

- Infuse the *Protective Factors* into Florida systems that serve parents and children.
- Strengthen Florida systems to better serve the needs of Florida families.
- Provide information on ways to ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being.
- Inform and instruct education communities (*Florida Education Cooperative Plan*).
- Inform and instruct law enforcement communities (*Florida Law Enforcement Cooperative Plan*).
- Monitor and evaluate plan implementation.

Within these six strategies are twenty objectives focused on building family resilience and educating Florida professionals and communities; thus preventing child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The objectives focus on:

- Child protection transformation.
- Child death reviews.
- Early education and care.
- Education services for parents/caregivers of newborns/young infants.
- Evidence-based parenting programs.
- Faith-based and community-based efforts.
- Head Start programs.
- Healthy Families Florida programs.
- Healthy Start programs.
- Home visiting programs.
- Human trafficking.
- Law Enforcement *Memorandum of Understanding* implementation reviews and updates.
- Medicaid Child Health Check-Up services.
- Monitoring and evaluating implementation of prevention strategies.
- Multidisciplinary approaches to prevention in schools.
- Professional development for school personnel.
- Public awareness and education.
- Resource awareness for educators and parents.
- Resources for parents of school children.
- Technical assistance to circuit prevention efforts.
- Whole Child communities.

Florida Promotion of Adoption Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

Florida's five-year promotion of adoption strategies focus on ensuring that Florida families best suited to support the children and youth served in the child welfare system adopt these children and youth in a timely manner. This is being accomplished through the five-year adoption promotion plan.

The *Florida Promotion of Adoption Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* has three main strategies:

- Infuse the *Protective Factors* into Florida systems that recruit adoptive parents.
- Strengthen Florida recruitment systems to better identify families that meet the needs of children and youth awaiting adoption.
- Monitor and evaluate plan implementation.

The promotion of adoption objectives of the plan focus on:

- Local recruitment efforts.
- Parent preparation and training.
- Faith-based and community-based efforts.
- Targeted and child specific recruitment.
- Information and support for prospective adoptive parents.
- Monitoring and evaluating plan implementation.

Florida Support of Adoptive Families Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

Florida's five-year adoption support strategies focus on ensuring that Florida families adopting children and youth from the child welfare system receive the supports necessary to provide loving and permanent homes that help these children heal from their trauma histories. This is being accomplished through the areas of focus over the five-year period – July 2010 through June 2015.

The *Florida Support of Adoptive Families Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* has three strategies:

- Strengthen Florida service systems to better support adoptive families to meet the needs of their adopted children and youth.
- Provide information and supports to adoptive families.
- Monitor and evaluate plan implementation.

The support of adoptive families objectives cover:

- Information and support for adoptive families.
- Adoption competent professionals.
- Post Adoption Services Counselors.
- Adoption support groups.
- Education opportunities for adoptive parents.
- Faith-based and community-based efforts.
- Monitoring and evaluating plan implementation.

2012 Biennial Revisions

In accordance with §39.001(9)(b), Florida Statutes, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection had an opportunity to revise the state and local plans based on the changing needs of Florida and its communities. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection reviewed the state and local five-year plans, assessed the progress thus far, and documented mid-course changes. Every objective lead and local planning team had an opportunity to revise their action plans for the 2012 Biennial Revision. The 2012 Biennial Revision of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* was submitted to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House in June 2012.

Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that there are *Protective Factors* that make a difference for families. When families experience the stressors that are highly correlated with child maltreatment, some families maltreat their children and others do not. The Center found that in the homes that do not maltreat their children, although they are experiencing the same stressors, the difference in these homes is the presence of *Protective Factors*. These *Protective Factors* reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with what they need in order to parent effectively, even under stress. By building relationships with families, programs can recognize signs of stress and help families build protective factors with timely and effective help.

In April 2012, the Administration for Children and Families sent out an Information Memorandum prioritizing the promotion of social and emotional well-being for all children and youth, especially children in the child welfare system. The memorandum also encouraged child welfare organizations to improve the behavioral and social-emotional outcomes for children that have experienced trauma. Due to this prioritization and inclusion of a sixth *Protective Factor*, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has revised the five-year state prevention and permanency plan language from "*Five Protective Factors*" to "*Protective Factors*".

To include efforts of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and its agencies, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has included two additional objectives to the child abuse prevention plan: Human Trafficking and Child Protection Transformation. The Department of Juvenile Justice leads the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Human Trafficking Workgroup. The Department of Children and Families is leading the Child Protection Transformation project to ensure that all children are in safe, stable and nurturing environments.

PART 2 – STATUS OF CHILD MALTREATMENT AND ADOPTIONS IN FLORIDA

Part 2 of this annual report is governed by Subsections 39.001(7)(c)(5) b-d, Florida Statutes (§39.001(7)(c)(5) b-d, FS) which call for:

- b. A summary of the adoption data collected and reported to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the federal Administration for Children and Families.*
- c. A summary of the child abuse prevention data collected and reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the federal Administration for Children and Families.*
- d. A summary detailing the timeliness of the adoption process for children adopted from within the child welfare system.*

The Department of Children and Families is the reporting agency for these data. Thus, staff members from the Department of Children and Families provided the data and information included in Part 2 of this report.

The central focus of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* is to build resilience in all of Florida's families and communities in order to equip them to better care for and nurture their children. In accordance with the state law (§39.001, FS), the five-year prevention and permanency plan provides for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families. Below are Florida's desired population-level results after the five-year plan has been completed. Florida is using the data outlined above and governed in Florida Statutes to benchmark the success.

Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

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 Population-Level Results of Plan Implementation

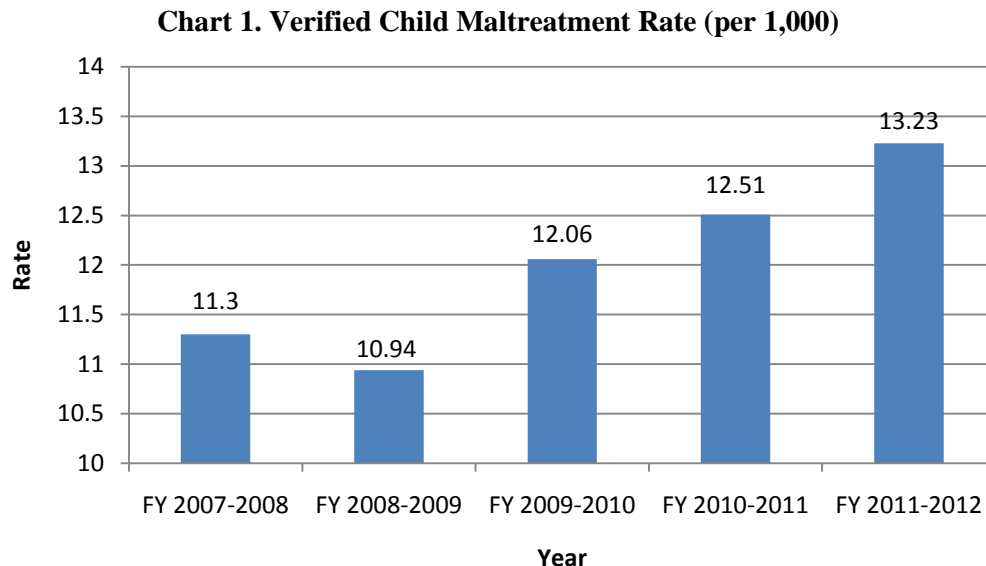
- 1. Child Maltreatment Prevention** – By June 30, 2015, the verified findings of child abuse rate will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 statewide rate of 10.94 per 1,000 children.
- 2. Promotion of Adoption** – By June 30, 2015, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 66.4 percent.
- 3. Promotion of Adoption** – By June 30, 2015, 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 State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 53.19 percent.
- 4. Support of Adoptive Families** – By June 30, 2015, the annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 number of 98.

Summary of Child Maltreatment Data

Child maltreatment is an all inclusive term for child abuse, abandonment and neglect. Data and summaries were provided by the Department of Children and Families to the Executive Office of the Governor in December 2012 for State Fiscal Year 2011 through 2012. These data and information have been aggregated in order to describe the status of child maltreatment in Florida. The data in Chart 1 and Table 1 are based on the official published per capita rate for Florida and are based on data that were extracted on September 18, 2012. The data contained in the Tables 2 – 7 were extracted on October 6, 2011 specifically for the additional breakdowns to provide for more in-depth reporting and analysis. Therefore the numbers differ slightly because when querying a live data system, used for both case management and reporting, the time lag between different run dates allows for additional data entry and correction.

Status of Child Maltreatment in Florida

State Plan Desired Result 1 – Child Maltreatment Prevention. By June 30, 2015, the verified number of child victims per capita will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 statewide rate of 10.94 per 1,000 children between the ages of birth – 17.



The Story Behind the Baseline

Based upon a strategy developed by Mark Friedman (2005), a child abuse and neglect workgroup was convened by the Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida. The workgroup included 13 members representing 10 organizations and departments across Florida. The workgroup developed a story behind the baseline data reviewed, identifying events or issues that would correlate with the changes in the numbers, either up or down.

Interaction effects among these and other potential contributing factors may drive performance in directions that, if the factors were changing in isolation, might seem counter-intuitive. External influences that may contribute to a change since the baseline include:

- A tightening of definitions in the allegation matrix, now known as the child maltreatment index.
- Change in terminology for findings of investigations (e.g., “not substantiated” was added and “some indicators” was eliminated).
- Screening hotline calls to divert those that do not meet statutory criteria for investigation toward other Departmental services, increasing the proportion of those that will result in verified findings among those hotline calls that are accepted for investigation.
- Effectiveness of the primary and secondary prevention programs in place (e.g., Florida’s public awareness campaigns, Healthy Families Florida, programs funded by the Children’s Services Councils, Healthy Start, etc.).
- Loss of funding for secondary prevention (e.g., Healthy Families and Healthy Start) may increase the rate of child maltreatment.
- Loss of revenue to Children’s Services Councils which funded primary and secondary prevention programs may increase the rate of child maltreatment.
- Foreseeable stressors:
 - Changes in family living arrangements.
 - Economic losses / rising unemployment.
 - Increase in adoptions without sufficient post adoption supports.
 - Increase in teen pregnancies and births.
 - Natural and environmental disasters (e.g., oil spill, hurricanes, etc.).

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 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 December 2012 for State Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012, the hotline accepted calls to commence investigations for **228,111 alleged victims of child maltreatment**. This is a **statewide rate of 56.90 alleged victims** per 1,000 children (birth – 17) in Florida. Of these commenced investigations, **53,035 (23.25%) resulted in verified findings** of child maltreatment. This results in a **statewide victimization rate of 13.23 maltreated children** per 1,000 children (birth – 17) in Florida.

This increase is at least partially attributable to the fact that:

- The 0 – 17 year old child population in Florida is *lower than that of the previous fiscal year* (4,121,741 in SFY 2010 – 2011 vs. 4,009,221 in SFY 2011 – 2012).
- The number of alleged victims in commenced investigations is *higher than that of the previous year* (228,018 in SFY 2010 – 2011 vs. 228,111 in SFY 2011 – 2012).
- The number of children with verified findings is *higher than last year* (51,555 in SFY 2010 – 2011 vs. 53,035 in SFY 2011 – 2012).

Verified Maltreatment

As stated earlier, the rate of children with verified maltreatment was 13.23 during SFY 2011 – 2012. The table below provides the rates statewide and for each of the twenty (20) circuits for SFY 2009 – 2010, 2010 – 2011, and 2011 – 2012. As shown in the table below, the rate of children with verified maltreatment declined for eight (40%) of the circuits (i.e., Circuits 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 18 highlighted in green), but increased statewide. As previously stated, the statewide increase can partly be contributed to the fact that the child population (age 0 – 17) in Florida is lower than the previous fiscal year, the number of alleged child victims is higher than the previous year, and the number of verified findings from allegations is higher than last year. Environmental, physical, and emotional stressors can also be attributed to the higher rate of verified maltreatment.

