

Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection



2014 Annual Report



STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

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

We are pleased to present to you this annual report of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection (Office). The purpose of the Office is to establish a comprehensive statewide approach for the promotion of adoption, support for adoptive families and prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. In addition, the Office provides administrative support to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council.

As directed by Florida Statutes, Section 39.001, this annual report provides an update of the activities of the Office, an update on the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – 2015*, a summary of data pertaining to foster care adoption and child abuse and neglect, and recommendations by state agencies.

The Office, with limited resources, has employed creative strategies to complete tasks and worked to facilitate a coordinated statewide approach to providing comprehensive and holistic services to children and families. The information below provides a snapshot of information contained within this report:

- Identifies partnerships and events where information was presented by the Office to promote activities in support of state and agency initiatives.
- Performance towards state level targets have resulted in:
 - The Child Maltreatment Rate being reduced from a high of 13.23 per 1,000 children in SFY 2011-12 to 11.42 per 1,000 children in SFY 2013-14.
 - The percentage of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption is 7.02% higher than the baseline percentage of 66.4% in SFY 2008-09.
 - The percentage of children legally free for adoption who have been waiting for adoption since the date of termination of parental rights for more than 12 months is 12.83% lower than the baseline percentage of 53.19% in SFY 2008-09.
 - The annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) was lower than the SFY 2008-09 baseline of 98.

While we have made some progress, there is still much more to be done. We are very grateful for the leadership of Governor Rick Scott, First Lady Ann Scott, and Lieutenant Governor Carlos Lopez-Cantera for their vision and dedication to ensuring Florida is on the right track where children and families can thrive.

We hope you will review this annual report and that the information will help make decisions that will safeguard and improve outcomes for children and families across the state.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Zackary Gibson in cursive.

Zackary Gibson
Florida's Chief Child Advocate
Director, Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection

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Part 1 – SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection

On June 12, 2007, the bill creating the Office of Adoption and Child Protection (Office), within the Executive Office of the Governor, was signed into law. The duties and responsibilities of the Office are enshrined in Section 39.001, Florida Statutes (§39.001, F.S.). 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. In addition, the Office provided administrative support to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet as outlined in Section 402.56, Florida Statutes (§402.56, F.S.) and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council as outlined in Section 14.31, Florida Statutes (§14.31, F.S.).

The Office worked diligently to advance the efforts of all three statutory requirements and state agencies through a servant leadership approach. As of December 2014, the Office has a dedicated staff of two full-time employees: Zackary Gibson (Chief Child Advocate and Director) and Christina Pacelle, MSW (Special Projects Manager), and one part-time employee: Frenchie Yon (Program Support). To assist with the many tasks of the Office, student interns were utilized and provided support throughout the spring, summer, and fall semesters of 2014. Together, this team has the passion and desire to work collaboratively with state agency leaders and staff to support efforts that increase awareness and improve programs and services in order to achieve desired outcomes for children, youth, and families.

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(8)(b), F.S., the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Child Advocate and Director 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, and developing public awareness campaigns.



The Chief Child Advocate and Director serves on the following coordinating councils/committees:

- Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council
- Department of Education Faith-Based and Community Outreach Advisory Council
- Early Steps Continuous Improvement Stakeholder Group
- Florida AWARE State Management Team
- Florida Children and Youth Cabinet
- Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children
- Project LAUNCH State Council
- Public Health Recovery Workgroup
- Statewide Child Abuse Death Review Team
- Statewide Trauma Informed Care Workgroup

Throughout 2014, the Chief Child Advocate has worked to support interagency collaboration and coordination, and the Governor's priorities towards improving education, economic development and job creation and maintaining affordable cost of living in Florida. These efforts include:

- Provided outreach to other state contacts to identify topics, strategies, and approaches that Florida could consider to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.
- Reviewed foundation and federal grant opportunities to support the efforts of the Office and forwarded opportunities to state agency contacts and stakeholders for consideration to enhance funding capacities.
- Collaborated in the development and implementation of public awareness campaigns focusing on healthy child development, promotion of adoption and support for adoptive families, as well as bullying and cyber bullying. Through these campaigns, information was provided to connect families with resources that can strengthen their protective capacities.
- Collaborated in the development of a survey to gather baseline data about current practices in school districts related to collaboration and connections to resources and information assisting students experiencing trauma or otherwise challenging situations. Results of this survey will be used to identify strategies to strengthen collaboration and coordination among state agencies and stakeholders at the local level that can support schools/school districts to keep children in school and on track towards graduation.
- Developed relationships with the Florida League of Cities to disseminate information on public awareness campaigns to all Mayors in the state. This was done in an effort to seek their support in developing proclamations to acknowledge their municipality's support in addressing issues to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods they serve. In the development phase with the Florida Association of Counties to engage their involvement and support of child focused topics to strengthen the communities they serve.
- Supported and assisted in the development of relationships and partnerships between faith-based and community-based organizations to assist state agencies serve children and families in need.
- Collaborated in the development and implementation of the National Faith Symposium to celebrate faith and community-based organizations for their work in support of state agencies, offer break-out sessions on promising and best practices to engage individuals and families in need, and become more aware of other state initiatives and activities to strengthen communities and families.



One Voice at the Steps event in Inverness, FL

To increase awareness of Office functions and to promote the statutory duties and responsibilities that support state initiatives, the Chief Child Advocate presented at the following events:

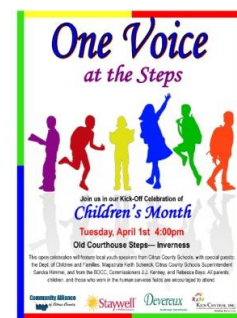
Angels Against Abuse: Child Advocacy Expo – St. Petersburg, FL



The Child Advocacy Expo is an annual event that brings together various community organizations to showcase what they can do to assist children and families who are at-risk or in need. Organizations are provided with the opportunity to present information about their programs to promote collaboration among local groups. The Chief Child Advocate served as the keynote speaker for the event and shared information on the role of the Office, its relationship with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council, and the importance of organizational collaboration and coordination to improve outcomes for children and families.

Citrus County’s “One Voice at the Steps” Event – Inverness, FL

After participating in the Community Alliance Meeting and touring Jessie’s House, the child advocacy center in Lecanto, FL, the Chief Child Advocate attended and spoke at the “One Voice at the Steps” event at the old Citrus County Courthouse. The message focused on the collective role we play in preventing and reporting child abuse and by coming together, we can strengthen families and communities where children grow healthy and thrive. This event kicked off a celebration of Children’s Month within the county and featured speakers from the Department of Children and Families, the Citrus County Magistrate, the Superintendent of Citrus County Schools, and members from the Board of County Commissioners.



Heart Gallery of Pasco-Pinellas County – St. Petersburg, FL



The mission of the Heart Gallery of Pasco-Pinellas is to increase the number of successful adoptions of local children in foster care. In addition to featuring children, the gallery recruits and supports families interested in adoption. The Chief Child Advocate attended the Gallery’s fundraising event at Tropicana Field to thank all of the attendees for their support of the organization and to consider how else they can assist youth seeking permanent families so they can receive the love and support they need.

Osceola County Child Abuse Prevention Month Kick-off Event – Kissimmee, FL

The Safe Families Task Force of Osceola County hosted a National Child Abuse Prevention Month event to raise awareness of the importance of healthy child development free from child abuse and neglect. The Chief Child Advocate served as the keynote speaker for the event with a message focused on how each member in the community plays a role in preventing and reporting child abuse, and of the importance of helping others seek assistance to address potential risk factors that can preserve the well-being of children. Additional speakers included an Osceola County Commissioner, the Deputy Chief of the Osceola County Sheriff’s Office, the Police Chief of the Kissimmee Police Department, and a representative from Senator Marco Rubio’s office.



Prayer Breakfasts – Multiple Locations

To promote foster care adoption for children without an identified family and encourage members of the faith community to consider becoming foster parents and/or mentors to youth who have had involvement with the juvenile justice system, the Chief Child Advocate attended various events to speak on the importance of healthy child development and opportunities to become involved in supporting the agencies and organizations that serve children. Events were held at the following locations:

- First United Methodist Church – Pensacola, FL
- Niceville Methodist Church – Niceville, FL
- Greenhouse Church – Gainesville, FL
- Zoo Miami – Miami, FL



Prevent Child Abuse America Conference – Jacksonville, FL



The National Prevent Child Abuse America Conference was held in Jacksonville, Florida with a primary focus on the healthy development of children and to give America’s children the healthiest starts possible. The Chief Child Advocate welcomed attendees from across the country on behalf of the Governor with information shared about Florida’s commitment to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and support of home visiting programs.

Ready by 21 National Conference – Covington, KY

The Chief Child Advocate was invited to attend this national conference that was build around four big questions about *How do we*: 1) Embrace a Broad Definition of “Readiness”, 2) Build Effective Community Partnerships, 3) Expand Learning Opportunities and Outcomes, and 4) Align Policies and Resources. During the conference, opportunities for administrative flexibilities and blending of federal funding streams to improve outcomes for “disconnected youth” were discussed and the Chief Child Advocate served on a panel discussion on the topic of “Sustaining collaborative efforts across administrations” with leaders from the Tennessee Governor’s Children’s Cabinet, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families in Maryland, and the Forum for Youth Investment in Washington, DC.



We Believe Day – Miami, FL

The We Believe Day event was held at Zoo Miami to encourage faith organizations and the community at-large to consider how they can become involved in supporting children in the child welfare system. This fun day with a meaningful purpose kicked off with a breakfast for faith leaders from Miami-Dade and Broward counties to become informed of the needs for children in the area. The Chief Child Advocate served as the Master of Ceremonies for the event that included speakers from Molina Healthcare, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Miami-Dade Human Services, and Share Your Heart. Speakers highlighted their work and opportunities on how individuals can become involved in supporting efforts that can result in improved outcomes for children. The Chief Child Advocate spoke about children available for adoption who are in need of permanent families. To further promote adoption, images from the Miami Heart Gallery were placed on USB drives that were distributed to participants of the event to share with others. Faith leaders were encouraged to display the images on their church monitors to create awareness of children available for adoption without an identified family.



During 2014, the Chief Child Advocate had the opportunity to speak with emerging leaders and youth groups to provide information on the role of the Office, perspectives on leadership and to celebrate accomplishments. The following groups were engaged:

50 LARGE – Tallahassee, FL



The mission of 50 LARGE (Lifelong Achievement Responsibility Growth Education) is “Changing lives by inspiring hope, molding character, teaching responsibility, providing REAL opportunity for young men”. The program puts forth efforts to prevent gang involvement by redirecting energies of young men who may be associated with gang members, have multiple referrals, suspensions and truancy. The Chief Child Advocate and Director was invited to speak with the young men in

this program about the importance of positive support systems, normative culture, and personal experiences encouraging and motivating youth to overcome their challenges.

AmeriCorps – Tallahassee, FL

During their visit to the Capitol, the Chief Child Advocate was invited to speak with AmeriCorps Youth from City Year Orlando and Miami to share information on the role of the Office and the leadership roles the youth may play in the future as a result of participating in this dynamic program.



Department of Children and Families: Leadership Development – Tallahassee, FL



During their visit to Tallahassee and to the Capitol, the Chief Child Advocate was invited to speak with department staff identified as emerging leaders from the Northwest and Central Regions to share information on the role of the Office and perspectives on effective leadership. Additional information was presented on the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council.

Florida Youth Commission Retreat – Quincy, FL

As part of the efforts to re-launch the Florida Youth Commission, the Chief Child Advocate, along with the Special Projects Manager, presented information to the commissioners on the role of the Office and the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet. Emphasis was provided on how the efforts of the Youth Commission should align to those of the Children and Youth Cabinet, and the leadership role commissioners will play by participating in future Cabinet meetings.



Parramore Kids Zone – Orlando, FL

During a site visit to become more familiar with the activities and efforts of the City of Orlando to implement one of three children's initiatives funded through the Florida Legislature, the Chief Child Advocate spoke with youth who were working to improve their lives with the support of mentors and staff from the PKZ. Spoke with the youth about the role of the Office, what issues they would like to see changed at the state level and opportunities to provide leadership within their neighborhoods to create a more unified community.



The Office has focused on building relationships to establish partnerships and facilitate connections with state agency contacts to advance state and agency initiatives. Below are partnerships and connections that were facilitated:

Florida Department of State – Division of Library and Information Services

Recognizing the important role public libraries play in the neighborhoods and communities they serve, the Office has worked to establish a strong partnership with the Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services (Division), in order to engage and communicate with public libraries throughout the state. The purpose of the partnership has multiple components to include:



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

- To inform and educate public libraries of statewide initiatives and campaigns from state agencies represented on the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet;
- To encourage the support of public libraries to promote and disseminate information on statewide initiatives and campaigns;
- To access the knowledge and experience of librarians and library staff to provide information and resources to citizens and stakeholders within their service areas; and
- To facilitate connections with public libraries for meeting space and to promote library programs and services.

Through meetings with the Division, the Office and the Department of Children and Families, a webinar series titled *The Future of Florida's Children* was created to focus on key topics and activities of state agencies to improve outcomes for children. To date, the following topics and sub-categories have been shared with librarians and their staff:

- **Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect – September 2014**
 - How to identify and report child abuse and neglect
 - Statewide initiatives and free resources and referrals:
 - Who's Really Watching Your Child?
 - Water Safety
 - Safe Sleep
 - Born Drug-Free Florida
 - Look Before You Lock
 - Child Fatality Website
 - National Bullying Awareness Month
- **Permanency and Independence – October 2014**
 - Foster care adoption in Florida
 - National Adoption Month
 - Explore Adoption Campaign
 - There's a Special Need for Your Heart Campaign
 - 28 Days of Amazing African-American Children: Explore Adoption
 - Extended Foster Care
 - It Can Be Done Campaign
- **Human Trafficking – December 2014**
 - Information on Human Trafficking and Victim Identification
 - What Florida is doing to combat Human Trafficking
 - Human Trafficking Awareness Month
 - State and National Resources

In 2015, the Office will continue to partner with the Division to share additional information on topics with public libraries and seek their support with further promotion of awareness campaigns and state initiatives.

Florida Military Family and Community Covenant (FMFCC)

This organization works to unite key areas within a community to create a comprehensive network that connects and coordinates agencies, organizations, resources and employers at the local



Florida Military Family and Community Covenant

level to address the needs of service members, veterans and military families. In addition to this effort, FMFCC served as the lead for coordinating the inaugural “Our Community Salutes” event held for North Central Florida. This event recognized graduating seniors from 12 local school districts by being “the first to say thanks” for their commitment to enlist into a branch of the military. The Office assisted in the planning and implementation efforts where each young adult was recognized with their parent/guardian, received a commemorative coin signifying the event, and a personalized letter from Governor Scott congratulating them on their future careers.



Interstate Compact on Education Opportunities for Military Children

To increase awareness of services available through the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (Compact), the Director, who serves as a member of Florida’s Compact Council, facilitated a connection with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to include information on the Compact as part of their townhall meeting with military personnel at Eglin Air Force Base. The purpose of having information shared at this townhall was to reflect our state’s support of military families who have children with disabilities. Specific topics shared during the townhall include eligibility, services offered, background information on the Compact, and points of contact for those who have questions.

Office Activities

The Office planned, staffed, and supported activities throughout 2014 to fulfill statutory requirements for Florida's Five Year Prevention and Permanency Plan, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council. In addition, the Office participated on a various committees, workgroups and teams to advance the work of the state. Summarized below are Office efforts throughout 2014 for the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council. Both groups are required in statute to submit an annual report to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House by January 31st. Additional information regarding their efforts can be found in their reports, located on the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection's website at: www.flgov.com/child_advocacy.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

- Planned, staffed and supported four required Cabinet meetings throughout the state.
- Facilitated connections between meeting location contacts and the Florida Channel to televise meetings.
- Supported and participated on the Cabinet workgroups and initiatives identified by the Cabinet.
- Coordinated presentations and site visits to local organizations in conjunction with the Cabinet meetings.
- Identified and invited an organization to carry out a strategic planning session with Cabinet members during their last meeting in 2014.

Florida Youth Commission

- Partnered with the Department of Juvenile Justice to re-energize and develop a new framework, structure, and timeline for the Youth Commission.
- Participated in the Florida Youth Commission's first annual retreat in August 2014.
- Reached out to the Youth Commissioner's Principals to secure support and approval for youth to participate on conference calls one per month during lunch hour.

Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

- Planned, staffed and supported four required Council meetings throughout the state.
- Supported and participated in Council workgroups.
- Worked with the Appointments Offices for the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House to have prospective candidates appointed to the Council.
- Encouraged participation at Council meetings to add continued value for both members and the public.
- Supported the National Faith Symposium through participation in the planning committee and presented at the Faith Symposium.
- Supported the Council's leadership in the Champions of Hope Award.

Child Abuse Prevention Activities

Child Abuse Prevention Month

In an effort to further raise awareness and support for Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Office participated in many events throughout the state. Florida's Chief Child Advocate served as the keynote speaker at the Osceola County Child Abuse Prevention Month Event in Kissimmee. The Chief Child Advocate also attended a Community Alliance Meeting in Citrus County, toured the Child Advocacy Center, and spoke at the Citrus County Children's Month Event in Inverness. He also attended the Blue Ribbon Luncheon in Boynton Beach and the Speak Up For Kids Event in Palm Beach and attended the Pinwheels in the Park event.



The Office also coordinated the first ever planting of pinwheel gardens around the Capitol Complex during Children's Week and displayed the Pinwheels for Prevention posters within the Capitol Rotunda and the House and Senate floors to raise awareness of healthy child development

Additionally, the Office coordinated and worked with Prevent Child Abuse Florida to establish pinwheel gardens at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Guardian ad Litem, Department of Education and Department of Economic Opportunity in support of healthy child development during National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Child Abuse Prevention Month Planning Committee



The Office worked with the Department of Children and Families and the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida to raise awareness through the national Pinwheels for Prevention campaign. Efforts included dissemination of letters and emails to seek the creation of proclamations and identification of local awareness events and activities, development of informational cards with lapel pins distributed to all 160 legislators, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council.

Human Trafficking Awareness Month Planning Committee

The Office partnered with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Juvenile Justice to plan and implement a public awareness campaign on Human Trafficking. Efforts included: the circulation of letters and emails to encourage the creation of proclamations, the identification of local awareness events, and the development of informational cards which were distributed to all 160 legislators, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, and Mayors throughout the state.



Adoption Promotion Activities

Adoption Training

The Office attended adoption trainings hosted by the Adoption Information Center to learn, meet, and engage both staff and parents on adoptive families' needs. At the trainings the Office had a booth with materials relating to adoption promotion materials as well as healthy child development. During the January Training, a congratulation letter was presented on behalf of Governor Scott to Kathleen Waters, who retired from the Department of Children and Families. For the May training, the Office coordinated with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to have their Senior Director of Programs to present information on their approach and to encourage Community Based Care Lead Agencies to consider funding positions.



Black History Month

In February, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection partnered with the Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies and community partners throughout the state to celebrate Black History Month. Every day throughout the month the *Explore Adoption* website (www.adoptflorida.org) featured a different amazing African American child or teenager who was available for adoption without an identified family. Additionally, the website featured African American adoptive families and families who adopted African American children.

Explore Adoption Website

Throughout 2014 Office staff and interns reviewed the information on the Explore Adoption website to ensure its consistency and accuracy. Over the summer, staff reorganized the menus, creating separate menus for families interested in adopting, and for the families that have adopted from foster care. This was done to allow families to easily identify the information they are seeking.

In addition, the Office has reviewed the pictures and biographies on the Adoption Exchange throughout the year, as well as reports generated from the Exchange. The Office is working with the Department of Children and Families to ensure that all children available for adoption without an identified family are featured on the Adoption Exchange within the required timeframe.

Heart Galleries

Every Heart Gallery in Florida works with partnership agencies in their area to provide awareness to the general public of the needs of children available for adoption without an identified family – a population of children not generally in the spotlight, breaking down the old labels and stereotypes of children in foster care. Heart Galleries also bring in support through foster parents, respite, mentors, volunteers and adoptive families. By photographing these children in their best light, capturing their hope, their vulnerability, their pride, Heart Galleries bring the cause of adoption into the hearts of millions of caring citizens each year. The Office has and will continue to work with Heart Galleries throughout Florida to identify opportunities to assist and support their efforts. Through the Office's partnership with Starbucks in the Northwest region to display Heart Gallery photos within their stores, continued efforts will occur to expand this partnership to other store locations throughout the state.



Art of Adoption: The Heart Gallery of the Gulf Coast

Serving Northwest Florida, the heart gallery strives encourage the adoption of children from foster care. In addition to displaying pictures on the Explore Adoption and the national Heart Gallery websites, the Heart Gallery of the Gulf Coast also strives to make the most of local efforts by working with volunteers and forming partnerships.

Art of Adoption
...a Heart Gallery® project

A few generous volunteers over the last year include:

- 13 volunteer photographers took new pictures of 30 children
- One local professional photographer generously prints all pictures at no cost
- One local adoption attorney generously provided funds to pay for exhibits
- 479th Air Force Operation Support Squadron provided refreshments for our Gallery Night Exhibit and our reception at the Steve McCurry Exhibit.

Local Efforts:

- Rotating displays of pictures at local libraries, churches, and the Chappie James Building, which houses the local office of the Department of Children and Families
- Community prayer breakfasts
- Art exhibits
 - Partnered with Mainline Art House in Pensacola starting in April. The gallery now permanently hosts a rotating display of four pictures.
 - Partnered with Pensacola State College in August through October to display pictures jointly at an exhibit of photographs by world famous National Geographic photographer Steven McCurry. The exhibit was entitled *The Importance of Elsewhere*.
 - Continued partnership with Artel in November for a two week exhibit which included Gallery Night in downtown Pensacola, which brings large crowds into the downtown area.
- Media outlets:
 - Segments have been produced for and/or pictures have been displayed in:
 - Various local newspapers
 - Local television station WEAR TV
 - WEAR TV also produced a special segment entitled *Angels in Our Midst*, which highlighted the efforts of three local Heart Gallery photographer volunteers
 - Local Christian radio station WHBR



Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay

Heart Gallery Mission Statement: The mission of the Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay is to raise awareness of Tampa's waiting foster children, engage the community in their welfare and secure permanent, loving adoptive families.

Heart Gallery Overview and Core Objectives: The Heart Gallery is a dedicated recruitment and development tool supporting both the foster children in need of families and the system of care who oversee their well-being. The program specializes in recruitment for hard-to-place teens, minority and sibling groups and children with special medical and therapeutic needs. Professional photographers donate their time and talent photographing foster children available for adoption and are the key to capturing each child's character in their best light. These fine art portraits and biographical profiles are part of museum quality exhibits that tour the community and are featured in an interactive website. The Heart Gallery utilizes multimedia tools to create child profiles that provide prospective families with genuine insight in to a child's hopes and dreams.

Forever Families for Foster Children: On average, the Heart Gallery features 125 of the children and teens available for adoption in Hillsborough County. The Heart Gallery creates compelling images utilizing photography and videos and places these hopeful faces in areas across the community to increase the chances for a family, support and resources. A child or sibling group can be placed in the Heart Gallery for about \$2,500; where *they are 3 times more likely to be adopted* than a child not featured in the gallery. Conversely, it costs from \$17,000 to as much as \$40,000 per year to provide care for a child in foster care. If a child is not adopted and "ages out", they are far more likely to turn to drugs, crime, homelessness or unplanned pregnancy than their peers. Every year, *40 – 45% of children in the Heart Gallery are matched* with a family.

Quality of Life Initiatives: The Heart Gallery actively engages the community in the venues where the exhibit is touring. For citizens who may not wish to adopt, but are moved to contribute in other ways, these activities provide direct resources to the children we serve. These funds are utilized to meet the "normalcy" needs often not provided by social services. Birthdays, holidays and events typically celebrated by birth parents are not consistently provided to children in foster care. Quality of Life initiatives include Birthday Buddies which ensures gifts for every child, extracurricular supports such as sports equipment, piano lessons, yearbooks, prom dresses and field trips; all providing crucial reinforcements to improve the life of a foster child while in care.

Recent Awards:

WEDU *Be More Unstoppable*, Non-Profit of the Year Award, 2013

WEDU *Be More Brilliant* Innovation Award, 2013

Tampa Bay Lightning's Community Hero Award, 2012

Hobbs Foundation Grant, 4 years consecutively 2008 – 2012

The Junior League of Tampa's Community Partnership Project – 3 year grant, 2011 – 2013

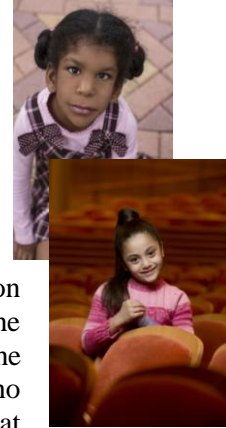




Children's Trust Heart Gallery of Miami

The Children's Trust Miami Heart Gallery website received more than 149,000 page views this year from people looking to expand their families through adoption, nearly 10,000 more page views than the previous year.