**Table 1. Rate of Children with Verified Maltreatment
per 1,000 Children in the General Population
July 2009 – June 2010, July 2010 – June 2011, and July 2011 – June 2012**

Circuit	2009 – 2010				2010 – 2011				2011 – 2012				↑ ↓
	Number Alleged Victims	Number Verified	Total Population	Maltreatment Rate	Number Alleged Victims	Number Verified	Total Population	Maltreatment Rate	Number Alleged Victims	Number Verified	Total Population	Maltreatment Rate	
Circuit 01	10,734	2,587	162,575	15.91	12,031	2,879	161,052	17.88	12,171	3,118	153,905	20.26	↑
Circuit 02	4,185	900	81,048	11.1	4,549	1,057	79,319	13.33	4,438	1,009	78,797	12.81	↓
Circuit 03	2,893	804	41,568	19.34	3,398	794	41,473	19.14	3,224	847	41,054	20.63	↑
Circuit 04	15,770	3,651	289,082	12.63	17,101	3,782	283,383	13.35	17,601	3,786	268,639	14.09	↑
Circuit 05	14,213	3,254	191,647	16.98	14,625	3,028	191,177	15.84	14,955	3,485	190,201	18.32	↑
Circuit 06	16,939	4,881	261,831	18.64	18,316	5,055	262,114	19.29	17,950	5,271	259,535	20.31	↑
Circuit 07	11,698	2,162	171,309	12.62	12,641	2,421	169,125	14.31	12,068	2,764	173,028	15.97	↑
Circuit 08	5,216	1,662	77,158	21.54	5,632	1,763	77,388	22.78	5,917	1,607	72,122	22.28	↓
Circuit 09	18,757	4,844	359,495	13.47	20,132	4,910	358,055	13.71	20,172	4,607	347,853	13.24	↓
Circuit 10	11,063	2,163	165,466	13.07	11,401	2,063	164,776	12.52	11,434	1,959	167,515	11.69	↓
Circuit 11	14,501	3,294	594,557	5.54	16,799	3,964	591,780	6.70	16,632	3,664	548,848	6.68	↓
Circuit 12	8,116	2,024	134,629	15.03	9,114	2,258	133,451	16.92	8,883	2,183	133,777	16.32	↓
Circuit 13	13,893	3,159	298,584	10.58	14,947	3,019	298,184	10.12	15,096	3,235	297,794	10.86	↑
Circuit 14	5,232	943	63,781	14.78	5,433	740	62,669	11.81	5,478	851	61,892	13.75	↑
Circuit 15	12,621	2,900	270,882	10.71	13,553	2,717	271,266	10.02	13,111	2,769	268,495	10.31	↑
Circuit 16	682	214	12,828	16.68	723	207	13,296	15.57	707	168	10,869	15.46	↓
Circuit 17	14,911	4,225	407,694	10.36	15,702	4,556	407,498	11.18	16,241	5,215	387,722	13.45	↑
Circuit 18	11,998	2,422	206,267	11.74	12,817	2,504	204,466	12.25	12,424	2,425	202,614	11.97	↓
Circuit 19	6,118	1,807	120,130	15.04	6,446	1,790	120,204	14.89	6,623	1,680	123,144	13.64	↑
Circuit 20	11,552	2,068	231,967	8.92	12,658	2,048	231,065	8.86	12,986	2,392	221,417	10.80	↑
Statewide	211,092	49,964	4,142,498	12.06	228,018	51,555	4,121,741	12.51	228,111	53,035	4,009,221	13.23	↑

As shown in Tables 2 and 3 below, the younger the child, the more vulnerable the child is for maltreatment (highlighted in orange). The highest percentage of children with verified maltreatment during SFY 2011 – 2012 was in the birth to four year old range. This was followed by elementary school age children. It should be noted that there is a very small percentage difference (0.35%) between middle school children and high school children with verified maltreatment during SFY 2011 – 2012.

Table 2. Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, July 2011 – June 2012 Statewide

Child's Grade (Age Range)	Total with Verified Abuse	Percent of Total
Preschool (0 – 4)	23,492.00	44.30%
Elementary School (5 – 10)	16,990.00	32.04%
Middle School (11 – 13)	6,176.00	11.64%
High School (14 – 17)	6,361.00	11.99%
18+	11.00	0.02%
Unknown	5.00	0.01%
Total	53,035.00	100%

Table 3. Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, July 2011 – June 2012 by Circuit

Circuit	Child's Age						Totals
	0 – 4 Years	5 – 10 Years	11 – 13 Years	14 – 17 Years	18+ Years	Unknown	
Circuit 01	1,368	1,019	361	382	2	–	3,132
Circuit 02	433	337	145	107	1	–	1,023
Circuit 03	370	319	91	106	–	–	886
Circuit 04	1,657	1,155	451	444	1	–	3,708
Circuit 05	1,382	1,142	427	417	1	–	3,369
Circuit 06	2,598	1,682	628	585	1	–	5,494
Circuit 07	1,285	956	333	354	–	–	2,928
Circuit 08	677	449	182	178	–	–	1,486
Circuit 09	2,037	1,475	490	565	–	1	4,568
Circuit 10	943	639	202	269	1	2	2,056
Circuit 11	1,578	1,191	481	448	1	–	3,699
Circuit 12	991	728	245	268	–	1	2,233
Circuit 13	1,521	945	305	333	1	–	3,105
Circuit 14	350	267	107	98	–	–	822
Circuit 15	1,239	936	334	322	–	1	2,832
Circuit 16	75	71	20	21	–	–	187
Circuit 17	2,163	1,590	605	673	1	–	5,032
Circuit 18	1,029	770	291	331	–	–	2,421
Circuit 19	756	564	213	202	–	–	1,735
Circuit 20	1,040	755	265	258	1	–	2,319
Statewide	23,492	16,990	6,176	6,361	11	5	53,035
Statewide Percent	44.30%	32.04%	11.64%	11.99%	0.02%	0.01%	100.00%

Allegations and Investigations of Child Maltreatment

This pattern continues when looking at allegations of child maltreatment. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the largest percentage of allegations is for children between the ages of birth and four years old, with the next highest group being ages five to ten years old (highlighted in orange). These two age groups include 160,543 children who were alleged victims of maltreatment, or 70.37% of all children who were alleged victims.

Table 4. Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated) for July 2011 – June 2012 Statewide

Child's Grade (Age Range)	Total with Verified Abuse	Percent of Total
Preschool (0 – 4)	82,635	36.23%
Elementary School (5 – 10)	77,908	34.15%
Middle School (11 – 13)	31,604	13.85%
High School (14 – 17)	35,844	15.71%
18+	68	0.03%
Unknown	52	0.02%
Total	228,111	100%

Table 5. Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated) for July 2011 – June 2012 by Circuit

Circuit	Child's Age						Totals
	0 – 4 Years	5 – 10 Years	11 – 13 Years	14 – 17 Years	18+ Years	Unknown	
Circuit 01	4,724	4,059	1,574	1,835	6	2	12,200
Circuit 02	1,676	1,568	577	653	1	1	4,476
Circuit 03	1,215	1,176	434	481	3	–	3,309
Circuit 04	6,377	5,980	2,452	2,621	6	6	17,442
Circuit 05	5,230	5,136	2,021	2,310	3	4	14,704
Circuit 06	6,940	6,038	2,579	2,834	5	4	18,400
Circuit 07	4,522	4,200	1,726	2,029	4	1	12,482
Circuit 08	2,236	1,861	735	806	3	2	5,643
Circuit 09	6,873	7,057	2,748	3,322	3	8	20,011
Circuit 10	4,273	4,036	1,612	1,775	2	3	11,701
Circuit 11	5,786	5,623	2,480	2,843	5	2	16,739
Circuit 12	3,419	3,131	1,186	1,246	6	1	8,989
Circuit 13	5,478	4,963	2,011	2,276	1	7	14,736
Circuit 14	1,970	1,882	734	817	2	3	5,408
Circuit 15	4,806	4,583	1,922	1,977	4	2	13,294
Circuit 16	287	255	89	100	1	–	732
Circuit 17	5,676	5,184	2,270	2,687	3	3	15,823
Circuit 18	4,403	4,297	1,714	2,048	6	2	12,470
Circuit 19	2,355	2,356	959	1,056	0	1	6,727
Circuit 20	4,389	4,523	1,781	2,128	4	–	12,825
Statewide	82,635	77,908	31,604	35,844	68	52	228,111
Statewide Percent	36.23%	34.15%	13.85%	15.71%	0.03%	0.02%	100.00%

The largest percentage of children and youth who were alleged victims of maltreatment were white (62.40%), from eighteen circuits. For ethnicity, the largest portion was non – Hispanic (82.61%) from every circuit in Florida. Investigations were conducted for nearly equal numbers of boys and girls, with only four circuits having more boys than girls. In Table 6 the highlighted cells show the highest numbers of race, ethnicity, and gender per circuit and for the state.

Table 6. Race, Ethnicity, and Gender of Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated) July 2011 – June 2012

Circuit	Race				Ethnicity		Gender		
	White	Black	Multiracial	Other	Hispanic	Other	Male	Female	Unknown
Circuit 01	8,176	3,009	570	445	515	11,685	6,054	6,085	61
Circuit 02	1,869	2,337	88	182	159	4,317	2,179	2,265	32
Circuit 03	2,470	645	154	40	201	3,108	1,596	1,707	6
Circuit 04	9,266	7,010	372	794	886	16,556	8,796	8,566	80
Circuit 05	11,535	2,303	361	505	1,610	13,094	7,393	7,256	55
Circuit 06	13,190	3,636	852	722	1,898	16,502	9,180	9,151	69
Circuit 07	9,097	2,532	240	613	1,046	11,436	6,142	6,278	62
Circuit 08	3,283	1,991	255	114	265	5,378	2,787	2,842	14
Circuit 09	11,337	6,828	334	1,512	5,987	14,024	10,019	9,839	153
Circuit 10	8,009	2,833	321	538	2,128	9,573	5,920	5,735	46
Circuit 11	8,185	7,104	130	1,320	7,686	9,053	8,174	8,439	126
Circuit 12	6,612	1,819	303	255	1,573	7,416	4,524	4,448	17
Circuit 13	8,612	5,152	515	457	3,432	11,304	7,303	7,388	45
Circuit 14	4,079	947	209	173	184	5,224	2,672	2,709	27
Circuit 15	6,781	5,547	179	787	2,927	10,367	6,613	6,605	76
Circuit 16	578	114	15	25	214	518	383	349	0
Circuit 17	6,456	7,792	227	1,348	3,123	12,700	7,960	7,766	97
Circuit 18	8,712	2,711	706	341	1,510	10,960	6,242	6,195	33
Circuit 19	4,496	1,787	227	217	1,127	5,600	3,403	3,304	20
Circuit 20	9,610	2,373	310	532	3,199	9,626	6,391	6,410	24
Statewide	142,353	68,470	6,368	10,920	39,670	188,441	113,731	113,337	1043
Statewide Percent	62.40%	30.02%	2.79%	4.79%	17.39%	82.61%	49.86%	49.68%	0.46%

In the following table, the numbers are duplicated counts. A child might have been the alleged victim with more than a single allegation attributed to the same incident. For example, an investigation may be conducted for a child for whom family violence, substance abuse and failure to protect were all noted; resulting in three allegations being assigned to that one investigation. Using the updated run from September 18, 2011, statewide there were 53,035 children with verified child maltreatment (unduplicated child count). For these children, there were 82,481 verified allegations of child maltreatment (duplicated child count). The largest numbers with verifications were for the following allegations: family violence followed by substance misuse in the home. The third through fifth, in terms of incidence, were those who lived in homes with inadequate supervision followed by physical injury and environmental hazards.

The highest numbers of verified allegations were for family violence threatens child and substance misuse. The highest *rates* of verification (e.g., the number of verified allegations divided by the number of allegations) were for abandonment, internal injuries, failure to protect, and threatened harm. The lowest verification rates were for mental injury, asphyxiation, and physical injury. In Table 7, the orange highlighted cells show the highest number of allegations, allegations verified, and percentages of allegations verified.

**Table 7. Allegations and Verifications of Abuse (Duplicated Child Counts)
July 2011 – June 2012**

Type of Abuse Allegation	Number of Allegations	Number of Allegations Verified	Percent of Allegations Verified
Family Violence Threatens Child	87,169	23,613	27.09
Substance Misuse	108,135	20,170	18.65
Inadequate Supervision	70,208	11,544	16.44
Physical Injury	59,477	5,380	9.05
Environmental Hazards	53,275	6,802	12.77
Threatened Harm	11,595	6,060	52.26
Sexual Abuse	17,282	2,530	14.64
Failure to Protect	4,162	2,208	53.05
Medical Neglect	7,799	1,425	18.27
Abandonment	1,186	836	70.49
Mental Injury	9,762	609	6.24
Bone Fracture	967	260	26.89
Bizarre Punishment	2,289	272	11.88
Burns	1,442	148	10.26
Failure to Thrive	344	160	46.51
Asphyxiation	1,924	107	5.56
Death	459	151	32.90
Internal Injuries	82	42	51.22
Human Trafficking	625	100	16.00
Malnutrition/Dehydration	169	64	37.87
Total	438,351	82,481	18.82

Reasons for Removal

The Department of Children and Families' *Florida Safe Families Network* (FSFN) data system recorded the primary reasons for removal of the children entering into foster care. If a child was removed more than once during the year, all sets of reasons are included in this analysis. Of the 15,884 children entering foster care in the twelve month span from July 2011 – June 2012, the reasons for removal were divided into nine categories. These are shown in Table 8 as drawn from the AFCARS data file. A child may have more than one reason for removal noted, thus the counts in this chart will represent duplicated child counts. Highlighted in orange, the highest percentage of removals (46%) were due to parental drug and alcohol abuse.

**Table 8. Reasons for Removal Reported (Duplicated Child Counts)
July 2011 – June 2012**

Removal Reason	Number of Children	Percent of Children
Parental Drug and Alcohol Abuse	7,407	46%
Physical and Sexual Abuse	2,860	18%
Inadequate Supervision, Medical and Physical Neglect	3,290	21%
Domestic Violence	2,560	16%
Death of Parent/Caretaker Unable to Cope	2,177	14%
Child Behavior/Relinquishment/Abandonment	2,066	13%
Incarceration of Parents	2,125	13%
Inadequate Housing	1,955	12%
Child Alcohol and Drug Abuse	210	2%

As shown in the previous table, parental drug and alcohol abuse was the most often cited reason for almost half of the children being removed from their parent or primary caregiver. The second most cited service reason for a removal was physical and sexual abuse. The least cited reason for a child removal was child alcohol and drug abuse, followed by inadequate housing.

Services Recommended

The Department of Children and Families’ *Florida Safe Families Network* data system recorded the services recommended at disposition of an investigation for alleged victims. Multiple services might be recommended for the same child and would be counted for each service. Additionally, there may have been an array of services recommended for a child but only the first few might have been recorded in the electronic data system. These data most likely under-represent the complete numbers of actual services recommended at disposition for alleged victims of reported abuse.

As shown in Table 9, the services with the largest numbers of recommendations include case management services, court appointed representatives, and other services highlighted in orange. These underscore the importance of the *Protective Factors* as foundational for family stability and resilience:

- Concrete Supports for Parents.
- Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development.
- Nurturing and Attachment.
- Parental Resilience.
- Social Connections.
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children.

**Table 9. Services Recommended for Alleged Victims at Investigation Disposition
July 2011 – June 2012**

Recommended Service	Number	Percent	Recommended Service	Number	Percent
Case Management Services	21,305	21.47%	Educational Training Services	1,003	0.54%
Court Appointed Representative	1,539	0.83%	Health Related Home Services	496	0.27%
Other Services	16,886	11.44%	Family Planning Services	451	0.24%
Counseling Services	40,035	11.44%	Pregnancy Parenting Services	1,250	0.67%
Services Offered Refused	15,458	8.29%	Juvenile Court Petition	727	0.39%
Informational Referral Service	17,301	9.28%	Day Care Services Child	22,491	12.06%
Substance Abuse Services	15,998	8.58%	Adoption Services	163	0.09%
Family Support Services	9,502	5.10%	Referral Possible False Report	148	0.08%
Family Preservation Services	3,688	1.98%	Special Juvenile Delinquent	255	0.14%
Home Based Services	3,584	1.92%	Transportation Services	221	0.12%
Mental Health Services	5,596	3.00%	Independent Transition Living	182	0.10%
Family Builders	1,603	0.86%	Employment Services	732	0.39%
Foster Care Services	1,777	0.95%	Petition Dismissed by Judge	54	0.03%
Legal Services	1,959	1.05%	Respite Care Services	90	0.05%
Housing Services	1,356	0.73%	Special Services Disabled	38	0.02%
Intensive Crisis Counseling Program	551	0.30%	Total (duplicated counts across services)	186,439	100.00%

Child Abuse Death Review

In 2011, the State Child Death Review Committee prepared a report of its reviews of deaths that occurred in 2010. During 2010, 2,282 children under the age of 18 lost their lives in Florida. Of those children who died, 507 were reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline. Of the 507 child deaths reported to the hotline, 155 were the result of verified child abuse or neglect. During 2011, the State Committee reviewed 136 child abuse deaths during the period of January – November 14, 2011. The cases verified and submitted to the Committee after the review period will be reviewed in 2012. The State Committee reviewed an additional eleven child deaths that occurred in previous years, bringing the total number of child deaths reviewed by the State Committee in 2011 to 147.

The committee found that in 2011, there was a decrease in the number of child abuse deaths in Florida from 2010 where 192 children died from verified child abuse or neglect. As shown in the table below, during calendar year 2011, the leading causes of the 136 verified child deaths reviewed during the period of January – November 14, 2011 were physical abuse (highlighted in orange), followed by drowning.

Table 10. Leading Causes of Child Abuse Deaths in 2011

Cause	Number of Deaths	Percent of Deaths
Physical Abuse	51	38%
Drowning	42	31%
Other*	22	16%
Unsafe Sleep	21	15%
Total	136	100%

*Other represents deaths related to Vehicle, Drug Toxicity, Other Neglect, Medical Neglect, Firearm and Fire

The key recommendations resulting from the review are addressed as a part of the five-year prevention plan. These recommendations include:

1. ***Continue and Enhance Statewide Public Awareness and Education Efforts*** – Continue and enhance researched-based statewide public awareness campaigns to educate the public on strategies and action that work to prevent child abuse and neglect and child deaths from occurring.
2. ***Review All Child Deaths*** – Amend §383.402 (1), F.S. to expand the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee’s authority related to the review of child deaths in Florida to have a better understanding of why children die in Florida.
 - Phase I – expand the State’s child abuse death review process to include the review of all child deaths reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline.
 - Phase II – expand the State’s child abuse death review process to include the review of all child deaths.
3. ***Invest in Successful Prevention Programs to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect*** – The 2012 Florida Legislature should maintain the 2011-2012 funding level for Healthy Families Florida and other successful prevention programs that improve the health, safety and well-being of Florida’s children to avoid the costly short-term and long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect.

The committee developed a list of recommendations for the causes of child deaths. The five-year prevention plan addresses many of the recommendations. And every strategy in the prevention plan is responsive to at least one of the recommendations that were developed by the committee. The recommendations include action such as:

- ***Physical Abuse*** – A disturbing number of infant and toddler homicides are attributed to common triggers and risk factors for physical abuse.

Recommendations:

- Any entity providing federal or state funded services, whether it be child protection investigations or case management, child care, home visiting or other services, should be trained to identify the common triggers and risk factors that contribute to child abuse.
- Any agency investigating child abuse should make it a priority to document and collect information as to a parent’s ability or inability to place their children in center-based child care as the state committee often observes that in physical abuse deaths, children were often with inappropriate caretakers.
- Support public awareness efforts developed and implemented by Prevent Child Abuse Florida that promotes the prevention of child abuse and neglect through a better understanding of child development, positive parenting practices and community action.
- Increase public awareness regarding the importance of reporting domestic violence or threats of violence.
- Fund training for law enforcement investigators and the Department of Children and Families Child Protective Investigators on physical child abuse investigations. Training should include:
 - Use of standardized Q & A (designed by Florida Department of Law Enforcement) during investigations.
 - An emphasis on common risk factors and triggers pertaining to adult male caregivers between the ages of 18-30.
 - The dynamics of substance abuse, domestic violence and animal abuse and how they relate to maltreatment and risk in child abuse and neglect cases.
- Economic factors should be considered as a part of the risk assessment and documented in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) data system so they can be analyzed both locally and on a statewide level to determine the impact they have on child deaths.

- Support The Policy Group for Florida’s Families and Children to expand child care subsidies by 20% annually until all eligible children have the opportunity to enroll in a child care program or family child care home, allowing parents to work.
- **Drowning** – Children continue to die from drowning at an alarming rate as a result of inadequate supervision.

Recommendations:

- Implement a systemic approach to prevent drowning of children in Florida, with a focus on those under 5 years of age.
 - Increase public awareness and education on drowning prevention with an emphasis on supervising children near or around water especially targeted at the five and under age group.
 - Enhance reporting by law enforcement and medical professionals of all child drowning deaths to the Florida Abuse Hotline, thereby allowing investigations to occur to determine if the child’s death was the result of neglect.
 - Allow the Florida Abuse Hotline to accept all reports from law enforcement or medical professionals on child deaths that occurred as a result of drowning.
- **Other** – To include causes related to Vehicle, Drug Toxicity, Other Neglect, Medical Neglect, Firearm and Fire

Recommendations:

- There should be continuing education for law enforcement on the reporting of vehicle-related deaths to the Florida Abuse Hotline.
- The Department of Children and Families should establish maltreatment guidelines and craft statewide training on vehicle-related child deaths to provide consistency in investigation and child maltreatment findings.
- Promote public awareness campaigns to prevent vehicle-related deaths such as the ones by Safe Kids USA (www.safekids.org).
- Provide training to hospitals and emergency personnel on mandatory child abuse reporting.
- Provide training to law enforcement and narcotics officers on mandatory reporting of child abuse when narcotics investigations indicate that children were present during drug-related sales, manufacturing or use by a caregiver. Protocols for handling these reports should be established between law enforcement and the Department of Children and Families at the local level.
- The DCF should develop and provide training to Child Protective Investigators that focuses on how substance misuse contributes to or results in harm to infants and children whose caregivers use illicit substances, abuse alcohol or allow children inappropriate access to prescription drugs.
- Training for Child Legal Services, in regards to these issues, should also be reviewed and revised, as needed.
- A multidisciplinary staffing should be required when children have medically complex issues to include agencies such as CMS to ensure the child's medical needs are met.
- Education should be provided to parents about the risk associated with family members whose lifestyle involves drug and gang activity.
- Continuing education should be provided to fire marshals on reporting fire related child deaths to the Florida Abuse Hotline.

- **Unsafe Sleep Environments** – Sudden unexplained infant deaths associated with unsafe sleep are tragic, but must be investigated thoroughly and consistently in order to prevent future infant deaths.

Recommendation:

- Public awareness and education materials on infant suffocation due to unsafe sleep environments should be made available to child protective investigators, law enforcement agencies, hospital medical personnel and other medical providers, parents and caregivers with newborn children, and the public.

Summary of Adoption Data and the Timeliness of Adoptions

This subsection comprises three areas of reporting:

- A summary of the adoption data collected and reported to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the federal Administration for Children and Families.
- A summary detailing the adoption process and its timeliness for children adopted from within the child welfare system.
- A summary of the support of adoptive families' information.

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).

The Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) tracks state performance on federal child welfare outcome measures using AFCARS, including five measures related to the timeliness of adoptions from foster care. Four of these measures are included in this report.

Data and summaries were provided by the Department of Children and Families to the Executive Office of the Governor in December 2012. These data and information have been aggregated in order to describe the status of adoption in Florida. It should be noted that for the information provided below on the AFCARS measures, original comparison benchmarks were established in 2007 based on analyses using data from the 2004 Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) which spans the months October through September. Differences in reporting period can alter measured performance. For example, FFY 2012 spans October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012. On the other hand, the current state performance information is based on the 12 – month period from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 (SFY 2011 – 2012), using the most recent available data for this report.

AFCARS 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 2011 through June 2012, **53.72 percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home.** The target was to reach the national 75th percentile for FFY 2004 which is 36.6 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target for the fifth consecutive year.** Florida has made steady progress on this measure over the last several years, increasing from 23.9 percent in FFY 2004 to 53.72 percent in SFY 2011 – 2012 (e.g., July 2011 through June 2012). This measure is limited to children adopted during the period and does not address the likelihood that children, presently in care, will be adopted within 24 months. It is important to note that this measure can be misleading, especially when an agency successfully recruits adoptive families for older children/teens who have been in foster care for multiple years and therefore may create a negative impact on this measure. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected on the next page. As shown in Table 11, all but two of the 20 Florida circuits exceeded the federal target.