More than half of the foster children featured in the exhibit have found a forever family since the adoption promotion initiative began six years ago in collaboration with Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe. Collaborative efforts with Our Kids expanded this year in response to the growing need for foster parent recruitment with an average of 38 children entering foster care weekly in Miami-Dade and Monroe. Fostering to adopt is a very effective means of boosting both foster parent and adoptive parent recruitment, so we are joining Our Kids to that end. In addition to increased joint advertising, The Children's Trust produced a documentary titled, *Voices of Fostering and Adoption* that broadcast on WSVN7 on National Adoption Day this November and successfully impacted recruitment efforts. We also were the signature sponsor of National Adoption Day ceremonies in Miami-Dade County. The documentary will rebroadcast this Saturday and features many inspiring parents who fostered to adopt. You may view it on line through our Website at <https://www.thechildrenstrust.org>.



Heart Gallery of Broward

Mission Statement:

The Heart Gallery of Broward County is dedicated to improving the lives of foster care children by providing innovative programs aimed at solving our community's foster care crisis.



Background:

Over the past seven years, the Heart Gallery has changed the face of foster care in Broward County. By presenting to the public these compelling portraits of foster children who are desperately seeking their permanent loving families, the Heart Gallery is connecting new people to the foster care system in a unique way.

The services to produce these portraits are enthusiastically donated by some of the area's finest professional photographers. For many prospective parents, the photos help to elicit an emotional connection at first sight. It's an emotion that's hard to feel from a snap shot taken by a cell phone. Broward is one of 120 Heart Galleries that have been established throughout the United States since 2001.

The Heart Gallery travels as an exhibit to many sites in Broward, including shopping malls, churches, universities, libraries, office buildings and museums. In addition to the photos, the exhibit contains panels and information cards about other ways to help foster children. We work with the volunteer coordinator at each agency to compile and update their page of information.

Each year, the Heart Gallery exhibit is seen by over a million people and the website receives over 50,000 visits. We receive about one hundred contacts a month and continue to work with each individual until they are being helped by ChildNet or are placed with a foster care agency to become a foster parent or a volunteer. We follow up after two or three months to see if we can still be of help.

Partnerships:

The Heart Gallery's partnership with ChildNet continues to be strong. The Heart Gallery is now the source of 90% of the children's official photos and ChildNet has replaced their searchable database with a link to the Heart Gallery site.

The Heart Gallery partners with 4KIDS of South Florida to make presentations at local churches. Most importantly, the Heart Gallery is getting great results. Of the approximate 120 children currently in the gallery, 31 have been matched with a family and 25 additionally are scheduled to participate in National Adoption Day (November 22).

Children’s Events:

The Heart Gallery co-sponsored the following events YTD with Child Net: 1) National Adoption Day (November), when several dozen new families celebrate their adoptions in the same morning at the County Courthouse. Heart Gallery photographers take courtroom photos as well as family portraits to help make these special events more memorable. 2) ART Program Day – HGOB photo-op day in which a local artist had a workshop and tutorial during the month of August and we also photographed the newest additions to the HGOB in addition to updated children’s photos that were the oldest. 3.) Bowling Mixer – a photo shoot and an additional opportunity for prospective foster/adoptive parents to interact under the supervision of ChildNet with children waiting to be adopted.4.) John U. Lloyd Park – reading event with Florida’s First Lady Scott, tour of the park and photo shoot opportunity 5.)Museum of Discovery & Science – STEM activity, end-of-school-year celebration and photo shoot

Public Awareness Campaigns:

- The Launch of Campaign 214 – Friends of the Heart Gallery of Broward championed the cause of bringing awareness, raising funds and partnering with the business community for 2014 to champion foster children in our area
- Birthday Buddy Drive ongoing – sponsor specific drive and awareness campaign to grant a birthday wish of a foster child waiting for adoption
- Spring for Kids Event – in partnership with the Galleria Mall, public awareness campaign and exhibits in April 2014

Future Growth and Direction:

Now that the photo gallery is well-established and running smoothly, the Heart Gallery board is augmenting with mixed media and digital software for a transitional kiosk. The kiosk has been a big hit with businesses and public spaces with smaller lobby spaces and is usually hosted for 45 days. Ten (10) have been built with the potential for another ten (10) for production, pending grant requests. The board is considering ways to expand the presence of the exhibit in the community and also to create greater awareness of the Heart Gallery and of foster care adoption in general. We have also begun thinking about how we might expand programs beyond the gallery in ways that would leverage our keys strengths: 1) using the public presence of the exhibit to draw support for additional programs or efforts and 2) using our relationships with the foster care agencies to provide programs that are an overlay to their efforts. Plans as to how and when to grow, as well as how to expand fundraising to support potential growth, will be primary considerations in the upcoming year.

YTD #'s	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.
Exhibit	27	25	15	7
Outreach	7	10	21	34
Web	17	16	15	10

*For the remainder of the contract year, we noted that it was important to track the total number of responses from community campaigns, exhibits and phone calls to provide quantitative data to match with our year end results. The hours devoted to tracking the information is noted in the monthly invoice and correlates with the data on the next page:

March Results/Inquiries: 110 total
52 online registrations
58 phone or online contacts (not registered)**

June Results/Inquiries: total 111
75 online registrations
36 phone or online contacts (not registered)

April Results/Inquiries: 137 total
62 online registrations
75 phone or online contacts (not registered)

July Results/Inquiries: total 119
83 online registrations
36 phone or online contacts (not registered)

May Results/Inquiries: 125 total
26 online registrations
119 phone or online contacts (not registered)

August Results/Inquiries: total 271
217 online registrations ***record number for
2014***

**Not registered denotes a new unique visit, non -returning prospective parent

Heart Gallery of Okeechobee & the Treasure Coast

- Social media—Promote adoption activities on agency and personal Facebook page
- Mass media
 - Internet—Promote children on the Heart Gallery as well as Adoption Orientation and Adoptive Parent Support Group activities
 - Children's Home Society of Florida website
 - Heart Gallery of America website
 - A Family for Every Child website
 - Adopt US Kids website
 - Adopt Florida/Explore Adoption website
 - Newspaper
 - Promote a child on the first Sunday of each month in our largest daily newspaper (Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers)
 - Promote our monthly Adoption Orientations and Adoptive Parent Support Groups in several other weekly publications (Hometown News, Your Voice Weekly, Okeechobee News) in addition to Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers
 - Television/Radio
 - Random interviews throughout the year (mostly with very local channels), primarily focusing on Adoption program, Process, Heart Gallery and National Adoption Month/Day activities
 - Magazines
 - Annual article in November (National Adoption Month) in Treasure Coast Parenting Magazine features information about the Adoption Process as well as photos/bios of children hoping to be adopted
 - Internal Children's Home Society of Florida newsletters and Adoption Newsletter
 - Feature stories focusing on Adoption Program, children waiting to be adopted
 - Mass emails
 - Above mentioned adoption newsletter is sent out quarterly to all Adoptive parents via email as well as being mass emailed by Adoption Marketing Specialist and sent across region by several other key personnel
- Heart Gallery exhibit
 - Large Heart Gallery exhibit is set up 24/7/365 at 1 of 10 – 12 rotating 'high traffic' locations annually



- Two smaller Heart Gallery exhibits are utilized throughout the year (3 – 4 times a month) at community events, agency special events/functions, faith-based organizations, civic groups, etc.
- Grassroots efforts
 - Adoption Marketing Specialist attends 2 – 3 special events monthly (setting up an adoption themed info booth), in addition to scheduling another 2 – 3 speaking engagements each month to promote the Adoption Program
- One Church One Child
 - Send electronic version of photo/bio of all available African American or bi-racial children to OCOC contact person for promotion purposes

Heart Gallery of Sarasota



The Heart Gallery of Sarasota photographed over 50 children for display in our exhibit and digitally on Facebook and our website receiving over 1,000 inquiries for the Heart Gallery children from all over the country. These inquiries were managed by the Safe Children Coalition.