Table 11. Percent Discharged to Adoption in Less than 24 months (by Circuit)

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
Circuit 04	82.57%	Circuit 05	51.45%
Circuit 08	80.61%	Circuit 19	50.86%
Circuit 02	75.47%	Circuit 09	50.61%
Circuit 03	72.00%	Circuit 10	48.51%
Circuit 14	59.15%	Circuit 01	47.27%
Circuit 18	59.05%	Circuit 11	46.53%
Circuit 07	56.38%	Circuit 13	39.06%
Statewide	53.72%	Circuit 17	39.04%
Circuit 15	52.98%	Federal Target	36.60%
Circuit 06	52.78%	Circuit 20	29.60%
Circuit 12	52.24%	Circuit 16	10.00%

AFCARS Measure 2 – Median Length of Stay in Foster Care. Of all children adopted from foster care during the period July 2011 through June 2012, the *median length of stay in foster care was 22.9 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 FFY 2004, established in FFY 2007, which is 27.3 months. 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. As shown in Table 12, *Florida exceeded the federal target.* Florida’s median length of stay has dropped for several years, from 35.1 months in FFY 2004 to 22.90 months in SFY 2011 – 2012. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. For the second straight year, 17 (85%) of the 20 Florida circuits met or exceeded the federal target.

Table 12. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care (by Circuit) for Children Discharged to Adoption

Circuit	Median LOS	Circuit	Median LOS
Circuit 04	14.0	Circuit 09	23.0
Circuit 02	15.0	Circuit 12	23.0
Circuit 08	17.0	Circuit 19	23.0
Circuit 03	21.0	Circuit 01	24.0
Circuit 14	21.0	Circuit 10	24.0
Circuit 18	21.0	Circuit 11	24.0
Circuit 15	21.5	Circuit 13	26.0
Circuit 07	22.0	Federal Target	27.3
Statewide	22.9	Circuit 17	28.0
Circuit 05	23.0	Circuit 20	30.0
Circuit 06	23.0	Circuit 16	34.0

AFCARS Measure 3 – Finalized Adoptions. Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 2010, and who had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, **35.39 percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption by June 30, 2012.** The target was to reach the national 75th percentile for FFY 2004, established in FFY 2007 of 22.7 percent. **Florida has exceeded this target.** 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. As shown in Table 13, for the second straight year of the 20 Florida circuits, 18 (90%) met or exceeded the federal target during SFY 2011 – 2012. The two circuits that did not meet the federal target are highlighted in orange. **It should be noted that Florida, for the fourth year in a row, has received an adoption incentive award from the Department of Health and Human Services for the number of finalized adoptions. Only Texas and Arizona exceeded the amount of Florida’s award.**

Table 13. Percent of Finalized Adoptions (by Circuit)

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
Circuit 12	56.74%	Circuit 09	33.42%
Circuit 01	52.14%	Circuit 13	33.13%
Circuit 14	46.88%	Circuit 15	32.58%
Circuit 05	46.08%	Circuit 10	32.42%
Circuit 07	44.06%	Circuit 04	31.38%
Circuit 19	43.86%	Circuit 17	30.54%
Circuit 06	40.05%	Circuit 18	28.48%
Circuit 20	37.45%	Circuit 02	23.21%
Circuit 08	36.49%	Federal Target	22.70%
Circuit 16	36.00%	Circuit 03	22.58%
Statewide	35.39%	Circuit 11	21.06%

AFCARS Measure 4 – Legally Free for Adoption. Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 2011 or January 2012, had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, and were not legally free for adoption prior to that day, **16.88 percent became legally free for adoption** by December 31, 2011 or June 30, 2012 respectively. The target was to reach the national 75th percentile for FFY 2004, established in FFY 2007 which is 10.9 percent. **Florida exceeded this target.** 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 on the next page. As shown in Table 14, the circuits highlighted in orange did not meet the federal target. Of the 20 Florida circuits, 16 (80%) met or exceeded the federal target.

Table 14. Percent of Children Legally Free for Adoption (by Circuit)

Circuit	Performance	Circuit	Performance
Circuit 12	38.24%	Circuit 06	16.15%
Circuit 07	28.57%	Circuit 09	14.23%
Circuit 14	23.61%	Circuit 20	13.39%
Circuit 01	23.42%	Circuit 08	12.50%
Circuit 05	22.22%	Circuit 17	11.93%
Circuit 19	20.77%	Circuit 03	11.76%
Circuit 10	20.11%	Federal Target	10.90%
Circuit 04	19.10%	Circuit 18	10.89%
Circuit 15	19.00%	Circuit 16	9.52%
Circuit 13	18.08%	Circuit 02	7.69%
Statewide	16.88%	Circuit 11	6.34%

The Adoption Process for Children Adopted from within the Child Welfare System

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) uses several data sources and metrics related to adoption. Each serves a unique purpose. Some of the differences between these metrics, though important, can be somewhat nuanced. To avoid miscommunication or inadvertent misinterpretation, it is critical to use “the right tool for the right job”. For example, the answer to the question of how many children are available for adoption in Florida depends entirely on the meaning of the term “available for adoption.” Different interpretations of this term refer to different populations, or population subsets. These may include:

- a. Children with a primary goal of adoption, who have not been TPR’d (that is the termination of their parental rights);
- b. Children who have been TPR’d, making them legally available for adoption, regardless of whether adoption is a primary goal;
- c. Children who have been both TPR’d and have a primary goal of adoption;
- d. Children who have been TPR’d, have a primary goal of adoption, and an adoptive family has been identified, but the adoption has not been finalized; and
- e. Children who are TPR’d, have the primary goal of adoption, but no family has been identified and recruitment for a family is still ongoing. These are the children who are eligible to be featured on the Department of Children and Families website.

As shown in Table 15, adoption-related populations overlap or are nested within each other, and each yields a different number. Table 15 provides a point in time chart as of July 1, 2011 and provides a starting base at the beginning of SFY 2011 – 2012.

Table 15. Adoption-Related Populations as of July 1, 2011

POPULATION DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
a. Children TPR’d or who have a primary goal of adoption	5,138
b. Children with a primary goal of adoption regardless of TPR status	4,294
c. Children TPR’d, regardless of goal	3,371
d. Children who have been TPR’d and have a primary goal of adoption	2,527
e. Children who have been TPR’d, have a primary goal of adoption, do not have an identified family and are eligible to be featured on the DCF website	746*

*The 746 is from the Monthly Adoption Report; all other figures are from the July 1, 2011 AFCARS Extract.

Of the 2,527 children who had a primary goal of adoption and were TPR'd as of July 1, 2011, 1,241 of them (49%) were adopted during the SFY 2011 – 2012. These adoptions represent 38% of the total 3,252 adoptions finalized during the course of SFY 2011 – 2012

Table 16 shows the length of time from the last TPR date until the adoption finalization for all children adopted during SFY 2011 – 2012. The date of TPR was recorded in the system for 3,245 out of the 3,252 of the children adopted; a 99.8 percent non-random sample. Of these 3,245 children, most (70.97%) were adopted in less than twelve months and almost all (89.06%) were adopted within 24 months (highlighted in green) of their TPR dates.

Table 16. Length of Time between TPR and Adoption Finalization for SFY 2011 – 2012 Finalized Adoptions

Number and Percent of Children Adopted by the Number of Months Between TPR and Finalization of Adoption based on 3,245 for whom data are available		
Time Span	Number of Children Adopted	Percent of Children Adopted
< 12 Months	2,303	70.97%
12 – 24 Months	587	18.09%
24 – 36 Months	193	5.95%
36 – 48 Months	62	1.91%
> 48 Months	100	3.08%
Data Not Available*	7	
Total of Adopted Children	3,252	100%

* TPR date was not included in FSFN for these children at the time of the extract, so the related time frames based on this date could not be calculated. These are excluded from the percentages calculated.

Table 17 shows the length of time from the last TPR date until June 30, 2012 for those children who were legally free for adoption as of the end of the State Fiscal Year. The date of TPR was recorded in the system for 2,048 of the 2,351 children who were legally free for adoption by June 30, 2012, an 87.11 percent non-random sample. Of these 2,048 children, less than half (44.34%) have been waiting more than 12 months (highlighted in orange) to be adopted. 429 children who were available for adoption at the end of the SFY 2011 – 2012 have been waiting for three or more years to be adopted.

Table 17. Length of Time Since TPR for Children Remaining Available for Adoption as of June 30, 2012

Remaining Children available for Adoption by the Number of Months Between TPR and June 30, 2011 for the 2,048 children for whom data are available		
Time Span	Number of Waiting Children	Percent of Waiting Children
< 12 Months	1,140	55.66%
12 – 24 Months	347	16.94%
24 – 36 Months	132	6.45%
36 – 48 Months	108	5.27%
>48 Months	321	15.67%
Data Not Available*	303	
Total Number of Waiting Children	2,351	100%

* TPR date was not included in FSFN for these children at the time of the extract, so the related time frames based on it could not be calculated. These are excluded from the percentages calculated.

Timeliness of Adoption

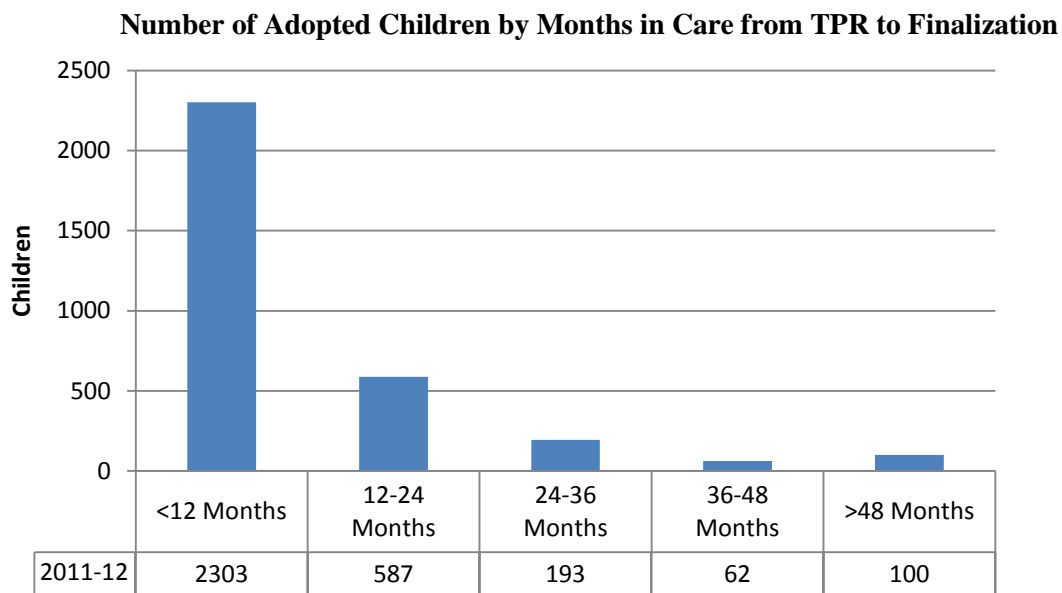
The state’s five-year prevention and permanency plan has two desired population results for the promotion of adoption. Both deal with the timeliness of adoption – increasing the adoptions that occur within 12 months of TPR and decreasing the length of time children have been waiting for adoption since TPR.

State Plan Desired Result 2 – Promotion of Adoption – By June 30, 2015, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 66.4 percent.

It should be helpful to know the number of months from securing the termination of parental rights (TPR) to the adoption finalization date to assess if there are delays. During SFY 2011 – 2012 3,252 children were adopted. Verified data sets were available and provided for 3,245 of these 3,252 children, representing a 99.8 percent non-random sample of this population. This section reports information based upon this sample of children for whom the data were complete.

As the following chart documents, 2,303 (70.97%) of the adoptions were finalized in less than twelve months from date of TPR. This is above the target of exceeding 66.4 percent in the next four years. Statewide efforts will continue in order to maintain this progress. As shown in this chart, of the children adopted during SFY 2011 – 2012, over 350 children were adopted after waiting two or more years and of these, 106 children had been waiting for four or more years. The longer a child is in foster care waiting adoption, the more difficult it may be to place the child. The circuits and their providers have made adoption possible for 942 of these children in their care that had waited longer than 12 months for their adoption

Chart 2. Length of Stay in Foster Care from the Date of Termination of Parental Rights to the Date of Adoption Finalization



As stated earlier, during SFY 2011 – 2012, 3,252 adoptions from the child welfare system were finalized in Florida. Of those, 3,245 had the adoptive parent relationship data entered into the system, a 99.8 percent non-random sample. Three-quarters of the 3,245 children were adopted by the families known to them and where they were already living – by their foster parents or relative caregivers: **26 percent** were adopted by foster parents and **50 percent** were adopted by relatives. The remaining **24 percent** of these children were adopted by families who were recruited for them. Over the last five years, the number and therefore the percentage of relative caregiver adoptions have increased. As documented in the table below, the percentages of these three adoptive populations do vary by circuit, with the highlighted cells showing the highest percentage for each circuit.

Table 18. Percentage of Adoptions by Circuit by Type of Adoptive Family

Circuit	Foster Parents	Relatives	Recruited Parents	Circuit	Foster Parents	Relatives	Recruited Parents
Circuit 01	25%	55%	20%	Circuit 11	31%	49%	19%
Circuit 02	26%	47%	26%	Circuit 12	33%	38%	29%
Circuit 03	19%	60%	21%	Circuit 13	29%	46%	25%
Circuit 04	21%	60%	18%	Circuit 14	19%	54%	28%
Circuit 05	23%	53%	24%	Circuit 15	29%	56%	16%
Circuit 06	28%	43%	29%	Circuit 16	30%	60%	10%
Circuit 07	18%	64%	18%	Circuit 17	33%	34%	33%
Circuit 08	13%	61%	26%	Circuit 18	29%	52%	19%
Circuit 09	30%	42%	28%	Circuit 19	12%	70%	18%
Circuit 10	25%	37%	38%	Circuit 20	47%	38%	15%

State Plan Desired Result 3 – Promotion of Adoption – By June 30, 2015, 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 State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 53.19 percent. (Note: In the original plan submission the figures for SFY 2008 – 2009 were based on a different calculation and have been updated retroactively to improve the quality of the metric. Previously, these figures were calculated based on the date of removal to the end of the fiscal year. The modified metric instead uses the last date of TPR until the end of the fiscal year.)

Table 19 shows the same categories found in Table 15, but for a different snapshot of time. These counts were taken on June 30, 2012 and provide for end of State Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012 counts as well as a starting base for the beginning of the next State Fiscal Year 2012 – 2013.

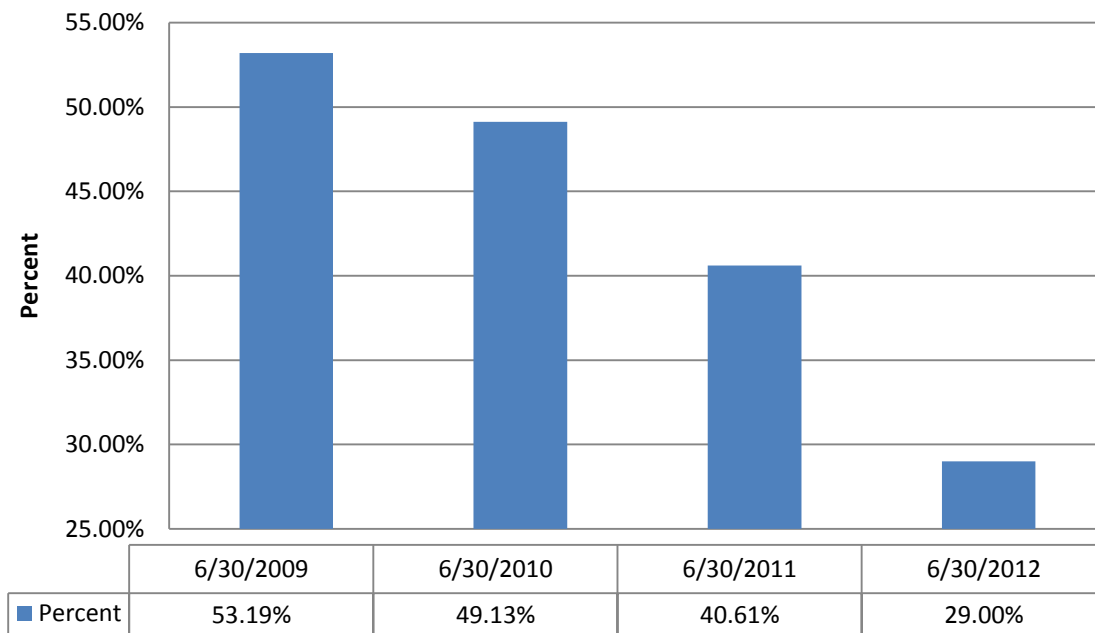
Table 19. Adoption-Related Populations as of June 30, 2012

POPULATION DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
a. Children TPR'ed or who have a primary goal of adoption	5,875
b. Children with a primary goal of adoption regardless of TPR status	5,147
c. Children TPR'ed, regardless of goal	3,612
d. Children who have been TPR'ed and have a primary goal of adoption	2,884
e. Children who have been TPR'ed, have a primary goal of adoption, do not have an identified family and are eligible to be featured on the DCF website	621

* Source July 1, 2012 AFCARS Extract

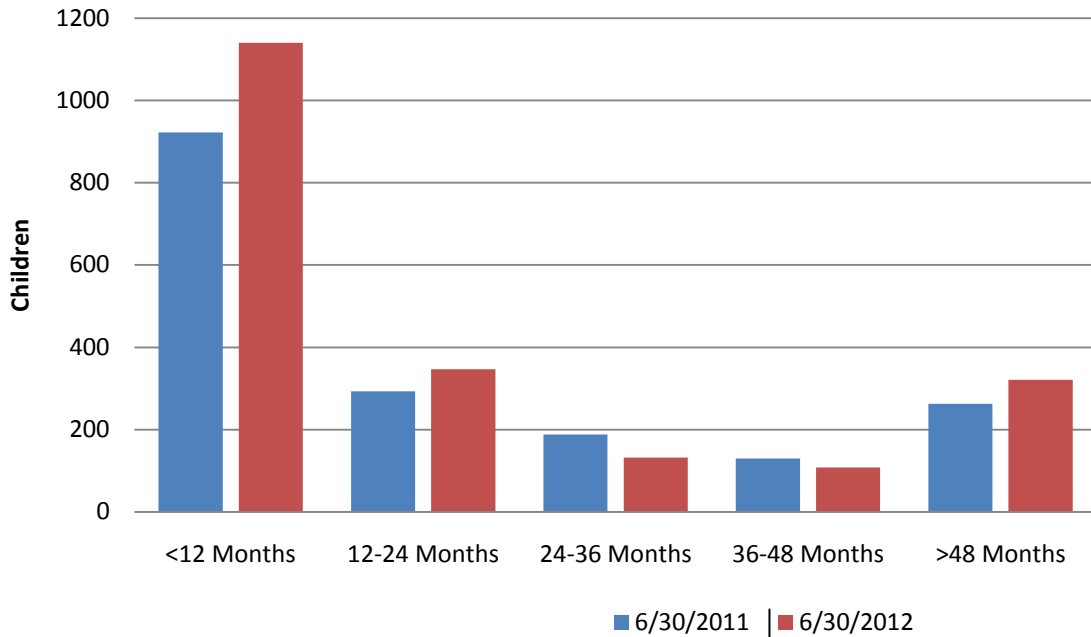
As shown in Table 19 2,884 children were waiting to be adopted as of June 30, 2012. Of these, 2,048 have TPR dates entered in the system providing a 71 percent non-random sample for analysis. Of those, 836 (29%) have been waiting longer than 12 months from the date of their TPR. As shown in Chart 3 below, the percent has decreased from the prior year percent of 40.61 percent.

Chart 3. Percent of Children Awaiting Adoption Who Have Been Waiting Longer than 12 Months



The children awaiting adoption can be further illustrated by the length of time (in months) since they became legally free for adoption (TPR). Chart 4 displays the proportion of children who have been TPR'd, have a primary goal of adoption, and are therefore said to be “available for adoption” for the last two state fiscal years. Taken together, Charts 3 and 4 indicate that more children becoming newly available for adoption are being found permanent adoptive homes within 12 months and that an increasing number of children who have been in foster care and awaiting adoption for a longer period of time are being found permanent homes. In fact, the majority of the total number children available for adoption at the end of the fiscal year have been waiting less than 12 months.

Chart 4. Children Awaiting Adoption by Length of Time Since TPR



Total Number of Children	2,152	2,351
Number with complete data	1,796	2,048
Percent in Non-random sample	83%	87%

As previously shown in Table 19, there were 2,884 children legally available for adoption with a primary goal of adoption as of June 30, 2011. Of these, 621 (21%) do not have identified adoptive families as of June 30, 2012 and are listed on the website as available for adoption. Only the 621 children available without identified adoptive families are described below. On the next page, Chart 5 describes these 621 children by age groupings. Youth who are 13 – 14 years old represent 31% of the waiting children. Over half (52%) are youth age thirteen or older. 13 percent of the available children are eight years of age or younger while 87 percent are between the ages of nine and seventeen.

Chart 5. Age Groups of Children without Identified Adoptive Families Awaiting Adoption

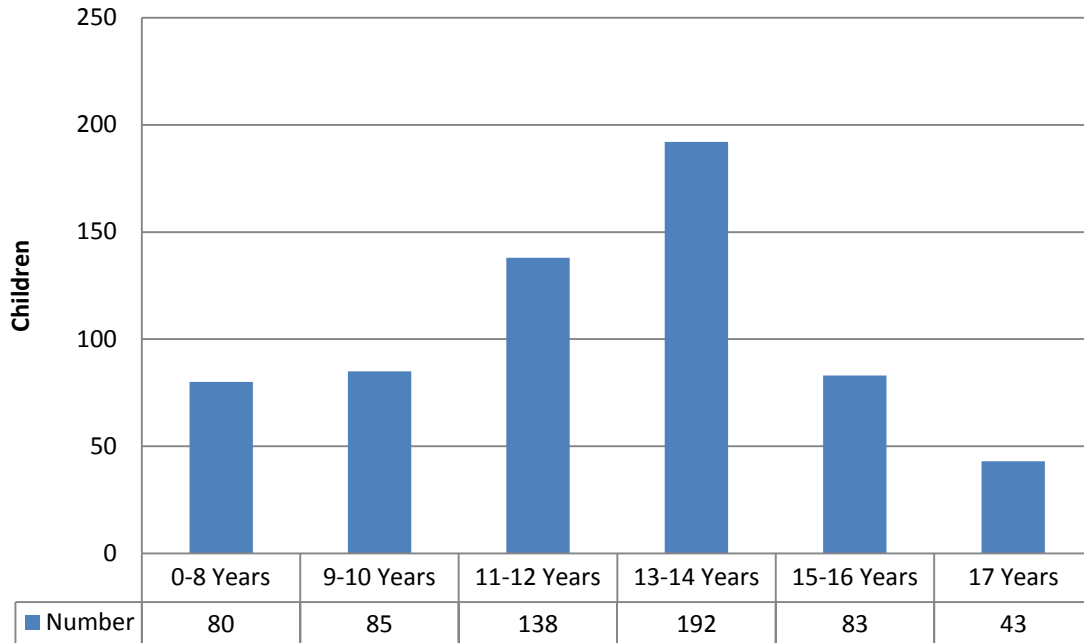
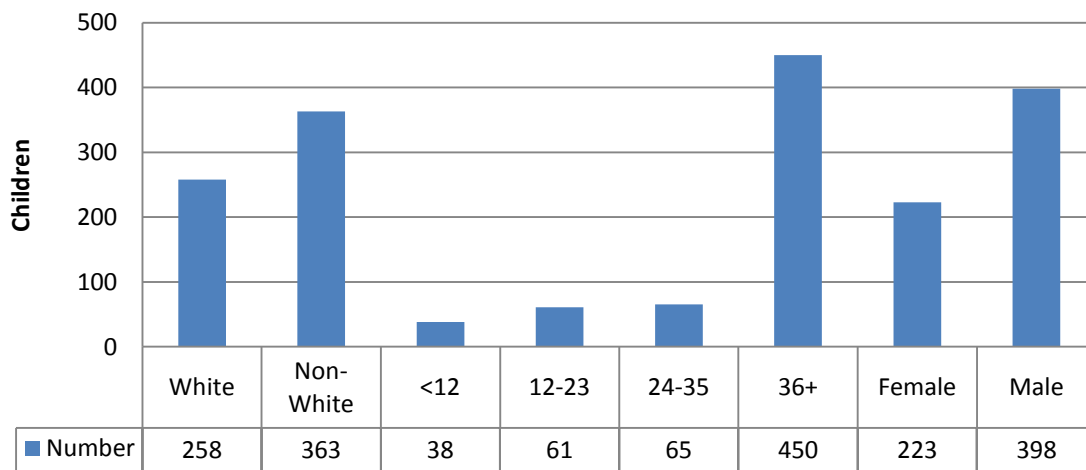


Chart 6 describes the races, lengths of time waiting to be adopted and the genders of non-random samples of the 621 children without identified adoptive families awaiting adoption. Of these children, 64% are male and 36% are female. Over half (58%) of the available children with race data are non-white. Over two-thirds (72%) have been legally available and waiting for three or more years without an identified family. This is significantly different than Chart 4, where the majority of the total number of children awaiting adoption is less than 12 months.