Mid Florida Heart Gallery

The Mid Florida Heart Gallery raises awareness about the local children available for adoption without an identified family. The heart gallery covers thirteen counties within mid Florida. Partnership for Strong Families, Children's Home Society, volunteers and local photographers come together to ensure that every child has a permanent, loving family.

July 2013

7/1 Tower Rd Library Gainesville

August 2013

8/1 Tower Rd Library – Gainesville

8/30 United Downtown – Gainesville

8/31 Adoption Orientation – Gainesville

September 2013

9/9 Family Visitation Center/Leadership – Gainesville

9/11 Nationwide Insurance/United Way Agency Fair

9/20 United Downtown – Gainesville

9/26 Lake City Chamber mixer – Lake City

9/27 Campaign for Charities/University of Florida – Gainesville

October 2013

10/1 Millhopper Library – Gainesville

10/4 United Downtown – Gainesville

10/4 Greater Truvine Baptist Church – Madison

November 2013

11/2 Harvest Bible Chapel – Gainesville

11/17 Celebrate Adoption Event Westside Park – Gainesville

11/20 PFSF Adoptive Family Training – Gainesville

11/22 United Downtown – Gainesville

11/23 Celebrate Adoption Event Skate Place – Lake City

January 2014

1/8 Adoption Orientation – Gainesville

1/22 Adoption Orientation – Gainesville

1/27 Madison County Bank – Madison

February 2014

2/8 Tri-County Prayer Breakfast – Trenton

2/10 Madison County Bank – Madison

2/16 Grace Baptist Church – Madison

2/17 Adoption Orientation – Gainesville

March 2014

3/1 Spring Festival Lincoln Middle School – Gainesville

3/15 Puttin' on the Ritz – Gainesville

3/15 Stop the Stigma Kanapaha Park – Gainesville

3/29 The Family Church – Gainesville

April 2014

4/1 – 4/11 The Family Church – Gainesville

4/13 Duck Derby Westside Park – Gainesville

May 2014

5/2 Relay for Life Lincoln Middle School – Gainesville

5/24 Pre-Father's Day Prayer Breakfast – Pinetta (Madison County)

5/23 to 2/25 Family Partner Conference at Best Western Hotel – Gainesville

June 2014

6/8 New Hope Church Men's Day Program – Pinetta (Madison County)

Palm Beach Heart Gallery

Strategies used to promote adoption throughout 2014:

Activities

- Both the Adoption Recruiter position and the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter provide targeted recruitment of potential adoptive parents for older youth
- Lifebook development
- Provide recruitment – general and child specific as well as plan and hold recruitment events.



- During 2014, there were over 10 general/child specific recruitment events held in an effort to find matches between prospective adoptive parents and available children. Among them:
 - Holidays Around the World Recruitment Party
 - Pumpkin Patch Recruitment Party
 - Bowling
 - Fear Factor Event
 - Miniature Golf
 - Okechelee Park
 - Chick-Fil-A.



Outreach

Newsletters:

Jewish Children’s Adoption Network (JCAN) located in Denver, CO. – Is “an organization that helps find good homes nationally for Jewish children in need of them.”

Radio:

SPIRIT OF GIVING – participated in the half hour non-profit radio show, a show designed to provide outreach. We used the platform for explaining the mission of our agency and speak specifically about adoptions and the process of growing your family through adoption. In addition, we discussed the Heart Gallery of Palm Beach County and opportunities to make a difference in a child’s life.

Online:

The gallery can be viewed online: www.chsfl.org/Locations/South-Coastal/Heart-Gallery and at <http://www.chsfl.org>.

1. <http://www.childnet.us>
2. www.afamilyforeverychild.org (Oregon)
3. www.chsfl.org
4. www.ChildrenAwaitingParents.org (recruits nationally)
5. www.heartgallerypbc.org
6. www.adoptuskids.org
7. www.adoptflorida.org

Heart Gallery Exhibits (includes both permanent gallery locations and travelling exhibits):

Exhibits: On any given day during 2014, Heart Gallery/recruitment efforts featured over 20 available children in over 22 exhibits which include both permanent and travelling exhibit.

Recruitment Videos were created for over 30 available children.

Speaking engagements – Trained Guardian ad Litem volunteers on the adoption process and their valuable role in helping a child prepare for adoption.

Partnerships

Heart Gallery Photographers volunteer their time and talent to photograph available children (with an active adoption recruitment plan) for the Palm Beach County Heart Gallery exhibit.

Pinellas-Pasco Heart Gallery

The mission of the Heart Gallery of Pinellas and Pasco is to increase the number of successful adoptions of local children in foster care. In addition to featuring children, we recruit and support families interested in adoption.



The Heart Gallery was founded on the belief that every child deserves a home. There are no unwanted children, only unfound families.

It began with a simple idea. Create an extraordinary portrait of a foster child, and it will capture the heart of prospective parents.

Since this Heart Gallery chapter was created in 2006, it has helped to create more than 225 forever families.

The Heart Gallery includes three key initiatives:

- A traveling exhibit, which can also be viewed on our website, of professional portraits and personal biographies of children waiting to be adopted. Services donated by local Tampa Bay area photographers make this possible.
- Child specific recruitment to promote emotionally safe adoptions.
- Support services for families along all stages of the adoption journey.

On any given day there are more than 3,000 children in foster care in Pinellas and Pasco counties, including close to 100 who are available for adoption.

While most are eventually reconnected to their parents or taken in by responsible relatives, too many kids become fixtures in the foster care system. It is only after their parents legally lose parental rights that these children can then start the waiting process to become adopted, often lingering for years in foster care.

The Heart Gallery works hand in hand with our lead agency partner, Eckerd Community Alternative, as well as deeply committed caseworkers from Directions for Living, Lutheran Services Florida, and Youth & Family Alternatives.

Connecting Hope:

- Connecting Hope is a child specific diligent recruitment program which strives to improve permanency outcomes for children in care. This program involves an intensive and holistic review of the child's record (file mining). Due to its intensive nature, referrals are currently limited to one per agency.
- The task of preparing the client for recruitment and permanency is shared with a team of individuals known to the client. By including the child in the recruitment process, as well as identifying and acquiring commitments from persons who already have a relationship with the child, permanency outcomes increase. This model has been designed using adoption and trauma tenets to create a diligent recruitment tool in which many avenues may be explored.

Adoptive Parent Support Group:

- Supported in part by the Heart Gallery, the Adoptive Parent Support Groups ensure successful adoptions by supporting families at any point in their adoption journey.
- These groups are run in two locations across the county.
- The groups are facilitated by adoptive families for adoptive families.

National Adoption Month

Throughout November, the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies, and community partners celebrated National Adoption Month throughout the state with celebrations, awareness runs, parties, finalizations, and more. The Chief Child Advocate attended and participated in several finalization events to show the support of the Governor’s Office.



Governor Scott issued a proclamation announcing November 2014 as Florida Adoption Month and National Adoption Day on Saturday, November 22, 2014. Additionally, First Lady Scott made a video encouraging Floridians to consider adopting a child from foster care. The proclamation and video were posted to the *Explore Adoption* website, www.adoptflorida.org throughout November and December.



On Friday, November 21, 2014 Florida celebrated National Adoption Month with a statewide finalization and celebration at the Orange County Courthouse in Orlando, Florida. In addition to Florida’s Chief Child Advocate, the Secretary and the Adoption Policy Manager of the Department of Children and Families, the Chief Executive Officer of Community Based Care of Central Florida, local Case Managing Organizations, and many others came together to celebrate the wonderful occasion.



30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption!



30 Days of Amazing Children: Explore Adoption! was Florida's National Adoption Month awareness campaign in November 2014. Each day in November, the website featured sibling groups, children with medical needs, and older children available for adoption without an identified family in pictures and videos. Throughout the month, over

80 children were highlighted on the website, or approximately 11% of children available for adoption without an identified family.

The initiative was a success due to the combined efforts of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies, and many other community partners.

Governor's Cabinet Meeting

On Wednesday, November 12, 2014, the Governor's Cabinet met in Tallahassee and invited Florida's Chief Child Advocate to share a few words regarding adoption and Florida's recent successes. Mr. and Mrs. John and Wendy Ryan, local adoptive parents, were also invited to share their adoption story. During the meeting, the Cabinet issued a resolution of congratulations and best wishes to all families celebrating National Adoption Day on November 22, 2014.



Post Adoption Support Activities

Meetings

The Department of Children and Families held meetings focused on post adoption needs in conjunction with the Adoption Information Center Trainings. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection attended these meetings to support the Department of Children and Families, the Community Based Care Lead Agencies, and the Case Managing Organizations that work with adoptive families.

Post Adoption Survey

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection along with the Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies, Case Managing Organizations and others created a survey for the purpose of identifying baselines. The survey was directed to solicit responses from current Florida residents who have adopted children currently under 18 years old from the state's foster care system. The purpose of the survey was to identify adoptive families' thoughts and needs regarding services. The Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies sent the survey out to families in the fall of 2014. The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has been providing support through data entry of survey responses returned through mail. It is anticipated that the information gleaned from this survey will be presented to post adoption staff at an adoption training next year.

Post Adoption Services Survey

In order to assess the quality and quantity of our post adoption services programs, we need from our adoptive parents who are the true customers of post adoption services. Post adoption services include all services and staff available to you as an adoptive parent and your adopted child until the child turns age 18. Please help us by taking a little time to answer the questions but very much want to hear from you and appreciate your input. Please call 1-800-96ADOPT if you have any questions.

Next

Powered by :
Check out our [sample survey](#)

FLORIDA'S 2014 POST ADOPTION SERVICES SURVEY

Conducted by:

Florida Department of Children and Families
and the Office of Adoption and Child Protection
in Partnership with Florida's Post Adoption Services Staff



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor
Mike Carroll
Interim Secretary

September 15, 2014

Dear Adoptive Parent,

I am writing to encourage you to complete the attached survey regarding Florida's Post Adoption Services. Post adoption services include all services and staff available to you as an adoptive parent, and to your adopted child until age 18. The goal of this survey is to assess Florida's post adoption services at the local and statewide levels. The survey is divided into several types of information:

- Demographics about you and your family.
- Support groups
- Adoptive parent conferences and educational trainings.
- Services
- Post adoption services staff

We know that post adoption services are essential for adopted children and their families. As customers of the post adoption services in your community, your responses are critical in helping us assess what services are working, and what services are needed but not available in your community.

Enclosed in this letter you will find the 2014 Post Adoption Services Survey, along with a pre-paid postage envelope to mail the survey using the pre-paid postage envelope by 11/01/2014. If you prefer to take the survey on-line please visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/V9P7L4E>

We very much want to hear from you, and appreciate your input. If you have any questions regarding the 2014 Post Adoption Survey, please contact 1-800-96-ADOPT.

Explore Adoption Website

Upon reviewing the Explore Adoption website, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection wanted to ensure that information was readily available to parents that had already adopted from the Florida foster care system. Office staff put together a page of resources for families, with information on support specifically for parents, for entire families, regarding relationships, education, health and finances.



Post Adoption Support

Support for Parents

Support Groups
In addition to services and counselors, support groups are a great way to learn from other families that have likely experienced what you are experiencing. Adoption support groups can be found in most communities. [Find a support group near you.](#)

Support for the Entire Family

Adoption Competent Mental Health Therapists
Professional help can be found in many places. Licensed Mental Health Professionals in your community who have completed Adoption Competency training specialize in helping adoptive families. Therapy for a child who has experienced trauma should be in a family setting, with the therapist providing the parent(s) the tools. Children who have experienced trauma will heal in a family setting. Find an [Adoption Competent Mental Health Professional](#) in your community.

Post Adoption Services Counselors
There also are Post Adoption Services Counselors throughout the state in every Community Based Care Lead Agency who can help you and your family. All families need help at some point in their lives, whether big or small. Unfortunately, many adoptive parents do not request post adoption services for many months or even years after a problem arises. Many times additional support is needed during the teen years because many teens "start wondering about their birth families". Locate a [Post Adoption Services Counselor](#).

Behavior
Sometimes as children grow up they do not make the most informed or "best" decision for themselves, which can result in mental health issues.

Constituent Support and Assistance

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has established rapport with Floridians and is recognized as a resource to those seeking help and assistance. The Office worked with the Governor's Office of Citizen Services and the Department of Children and Families to address the challenges and concerns expressed by citizens about the Florida child welfare system. The three offices worked collaboratively to coordinate their resources and collective knowledge bases.

Intern Support

Throughout 2014, the Office has been fortunate to have several undergraduate student interns seeking experience through work within child welfare and state government. Through the leadership of the Special Projects Manager, student interns were utilized during the spring, summer and fall semesters of 2014 to provide the following support:

Spring Intern Responsibilities

- Answered telephone and left messages when appropriate.
- Assisted the Office in preparing for Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council meetings.
- Assisted in providing Pinwheels for Prevention cards and pins to leadership in the Governor's Office, Legislators, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet members, and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council members for Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Assisted in updating the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council's website.
- Created an award for Florida's Chief Child Advocate and Department of Children and Families Adoption Program Manager to provide to outstanding staff recruiting families for children available for adoption without an identified family.
- Created cover pages for the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council Annual Reports.
- Ensured all documents posted to the Office's website were compliant with the American Disabilities Act.
- Reviewed the Explore Adoption website to identify errors and inconsistencies with the children's pictures and biographies to provide to the Department of Children and Families.

Summer Intern Responsibilities

- Analyzed the 2014 Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council Workgroups, along with what topics individual members could assist with.
- Answered telephone and left messages when appropriate.
- Assisted in analyzing data regarding children not shown on the Explore Adoption website for January 2014 to July 2014.
- Created an adoption specialist and contact form.
- Assisted in staffing the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet meeting in Pensacola.
- Created a webpage on the Explore Adoption website that provides information, resources, and support for adoptive parents.
- Created biographies for two new Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council members.
- Drafted letters on behalf of the Office.
- Drafted tweets for the Explore Adoption Twitter account, @ExploreAdoption.
- Ensured all documents posted to the Office's website were compliant with the American Disabilities Act.
- Help draft and prepare welcome letters and packets for new Florida Children and Youth Cabinet members.
- Helped print, arrange, and gather materials for Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council and Florida Children and Youth Cabinet meetings.
- Helped update various office documents with current information.
- Created an e-mail distribution list for all Faith-Based and Community-Based partners throughout Florida.
- Organized Local Planning Team Membership into agency specific lists of membership to provide to state agencies required to participate in the five-year plan.
- Reviewed local heart gallery's pictures and bios to ensure information was consistent with the Explore Adoption website.
- Reviewed the Explore Adoption website to identify errors and inconsistencies with the children's pictures and biographies to provide to the Department of Children and Families.

Fall Intern Responsibilities

- Answered telephone and left messages when appropriate.
- Assisted a Spanish speaking citizen over the phone.
- Assisted in creating several charts to be included in annual reports.
- Assisted in updating the Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council's website.
- Assisted with data-entry of post adoption surveys.
- Created six infographs for the Office's annual report.
- Ensured all documents posted to the Office's website were compliant with the American Disabilities Act.
- Drafted and mailed letters to superintendents throughout the Florida regarding Bullying Awareness Month.
- Inputted strategies, objectives, and data for circuit annual reports to be included with the Office's annual report.
- Assisted in the planning and staffing of the Children and Youth Cabinet and Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council meetings.
- Mailed congratulatory letters to all new youth commission members.
- Reviewed the Explore Adoption website to identify errors and inconsistencies with the children's pictures and biographies to provide to the Department of Children and Families.

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

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, F.S.), 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.

The plan was developed following collaboration with 166 planning partners representing 107 organizations and agencies, the 33 member Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council and Local Taskforces for each of 20 Florida's 20 judicial circuits. The vision, mission, overarching goal 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.

Protective Factors

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 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 incorporated into existing programs and systems, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.

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

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.

The progress can be found on Infographs 1 and 2 on pages 31 and 32.

- 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.

The progress can be found on Infographs 3 and 4 on pages 42 and 43.

- 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.

The progress can be found on Infograph 5 on page 53.

- 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 status can be found on Infograph 6 on page 57.

Summary of the Current Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan

The primary intent of the five-year plan is to build resilience in all of Florida's families and communities to equip them to better care for and nurture their children and to later develop into a more stable and effective workforce. In accordance with the state law (§39.001, F.S.), 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 specifically 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.

As of December 2014, the five-year plan is in its fifth year of implementation at the state and local levels. Each state objective lead as well as Local Planning Team was requested to submit an annual report providing a status update on their five-year plan. To read these submissions, and for more information about the five-year plan, please visit www.flgov.com/child_advocacy.