Chart 6. Race, Amount of Time Waiting and Gender of Children without Identified Adoptive Families Awaiting Adoption



	Race	Months Since TPR	Gender
Total Number of Children	621	621	621
Number with Complete Data	621	614	621
% in Non-Random Sample	100%	99%	100%

Dissolutions of Adoptions

State Plan Desired Result 4, Support of Adoptive Families – By June 30, 2015, the annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 number of 98.

The Department of Children and Families Office of Child Welfare submitted data provided by the Circuits on the number of children who were returned to foster care after finalized adoptions and the parental rights of the adoptive parents were terminated. The reasons for the dissolutions were also documented by the Circuits for each child. A comprehensive analysis of adoption dissolutions by the post adoption services program for each Community Based Care Lead Agencies will assist in assessing the effectiveness of their post adoption services program. The two most prominent reasons for dissolutions of adoption were the adopted child's violent behaviors or significant mental health issues. Because these are so closely tied, many of the reported dissolutions cited both reasons. In those cases, the counts are provided for both.

An analysis of the reasons and circumstances for every dissolution can assist the local post adoption services programs in determining if existing post adoption services are effective and if additional post adoption services are needed. Circuit 16 is the only circuit with no dissolutions last fiscal year. Many adoptive parents do not request post adoption services for many months or even years after a problem arises. Some post adoption services may be perceived as ineffective or too cumbersome for the parents to access. The sooner effective services are implemented; the sooner stress can be reduced within an adoptive family. A research study published by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute in October 2010 supports the need for an ongoing analysis of the post adoption services in each community. The 75 children with dissolutions listed below actually involved 56 adoptive families. The dissolution number is counted by child (which includes sibling groups). In addition to sibling groups of two, there were four large sibling groups (a sibling group of five and three sibling groups of three) included in the dissolution data below which increased the numbers for Circuits 1, 2 and 11 over their number of dissolutions from last fiscal year. Large sibling groups can be difficult to assimilate within a family especially when a family has a limited support network and one or more children in the sibling group are experiencing significant educational issues. The large sibling groups with dissolutions must be analyzed closely to determine if additional local resources are needed when sibling groups are being placed together for adoption. Adoption competent family therapy, supportive in-home services or educational supports may have been needed to assist these adoptive families.

Table 20. Dissolutions by Circuit and Child-Related Reasons Cited

CIRCUIT	NUMBER OF DISSOLUTIONS (UNDUPLICATE D COUNTS)	REASONS CITED FOR THE DISSOLUTIONS (DUPLICATED COUNTS)					
		BEHAVIORAL ISSUES	MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES	PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES	JUVENILE JUSTICE ISSUES	SAFETY OF OTHER CHILDREN	OTHER
Circuit 01	12	7					
Circuit 02	5	5					
Circuit 03	1		1			1	
Circuit 04	12	9	3	1	2	2	Child was not bonding
Circuit 05	5	2	1			1	
Circuit 06	3	3				1	
Circuit 07	2	1					
Circuit 08	1		1		1	1	
Circuit 09	3	3					
Circuit 10	2	2	2		1	2	
Circuit 11	8	3				1	
Circuit 12	4	1	1				
Circuit 13	1	1	1				
Circuit 14	2	1	1				
Circuit 15	1	1					
Circuit 16	0						
Circuit 17	5	1	1				
Circuit 18	4	1					
Circuit 19	3	2	1			1	
Circuit 20	1	1	1	1			
Totals	75*	44	14	2	4	10	1

* The 75 children with dissolutions listed above involved 56 adoptive families. This number is counted by child and includes sibling groups. In addition to sibling groups of two, there were four large sibling groups (a sibling group of five and three sibling groups of three).

The 34 children with abuse/neglect investigations listed below actually represent 20 adoptive families. Numerous investigations involved sibling groups, not just one child. Circuits cited that there were dissolutions due to the inability of the adoptive parents to either care for or provide a safe home for the adopted child(ren), specifically the adoptive parents of 10 children were afraid for their own safety and/or the safety of other children in the home. These investigations were initiated after an adoptive parent refused to allow an adopted child to return home after being released from a mental health or Department of Juvenile Justice facility. In each of these investigations, the adoptive parents were afraid because of significant threats or serious prior assaults by the adopted child on the adoptive parent or another child in the home.

Table 21. Dissolutions by Circuit and Adoptive Parent-Related Reasons Cited

CIRCUIT	NUMBER OF DISSOLUTIONS (UNDUPLICATED COUNTS)	REASONS CITED FOR THE DISSOLUTIONS (DUPLICATED COUNTS)		
		PARENT UNABLE TO CONTINUE CARE (SAFETY IN HOME, ETC.)	ABUSE OR NEGLECT BY THE ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)	OTHER
Circuit 01	12		5	Adoptive parent has with heart problems.
Circuit 02	5		5	
Circuit 03	1		1	
Circuit 04	1	1	3	
Circuit 05	5		2	
Circuit 06	3			
Circuit 07	2		1	
Circuit 08	1			
Circuit 09	3		3	
Circuit 10	2	1	1	Mom has severe health problems.
Circuit 11	8		4	
Circuit 12	4		3	
Circuit 13	1			
Circuit 14	2		1	
Circuit 15	1			
Circuit 16	0			
Circuit 17	5		2	
Circuit 18	4		3	
Circuit 19	3	1		
Circuit 20	1	1		Child w/severe developmental needs and parent with health problems.
Totals	75*	4	34**	4

* The 75 dissolutions listed above are counted by child and includes sibling groups. The 75 dissolutions involved 56 adoptive families.

** The 34 investigations involved 34 children and 20 adoptive families.

Status of Support of Adoptive Families

To assess the status of support of adoptive families, the Department of Children and Families Office of Child Welfare submitted data provided by the Circuits on the number of adoptive parent support groups, number of adoption competent mental health professionals and number of post adoption services counselors. These data were checked against the numbers submitted in the local five-year plans for the support of adoptive families. Where discrepancies were found between the two sets of information, the Circuits were contacted to assist with providing the final numbers used below.

Support Groups

Adoptive parent and youth support groups provide opportunities for adoptive parents and youth to meet with other adoptive parents and youth who are struggling with similar challenges and concerns, generally meet once a month and are appropriate for the languages, cultures and needs of the participants in each community; receive support from umbrella organizations and qualified facilitators when appropriate (e.g., teen support groups); etc. In the rural areas where there are limited numbers of adoptive families, newsletters and group emails are being utilized to provide new information about post adoption services and an avenue for some adoptive families to communicate with each other.

The twenty Circuits reported 48 adoptive parent support groups this year, this is four more support groups than last fiscal year. Every Circuit has at least one support group as of December 2012. Support groups are easy to start but difficult to maintain over time. Several of the support groups include both foster and adoptive parents in the group, however, it is important to remember that over 30 percent of the adoptions each year are by foster parents and therefore a support group inclusive of both parent types is appropriate.

Table 22. Quantity of Adoptive Parent Support Groups by Circuit

CIRCUIT	NUMBER OF ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS	COMMENTS
Circuit 01	4	Quarterly newsletters are sent to all adoptive parents. There are four foster/adoptive parent support groups for four counties in Circuit 1.
Circuit 02	1	There is one adoptive parent support group. Quarterly newsletters are sent to all adoptive parents and a teen support group has been established.
Circuit 03	1	There is now one adoptive parent support group. Many of the counties in Circuit 3 are very rural. Newsletters are sent out quarterly about post adoption services.
Circuit 04	3	Newsletters are sent with subsidy checks monthly or quarterly by the two CBCs, Family Support Services and Kids First of Florida.
Circuit 05	4	Four of the five counties have adoptive parent support groups.
Circuit 06	1	One adoptive parent support group meets monthly and is welcoming to families from the two counties in the Circuit.
Circuit 07	2	Family Integrity Program created a new adoptive parent support group in March of 2012 and meets bi-monthly. In addition, quarterly newsletters are sent to adoptive parents.
Circuit 08	1	There is one adoptive parent support group. Many counties are very rural. Newsletters are sent out quarterly to adoptive parents.
Circuit 09	4	Flyers and email newsletters are sent quarterly to adoptive parents. One of the new groups is facilitated by a mental health professional that is adoption competent.
Circuit 10	3	Two of the support groups are for adoptive parents only and one is an adoptive and foster parent support group. Each group meets monthly.
Circuit 11	4	Monthly newsletters are sent to adoptive parents and a 24 hour Warmline is available with a response by an experienced adoptive parent. Two of the four groups are foster/adoptive parent support groups with one having a breakout session for just adoptive parents. One support group is for Spanish speaking families. All meet monthly.
Circuit 12	5	All are foster and adoptive parent support groups.
Circuit 13	1	There is one foster/adoptive parent support group. In addition, a teen support group is facilitated by a licensed mental health practitioner.
Circuit 14	1	There is one foster/adoptive parent support group. A quarterly newsletter is sent to all adoptive parents and a teen support group has been created with a facilitator.
Circuit 15	2	One group welcomes all members of the triad and is primarily focused on private adoptions.
Circuit 16	1	There is one foster/adoptive parent support group. A newsletter is sent quarterly to adoptive parents.
Circuit 17	2	One group includes foster, adoptive and relative caregivers.
Circuit 18	2	One group includes foster, adoptive and relative caregivers. Newsletters are sent quarterly to adoptive parents.
Circuit 19	2	Newsletters are sent quarterly to adoptive parents.
Circuit 20	4	Support group meetings are conducted at least quarterly with social activities and training events. Newsletters are sent quarterly to adoptive parents. These groups are both foster and adoptive parents.
Statewide Total	48	

Nearly 19,500 children have been adopted from Florida’s child welfare system in the last five years. Research has shown that essential to family resilience are social connections, knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development, parental resilience, and concrete support in times of need. All of these can be made available to families through adoptive parent support groups. There are a total of 48 support groups across the State of Florida as of June 2012, which is four more support groups than reported last fiscal year. An important improvement is that most of the Circuits, 12 of 20 or 60%, have a Warmline or are sending quarterly or monthly newsletters to all adoptive parents in order to engage and inform them about local post adoption services and events. All of the post adoption services counselors are connected to one of the support groups in their area and assist with providing local community resource persons as speakers for one or more of the support group meetings during the year.

Adoption Competency

Adoption competent mental health professionals are mental health professionals who have completed the Rutgers *Adoption Competency* or an equivalent curriculum and provide educational and therapeutic services for adoptive families. The educational and therapeutic services focus on strengthening relationships within the family unit and assist families in understanding the developmental stages of adoption and how adoption impacts each family member and the family as a unit. During the fiscal year, another four trainers, for a total of eight of the original fifteen trainers certified by Rutgers University, were transferred to new positions. Therefore, another train the trainer class was conducted in Tampa during April 2012. Fortunately, fourteen new trainers completing the train the trainer classes and several of the new trainers are from areas of the state where the Department did not have a trainer for the adoption competency curricula previously. Although most of the trainers conducted at least one class during the fiscal year, the training was determined to be more effective if two trainers worked together to conduct each training.