Next Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection has worked diligently throughout 2014 to provide support to the Local Taskforces. Throughout June and July, the Office conducted meetings and conference calls with each Local Taskforce Convener and Chair to gain insight on local implementation of the current five-year plan and how to best reflect their concerns in the next five-year plan. The Office also provided suggestions for improving future performance and outcomes related to the five-year plan.

The Office provided data to local taskforces entailing factors relating to child maltreatment and adoption over the last five years across the state. The Office also provided a template to assist Local Taskforces in formulating their next five-year plan, contributing technical assistance as requested.

**PART 2
PLAN FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE, ABANDONMENT AND NEGLECT (2013-2018)**

For the purposes of the Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan, 2013-2018, child maltreatment comprises the acts of abuse, abandonment and neglect, including medical neglect, as defined in §39.01, Florida Statutes.

Abuse is any child act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or threatens the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse includes acts of sexual abuse, corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian, disciplinary measures that do not result in harm to the child, and any other act prohibited by §39.01(2), Florida Statutes.

Abandonment is a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver responsible for the child's welfare, while being able to provide for the child's physical, mental, or emotional health, fails to exercise the child's legal rights or fails to exercise a valid transfer of parental obligation. If the effects of such neglect or caregiver responsibility cause the child's welfare to be seriously and consistently impaired, or the caregiver's neglect or failure to exercise the child's legal rights or fails to exercise a valid transfer of parental obligation, the caregiver shall be held liable to be abandoned. The term "abandonment" does not include:

- an abandoned newborn as defined in §39.01(2)(b), Florida Statutes;
- an individual who is a defendant in a criminal case as defined in §39.01(2)(c), Florida Statutes;
- the incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare as defined in §39.01(2)(d), Florida Statutes;
- a child in need of services as defined in chapter 39A, Florida Statutes.

The incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare supports a finding of abandonment. §39.01(2)(d), Florida Statutes.

Neglect occurs when a child's legal act or is allowed to be deprived of necessary support or a finding of abandonment. §39.01(2)(e), Florida Statutes.

Neglect is a medical term.

Primary prevention using universal strategies

- Primary prevention is provided to the general public to prevent child abuse, abandonment or 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 characteristics. Examples include:
 - Broad-based public awareness campaigns on positive parenting and discipline
 - Developmental screenings for children in primary health care settings.
 - Post-partum home visits for all parents of newborns.

Secondary prevention using selected strategies

- Secondary prevention is geared to communities and/or families who are vulnerable to child abuse, abandonment and neglect.
- Selected strategies are those activities or services that are targeted to a group within that target group. Risk factors correlated with child maltreatment in poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, or maternal depression. Examples include:
 - Intensive home-visitations programs for first-time low-income mothers with 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.

During the previous five-year plan, the prevalence rates for these risk factors of maltreatment increased. Florida hotlines, help lines and assistance call centers increase in requests for help. Florida is continuing to take a concerted look at families become resilient when faced with multiple stressors.

This plan seeks to build the capacity for Floridians to prevent child maltreatment. To do this, Florida's child maltreatment prevention strategies will focus on families.

Plan to Prevent Child Maltreatment

Level of Prevention Addressed by this Priority:
 Primary Prevention
 Secondary Prevention
 Tertiary Prevention

Priority: Prevention Conditions Addressed by this Priority:
 Community Development
 Family Support for Families
 Information and Referral
 Family Supportive Programs Services
 Parent Training and Support
 Postpartum Home Visits

Secondary Prevention Conditions Addressed by this Priority:
 Community Development
 Family Support for Families
 Information and Referral
 Family Supportive Programs Services
 Parent Training and Support
 Postpartum Home Visits

Socio-Ecological Model Levels Influenced by this Priority:
 Societal Level
 Community Level
 Relationship Level
 Individual Level

Priority Factors that should be Addressed/Supported by this Priority:
 Community Development
 Family Support for Families
 Information and Referral
 Family Supportive Programs Services
 Parent Training and Support
 Postpartum Home Visits

Priority: Factors that should be Addressed/Supported by this Priority:
 Community Development
 Family Support for Families
 Information and Referral
 Family Supportive Programs Services
 Parent Training and Support
 Postpartum Home Visits

**PART 5
MONITORING**

1. Monitoring Plan Implementation

The Circuit Taskforce will:

- Provide ongoing monitoring of action steps to achieve objectives and strategies.
- Communicate with the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection regarding new information or challenges with implementation of the circuit plan, objectives and strategies.
- Annually monitor data elements to assess progress towards achievement of objectives and strategies.
- Complete annual circuit progress report that includes information on:
 - Circuit and county performance towards state goals.
 - Status and progress towards achievement of circuit strategies and objectives.
 - Revision of strategies or objectives based on achievement or justified need, objectives and strategies.
 - Circuit member collaboration to progress toward achievement of circuit objectives and strategies.
 - Foundation of the next fiscal year's strategies and objectives.
 - Any other information specific to the circuit's ability to progress towards the achievement of circuit objectives and strategies.

Florida's Socio-Ecological Continuum of Primary/Universal Prevention Strategies Accessible by the General Public Prior to the Occurrence of Child Abuse and Neglect

- SOCIETAL LEVEL**
Community Development, Public Awareness and Education Campaigns, Workforce
- COMMUNITY LEVEL**
Community Support for Families, Public Awareness and Education Campaigns
- RELATIONSHIP LEVEL**
Information and Referral and Help Lines, Family Supportive Programs Services
- INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**
Family Supportive Programs Services

Socio-Ecological Continuum of Secondary/Selected Prevention Strategies Targeted to Families with Multiple Risk Factors Prior to the Occurrence of Child Abuse and Neglect

- SOCIETAL LEVEL**
Community Development, Workforce
- COMMUNITY LEVEL**
Community Support for Families
- RELATIONSHIP LEVEL**
Family Supportive Programs Services
- INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**
Adult Education, Concrete Services, Family Supportive Programs Services

PART 2 – STATUS OF CHILD MALTREATMENT AND ADOPTION IN FLORIDA

Part 2 of this annual report is governed by Subsections 39.001(9)(c)(5) b-d, Florida Statutes (§39.001(9)(c)(5) b-d, F.S.) 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.*

Summary of Child Maltreatment Data

Child maltreatment is an all inclusive term for child abuse, abandonment and neglect. Data was provided by the Department of Children and Families to the Executive Office of the Governor in October 2014 for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013 through 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014). These data and information have been aggregated in order to describe the status of child maltreatment in Florida. The data reflect the official published per capita rate for Florida and are based on data that were extracted during October 2014 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 directly correlate positively or negatively with defined goal rates.

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.
- 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.).
- Foreseeable stressors:
 - Changes in family living arrangements.

- Economic losses / unemployment.
- Increase in adoptions without sufficient post adoption supports.
- 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. It would be expected that reporting and investigation rates would be low, conservative estimates of the actual abuse incident rates in Florida.