One hundred and ninety-three mental health professionals have completed the adoption competency training. All of the circuits have at least three adoption competent mental health professionals. Each of the adoption competency trainers are planning to conduct at least one training during the fall or spring. Fortunately, the Department has been able to provide, at no cost to the trainees, Certified Educational Units (CEUs) for each mental health professional who is licensed and needs the training hours for continued licensure. This has been a great incentive for the professionals to attend this training.

Table 23. Quantity of Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals by Circuit

CIRCUIT	QUANTITY OF ADOPTION COMPETENT MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
Circuit 01	14
Circuit 02	23
Circuit 03	3
Circuit 04	7
Circuit 05	3
Circuit 06	37
Circuit 07	6
Circuit 08	7
Circuit 09	11
Circuit 10	10
Circuit 11	10
Circuit 12	7
Circuit 13	15
Circuit 14	6
Circuit 15	5
Circuit 16	3
Circuit 17	6
Circuit 18	8
Circuit 19	9
Circuit 20	3
Statewide Total	193

It is exciting to have increased the number of mental health professionals who completed adoption competency training by 46 professionals this fiscal year. Again, almost 19,500 children have been adopted from the child welfare system in the last five years alone and the adoption competency of our mental health community is critical to our families as they struggle with the many challenges adoption can bring to an adoptive family. For the upcoming year, we need to focus on building capacity in some of the circuits where the number of mental health professionals continues to be low. This will be on the agenda to discuss with the post adoption services counselor at a January 2013 meeting.

Post Adoption Services Counselors

A post adoption services counselor is a staff person designated to respond to the requests and service needs of adoptive parents and their families after adoption finalizations have occurred. The response to requests and service needs includes, at a minimum, information and referrals with local resources, assistance to child protective investigators when an investigation involves an adoptive parent, temporary case management, assistance with subsidy and Medicaid issues and assistance in establishing and maintaining one or more adoptive parent support groups. This past fiscal year, all of the post adoption service programs focused on having a post adoption services counselor provide assistance to child protective investigators when an investigation involved an adoptive family. In addition, the statewide case management information system, Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), instituted an automated notification process for the post adoption services staff when an adoptive parent is involved in an abuse investigation. The automated process creates and sends an email notification that informs the post adoption services counselor of an investigation involving an adoptive parent. This notification occurs within 24 hours of the investigation being assigned to the local child protective investigation unit. The post adoption services counselor is able to assist by conducting an assessment of the needs and potential services for the adopted child and adoptive family. Across the state, thirty counselors were identified by the circuits as providing these post adoption services. This is an increase of only one position from last year, however, four circuits established full time positions for post adoption services rather than have one or more staff conduct post adoption services as a part of their job duties. This is a significant improvement! With 21 of the 30 positions or 70% designated as full time post adoption services counselors, this represents a significant increase from last fiscal year of 17 positions or only 59% last fiscal year were designated as full time positions.

Table 24. Quantity of Post Adoption Services Counselors by Circuit

CIRCUIT	QUANTITY OF POST ADOPTION SERVICES COUNSELORS	COMMENTS
Circuit 01	2	The Children’s Home Society Adoption Support Team has two post adoption services counselors, a supervisor and a family support worker.
Circuit 02	1	A full time post adoption services counselor is able to respond to all requests from adoptive families.
Circuit 03	1	A full time post adoption services counselor responds to all requests from families.
Circuit 04	2	CBC has a contract with two full time staff to provide post adoption services.
Circuit 05	1	A full time post adoption counselor was hired and is responding to all requests.
Circuit 06	2	Currently is part of the job duties of two adoption specialists. (This is an increase of another part time position.)
Circuit 07	2	There continues to be a full time post adoption services counselor for Community Partnership. A full time position was created this year for post adoption services within the Family Integrity Program.
Circuit 08	1	A full time post adoption services counselor responds to all requests from families.
Circuit 09	1	There continues to be a full time post adoption services counselor.
Circuit 10	1	A full time position for post adoption services was created this year.

CIRCUIT	QUANTITY OF POST ADOPTION SERVICES COUNSELORS	COMMENTS
Circuit 11	3	One of the three positions is handling post adoption services full time.
Circuit 12	1	Currently is part of the job duties of adoption specialist.
Circuit 13	3	Sylvia Thomas Center is a contract with the CBC. There are three full time staff responding to all requests for post adoption services.
Circuit 14	1	A full time post adoption services counselor responds to all requests.
Circuit 15	1	Currently is part of the job duties of the adoption supervisor
Circuit 16	1	Currently is part of the job duties of the adoption supervisor.
Circuit 17	1	Full time post adoption services counselor.
Circuit 18	2	A full time position for post adoption services was created this year.
Circuit 19	1	Currently is part of the job duties of the adoption supervisor..
Circuit 20	2	There is a full time post adoption services counselor and an adoption specialist who provides technical support and coordination of the post adoption services.
Statewide Total	30	21 of the 30 positions or 70% of the positions providing post adoption services are designated as full time positions.

With nearly 19,500 children adopted from foster care during the last five years, one or more full time designated post adoption services counselors in each circuit are critical for responding timely to the service needs of adoptive families post finalizations. The State of Florida and its partners are committed to providing a sufficient and accessible array of post adoption services in each circuit including information and referral services, temporary case management, assistance with assessments during investigations, assistance with subsidy and Medicaid issues and assistance in maintaining one or more adoptive parent support groups for the many adoptive families who face significant challenges as their adoptive children age and experience the various developmental milestones.

PART 3 – AGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUESTS

The following is a summary of the policy and budget recommendations as submitted to the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection by 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 listed in alphabetical order by agency name. This order does not reflect in any way the priorities of the Executive Office of the Governor, or the Office of Adoption and Child Protection. 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.

Ten (10) state agencies provided policy and budget recommendations related to the prevention of abuse, abandonment and neglect, the promotion of adoption, and the support of adoptive families. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection appreciates the time, resources, and support that each of the agencies invested into creating their recommendations and submissions. These recommendations are summarized below by state agency.

Agency for Health Care Administration

The Agency for Health Care Administration has no recommendations for the further development and improvement of services and programs for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect. However, we do have the following policies and practices in place for the reporting and prevention of child abuse.

Medicaid contracts with providers to provide services to Medicaid recipients. Medicaid has the authority under Chapter 435 and Section 409. 907, Florida Statutes, to deny any applicant that has a conviction for patient or child abuse. The Agency can also terminate a provider from enrollment in the program if it is discovered that the provider has committed patient or child abuse.

Medicaid contracts with managed care plans that maintain a network of providers to provide services to plan enrollees. The model health plan contract requires the Health Plans to ensure that primary care providers screen enrollees for signs of domestic violence and offer referral services to applicable domestic violence prevention community agencies if signs are identified.

Medicaid is in the process of implementation of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program. There are two key components to the SMMC program: the Long-term Care Managed Care program and the Managed Medical Assistance program. Medicaid is statutorily required to select health plans through a competitive procurement process. Plans shall be required to provide information to their enrollees on procedures for reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The Prepaid Mental Health Plans are required to have mental health clinicians available that are competent in the treatment of adoption related issues.

Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) providers are working to increase the quality of care for adopted youth in SIPP and their families. Approximately 16% of the SIPP population are youth who were adopted. The DCF sponsors Adoption Competency Training Sessions. Both SIPP staff and the AHCA's contracted Magellan Care Coordinators have participated in this training. Over the next year we expect that more staff will be trained to expand this knowledge base.

The Delmarva contract (Delmarva is the contracted Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) contracted through AHCA to monitor providers of the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Waiver services for individuals served by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities) requires reporting of all instances of actual or suspected physical/mental abuse (of both adults and children) immediately upon identification to the Abuse Registry, in accordance with Section 39.201, Florida Statutes.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

To ensure that adoptions are successful, plans for families should include accessing all resources available, prior to and effective with the final adoption. These services include all services available through the Medicaid State Plan for children, services available from local school systems, APD and DCF as well as the wide array of local resources that exist in some communities.

During the pre-adoption phase, potential adoptive parents should receive in-depth information, initial and ongoing training about the potential needs of children with developmental disabilities including physical and behavioral challenges that may be present so that they are making an informed decision on adoption of a child with special needs.

To ensure long-term, successful adoptions, there should be a mechanism for follow-along services by the CBC to adoptive families once the adoption becomes final. These services could include respite for parents, support groups and networks for families to share resources and experiences and ongoing case management.

To prevent child abuse, abandonment, neglect and to keep children in their family home, mechanisms to provide in-home services should be developed. These may include rapid response to needed services, family support including parent training, and anger management. Since economic stressors contribute to the potential for child abuse, the family's situation should be viewed as a whole and referrals to programs and agencies that provide assistance with employment or financial assistance should be explored. If the potential for abuse, neglect, etc., is detected early, services and support could be provided on an emergency basis with follow along support as needed. Perhaps a risk assessment could be developed with indicators of triggers or potential situations for abuse.

The interagency agreement signed by the Children's Cabinet should be developed and implemented with training provided to front line staff of all agencies involved.

There will be a need for increased funding to develop these support mechanisms. Budget requests for services to provide the preventive, in-home family support for pre and post adoptive families should be a high priority. The budget request should provide funding for agencies including DCF and APD to provide the services to children in the home who are not Medicaid eligible but who may be at risk of abuse or abandonment. These services would include respite, behavioral services and personal care assistance.

Department of Children and Families

The Department advocates for programs that support all families and prevent child abuse and neglect through community-based planning and service delivery.

As adopted in the Executive Office of the Governor's *Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*, the Department recommends the following prevention strategies:

- **Prevention Strategy 1** Infuse the *Protective Factors* into Florida Systems that Serve Parents and Children.
- **Prevention Strategy 2** Strengthen Florida's Family Support Systems to Better Serve the Needs of Florida Families.
- **Prevention Strategy 3** Provide Information on Ways to Ensure that Children are Safe and Nurtured and Live in Stable Environments that Promote Well-being.
- **Prevention Strategy 4** Inform and Instruct Education Communities (*The Florida Cooperative Education Child Abuse Prevention Plan*).
- **Prevention Strategy 5** Inform and Instruct Law Enforcement Communities (*The Florida Cooperative Law Enforcement Child Abuse Prevention Plan*).
- **Prevention Strategy 6** Monitor and Evaluate Plan Implementation.

In collaboration with the Department of Health, the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, Healthy Families Florida and the Association of Healthy Start Coalitions, our agency will specifically focus on the following action steps:

- **1.5 Technical Assistance to Circuits.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have provided assistance to circuits seeking to incorporate the *Protective Factors* within local prevention services and systems.
- **3.1 Public Awareness and Education.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented statewide, year-round public awareness campaigns with an emphasis in April by providing information to the general population on child development, positive parenting practices, child safety and community action that promotes and supports each of the *Protective Factors* for Florida's families.
- **3.2 Evidence-Based Parenting Programs.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have provided information and resources to promote and build evidence-based parenting programs that support the *Protective Factors* as enhancement within circuit planning team local prevention services and systems.
- **3.3 Child Death Review.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented selected prevention efforts based upon the findings of an All Child Death Review process that provides for the review of the deaths of all children from birth until the age of 18 who died in Florida.

As adopted in the Executive Office of the Governor's *Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*, the Department recommends the following adoption promotion strategies:

- **Promotion of Adoption Strategy 1:** Infuse the *Protective Factors* into Florida Systems that Recruit Adoptive Parents. By 30 June 2015, Florida-based adoptive parent recruitment systems will have intentionally incorporated the *Protective Factors* as a foundation for their work.

- **Promotion of Adoption Strategy 2:** Strengthen Florida Recruitment Systems to Better Recruit Families to Meet the Needs of Children and Youth Awaiting Adoption. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented systems and efforts to better target recruitment of families to meet the needs of children and youth awaiting public adoption.

As evident in our role as sharing the lead with our Community-Base Care partners, our agency will specifically focus on the following action steps:

- **1.1 Local Recruitment Efforts.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have incorporated the *Five Protective Factors* as a part of the foundation for the targeted recruitment of communities and potential adoptive families to provide long term stability and best meet the needs of the children awaiting adoption.
- **1.2 Parent Preparation and Training.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have incorporated in its orientation and education programs for potential adoptive parents, instruction on the importance and ways to ensure the presence of the *Protective Factors*.
- **2.2 Targeted and Child Specific Recruitment.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have increased targeted and child specific recruitment strategies through the use and support of *Explore Adoption* tools and materials and the Heart Galleries.
- **2.3 Information and Support for Prospective Adoptive Parents.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented fully the state adopted Customer Service Protocol for supporting families through the adoption process and after finalization of child adoption.

As adopted in the Executive Office of the Governor's *Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*, the Department recommends the following adoption support strategies:

- **Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 1:** Strengthen Florida Service Systems to Better Support Adoptive Families to Meet the Needs of Their Adopted Children and Youth. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented post adoption services that provide for mental health, emotional, physical and other needs of adoptive families.
- **Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 2:** Provide Information and Supports to Adoptive Families. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have provided information and supports to Florida adoptive families on ways to build competence in meeting the needs of their adopted children and youth.
- **Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 3:** Monitor and Evaluate Plan Implementation. By 30 June 2015, leadership of plan implementation will have monitored and annually assessed the progress and effectiveness the plan-based initiatives.

The Department will specifically focus on the following action steps:

- **1.1 Information and Support for Adoptive Families.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented fully the state adopted Customer Service Protocol for supporting families with adopted children.
- **1.2 Adoption Competent Professionals.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have increased the number and accessibility of adoption competent mental health, education, and child welfare professionals, so that sufficient numbers are accessible as defined by each circuit.

- **1.3 Post Adoption Services Counselors.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have increased the number of post adoption services counselors in Florida so that each Community Based Care Lead Agency has a sufficient number (a minimum of one full-time staff person) dedicated to responding to the needs and inquiries of adoptive families after finalization.
- **2.1 Adoption Support Groups.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have increased the number and sustainability of quality adoptive parent and youth support groups so that each community has a local support group or, in rural communities, at least a quarterly newsletter or warm-line that informs adoptive parents of nearby support groups and upcoming educational opportunities and information related to the Five Protective Factors.
- **2.2 Education Opportunities for Adoptive Parents.** By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have increased the number and accessibility of quality educational opportunities for adoptive parents that include education related to the Five Protective Factors, caring for the needs of adoptive children, and supporting the needs of adoptive families.

Prevention and Adoption Support Legislative Budget Requests

PREVENTION

The prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect is a priority in Florida and access to preventive services for all children need to be available.

- The Department’s 2013-2014 Legislative Budget Request includes \$2,000,000 of General Revenue to restore nonrecurring funding for Healthy Families Florida (HFF) to maintain the Fiscal Year 2012-2013 funding of \$18,114,329.
 - The Department recognizes that the Healthy Families Florida (HFF) program is designed to enable children to grow up healthy, safe, and be nurtured by promoting positive parenting and healthy child development. It is our single largest voluntary child abuse and neglect prevention program.
 - This request aligns with the agency’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan to *Enable Family Accountability*: Every resident desires and deserves to reclaim their right to prosper and to raise their children responsibly. (Issue number 4003010)
 - The Department’s request will prevent the elimination of services to 625 families and their 1,106 children who are at high risk of abuse and neglect and the elimination of services in up to 10 of the 55 counties that receive services. This is necessary to prevent child abuse and neglect and the removal of children from their homes.
- The Department requests \$1,468,608 of non-recurring Federal Grants Trust Fund (Department Unreserved Fund Balance) budget authority to provide intensive services in selected communities for female victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the foster care system. These children are in need of placements and services that comply with requirements established by the Florida Safe Harbor Act of 2012 and are intended to mitigate the impact of child maltreatment and the cycle of further victimization.
 - This request aligns with the agency’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan to *Effect Program Improvements*: *Apply proven best practices to maximize efficiencies and outcomes.*(Issue number 4001240)

- It is estimated that approximately 293,000 American youth are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The majority of American victims of commercial sexual exploitation tend to be runaway youth living on the streets who are highly susceptible to become victims of prostitution. These children generally come from homes where they have been abused, or from families that have abandoned them, and often become involved in prostitution as a way to support themselves financially (Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S, Canada and Mexico, University of Pennsylvania (2001).

ADOPTION

Continued support of Florida's adoptive families remains a key priority of the Department. The Department's 2013-2014 Legislative Budget Request includes requests for Maintenance Adoption Subsidies.

- The Department requests \$20,582,803 in General Revenue to fund ongoing activities performed in the Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies regarding Maintenance Adoption Subsidies. This action is needed to restore non-recurring funding that was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2012-2013. This issue has a corresponding growth issue of \$10,455,562 (issue number 4006020) for a total request of \$31,041,365 for Maintenance Adoption Subsidies. Restoration of nonrecurring budget for programs supported by this budget will prevent the elimination of critical services for adopted children and their families. (issue number 4409000)
- The Department requests \$ 10,455,562 (\$5,847,059 in General Revenue and \$ 4,608,503 in Federal Grants Trust Fund) to continue ongoing and new maintenance adoption subsidies for those children who have been adopted from foster care. These subsidies enable families to consider special needs adoptions. This issue, in addition to issue number 4409000 for \$20,582,803, requests a total of \$ for Maintenance Adoption Subsidies. (issue number 4006020)
- An annual survey of adoptive parents will be conducted to determine the quality of existing post adoption services, timeliness of responses to requests by adoptive parents for post adoption services and other services that are needed but not available or accessible. The survey results will be analyzed to establish a plan for potential improvements to local post adoption services programs.

As a result of the Maintenance Adoption Subsidy Program, thousands of children are growing up with permanent families rather than aging out of foster care at age 18. Section 409.166, Florida Statutes, recognizes the need for financial assistance for children who are adopted from foster care. These adopted children require a special commitment from adoptive parents because of the children's significant challenges. Every child needs and should have the stability and security of a permanent family. In Fiscal Year 2010-2011, there were 3009 new final adoptions. Many families, foster parents and relative caregivers have proven that they are able and willing to successfully adopt foster children because of this financial assistance.

Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections understands that many inmates and persons on probation are parents or part of family units with children; placing these families and, in particular, these children in a higher risk category. Targeted services for this population (either while in custody, or state supervision) offer opportunities to develop healthy parental skills and bring stability to these family units.

The Department of Corrections is not making any specific budget requests at this time but would support funding for these services.

Department of Education

The Department of Education serves on the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency (CAPP) Advisory Council and provided input for the Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015. Major CAPP Plan activities have included the development and distribution of the Child Abuse Prevention Sourcebook for Florida public school personnel, significant contribution to the Department of Children and Families web-based training course, and online training for health educators.

At this time, the department has no further recommendations related to CAPP activities and is not submitting a budget request.

Department of Health

Our recommendation is that Pregnancy Support be moved to the Department of Children and Families. This will assist in better coordination and reduction in duplication of support services that promote and encourage childbirth and adoption.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) submits the following policy proposals and budget request related to the development and improvement of services and programs promoting adoption, adoptive families, child abuse and neglect prevention, or adoption promotion and support needs.

- Budget: \$1,568,400 in the 2013-14 Legislative Budget Request (LBR) for respite beds to address children in domestic violence situations. (*DJJ Category: Prevention*)
- Legislation: As part of DJJ's 2013 legislative package, the Department is proposing changes that directly address criminal sanctions for employees found guilty of abuse or neglect of any individual being held in a juvenile facility or program regardless of age. It is DJJ's recommendation to amend Section 827.01, Florida Statutes, to define "child" as any person under the age of 18 years old (as is in current law) or any person being held in the custody of the DJJ, or any contracted, private, public, or county operated juvenile facility. Background: On March 8, 2012 the Circuit Court of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit in Palm Beach County released the Grand Jury Report on the death of Eric Perez while in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice. Eric Perez had turned 18 just a few days before his tragic death. The report specifically identified a recommendation regarding the definition of a "child" and stated: The Legislature should enact a statute addressing the criminal neglect of anyone in the care or custody of the DJJ. A subsequent Miami-Dade Grand Jury Report dated July 25, 2012 cited and supported the Palm Beach report in their recommendation to change the definition of child in statute. (*DJJ Category: Detention*)

- **Policy:** A recommendation regarding DJJ and DCF developing a protocol to deal with issues relating to case management and transition services for current and anticipated dually served (crossover) youth. The issue is that youth in DJJ facilities who are in the foster care system present some unique issue relating to case management, transition planning and exit placement. In addition, there are DJJ youth that are not technically in the dependency system, however, as a part of the DJJ treatment and transition planning process, it becomes clear that parental involvement and custody will be critical issues. The current system is such that the active involvement of the child welfare/dependency system does not occur until very close to the release date of the youth. There is a need to develop a protocol/process that would allow both DJJ and DCF to be more proactive in dealing with cases when there is a reasonable expectation that custody/placement issues will be problematic. This issue is linked to prevention of child abuse and neglect. *(DJJ Category: Residential)*
- **Policy/Legislation:** Consideration should be made to have the existing Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Council (CAPP) reconvene (annually) to review status and progress of the initial five-year plan, or have the Legislature consider the CAPP for sunset review. The CAPP was tasked with developing a five-year Plan (2010-2015). With the approval of the Department of Juvenile Justice representative, serving in a support role, one of the recommendations of the CAPP was for training of law enforcement officers in recognizing and intervention of child abuse. The training was coordinated, conducted, and managed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). During the past year, there has not been a follow-up sessions where the CAPP has meet; therefore no additional tasking or objectives have been assigned DJJ. *(DJJ Category: Prevention)*

Department of Law Enforcement

Inspector Terry Thomas provides training throughout the state on child abuse investigations. We will continue providing this training to Florida law enforcement and child protection workers at the current level but due to budget constraints, any additional training would require an adequate budget allotment to offset the costs.

This year, we have two recommendations for consideration that have been made previously but not yet implemented:

- Expand the scope of the State Child Death Review Team to ensure ALL child deaths are reviewed, not just those cases verified by DCF.
- Consider establishing a requirement in state statute for background check screening for private adoptions and for persons who house foreign exchange students.

The first is a recommendation that we strongly support and that has been recommended by various members of the group. The second, if implemented, could potentially have a fiscal impact as a government agency would be required to do the checks to authorize the adoption or placement of the student. We believe that all children placed in homes should be afforded the same level of protection regardless of whether the adoption goes through DCF, through a private organization or an attorney.

Guardian ad Litem

We recommend that every dependent child in Florida have a volunteer Guardian ad Litem. The Guardian ad Litem Program has launched an initiative to improve outcomes for children and increase program efficiency by using paid GAL staff to recruit, train and supervise volunteer child advocates. We know from national studies that appointment of volunteer GALs is closely related to improved outcomes for dependent children, such as better school performance, recidivism rates that are halved, and more services for children and families.

Our FY 2013-2014 Legislative Budget Request contains two issues. The first is for \$1.8 million in recurring funds to continue a program of GAL recruitment begun this year. The request will allow us to continue program expansion, with the five-year goal of every dependent child in Florida having a volunteer Guardian ad Litem. The second issue is for \$2.8 million to support the new role of paid GAL staff, who will serve as volunteer managers rather than child advocates, as we move to an all-volunteer system of child advocacy.

We believe the GAL Program plays an important role in both adoption and child protection. Our monthly scorecard includes measures on timeliness of adoptions and the GAL volunteers and attorneys work tirelessly to ensure that children who deserve adoptive homes are placed with appropriate, loving families. For its work, the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program was a recipient of the National "Angels in Adoption Award" for 2012, based on the nomination by Senator Marco Rubio. We also track placement stability and key federal permanency measures, as we know our volunteers make a contribution to the welfare of the children we serve.

The value of goods and services donated by GAL volunteers is equivalent to more than \$20 million. The Guardian ad Litem Program was recognized by Florida TaxWatch for its cost effectiveness and the impact it makes by using volunteers - both lay advocates and attorneys. In 2012, the program received the coveted Eagle Award from the Prudential-Davis Productivity Award program - the highest award offered.

Office of Early Learning

Florida's Office of Early Learning will implement a Parent Engagement Initiative that combines Parent Leadership Ambassador Training with technical assistance and mentoring to infuse the Protective Factors through Florida's 31 Early Learning Communities. Florida's Advisory Council on Early Education and Care has approved the use of Head State ARRA funds for fulfilling immediate action steps on the Parent Engagement Initiative. We are not requesting additional budget dollars.

APPENDICES

Florida Statutes 39.001
Florida Statutes 402.56
Florida Statutes 14.31