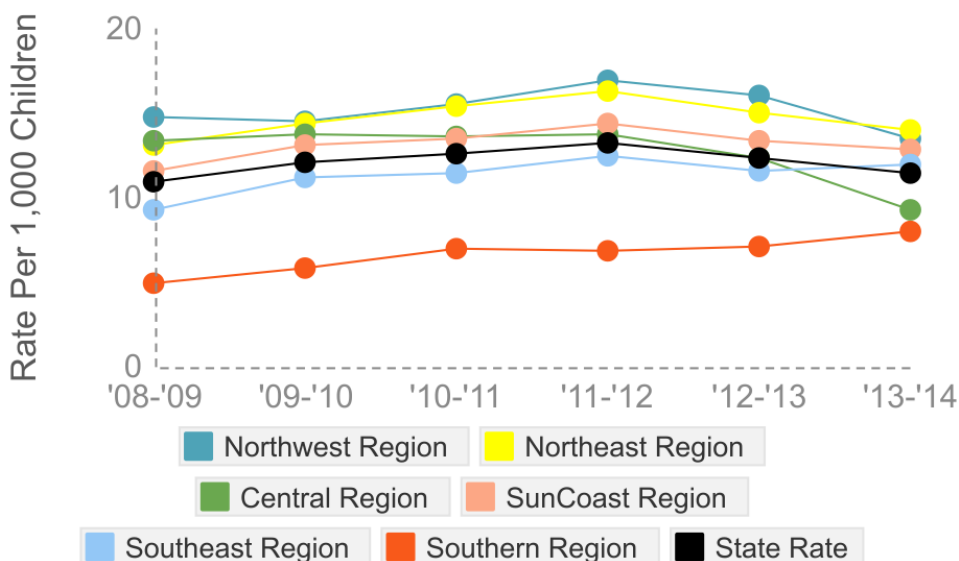
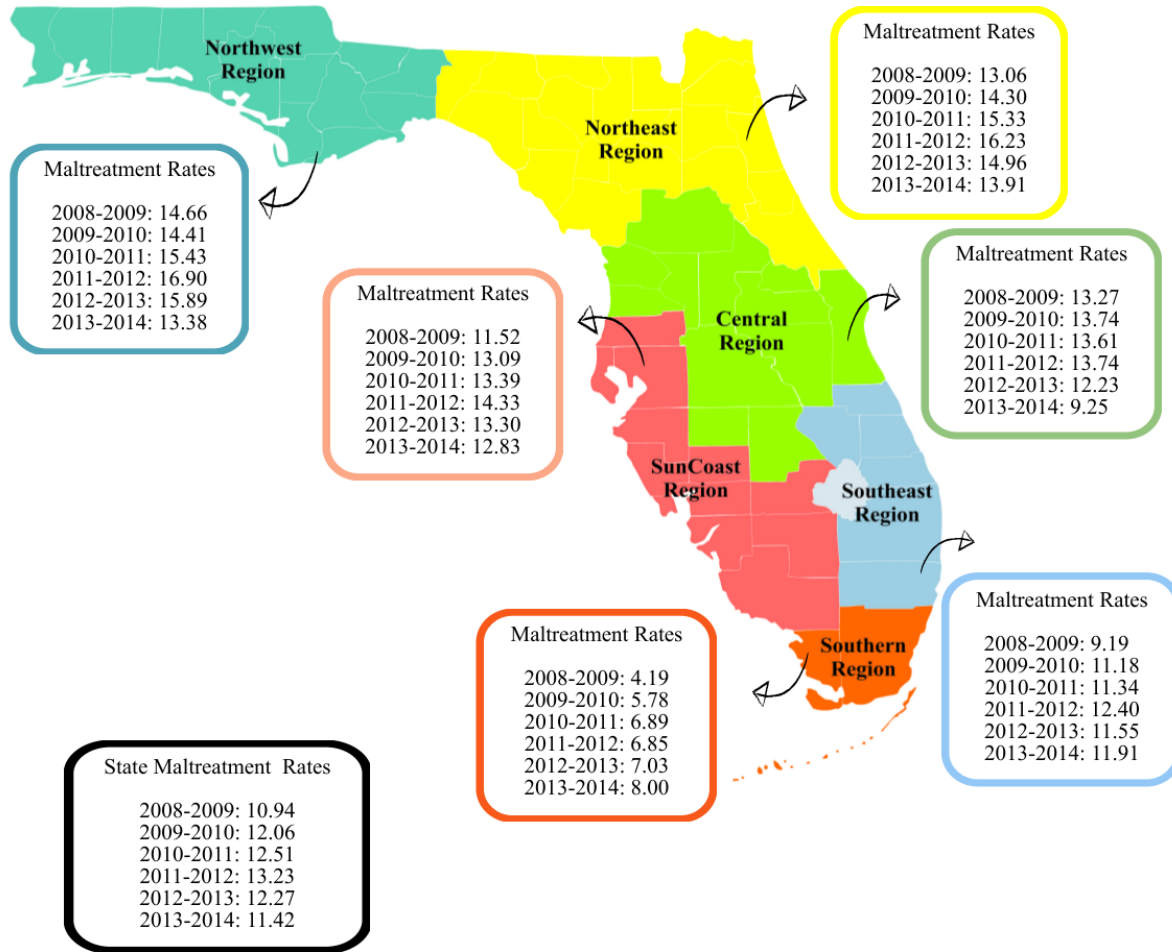
Verified Maltreatment

The rate of children with verified maltreatment was 11.42 during SFY 2013 – 2014. This represents a drop of 0.85 per 1,000 children, a 6.93% decrease in the year-over-year rate. This brings Florida that much closer to the goal rate of fewer than 10.94, as outlined in the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*.

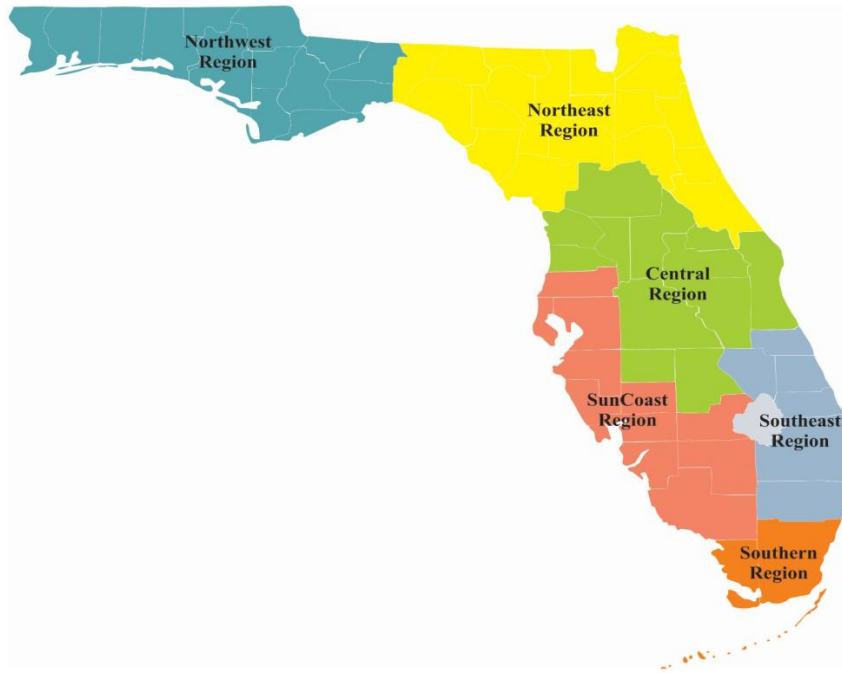
On the next two pages, rates of verified maltreatment per 1,000 children (birth – 17) are presented. The first presents these trends at both the state and regional levels as identified by Department of Children and Families. The second narrows the focus down into judicial circuit-level data. Shifting from the broad to the more specific may help communities identify which efforts are most effective to address each community’s unique needs. Though, as stated earlier, various interaction effects can play a part in producing a given area’s results. Therefore, it is important to consider many factors when reflecting on how to best use this data—data which generally indicates an overall downward trend in maltreatment since SFY 2011 – 2012, both statewide and within most of the circuits.



Infograph 1. Rate of Verified Maltreatment per 1,000 Children by State and Region



Infograph 2. Rate of Verified Maltreatment per 1,000 Children by Circuit



Circuit 1
Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties

2008-2009: 16.21
2009-2010: 15.91
2010-2011: 17.88
2011-2012: 20.26
2012-2013: 19.09
2013-2014: 15.38

Circuit 2
Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, and Wakulla Counties

2008-2009: 11.61
2009-2010: 11.10
2010-2011: 13.33
2011-2012: 12.81
2012-2013: 10.45
2013-2014: 10.03

Circuit 3
Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor Counties

2008-2009: 14.49
2009-2010: 19.34
2010-2011: 19.14
2011-2012: 20.63
2012-2013: 16.83
2013-2014: 19.90

Circuit 4
Clay, Duval, and Nassau Counties

2008-2009: 11.52
2009-2010: 12.63
2010-2011: 13.35
2011-2012: 14.09
2012-2013: 13.83
2013-2014: 13.84

Circuit 5
Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter Counties

2008-2009: 17.35
2009-2010: 16.98
2010-2011: 15.84
2011-2012: 18.32
2012-2013: 17.02
2013-2014: 12.25

Circuit 6
Pasco and Pinellas Counties

2008-2009: 15.25
2009-2010: 18.64
2010-2011: 19.29
2011-2012: 20.31
2012-2013: 18.77
2013-2014: 17.92

Circuit 7
Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, and Volusia Counties

2008-2009: 10.49
2009-2010: 12.62
2010-2011: 14.31
2011-2012: 15.97
2012-2013: 13.45
2013-2014: 11.25

Circuit 8
Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union Counties

2008-2009: 23.99
2009-2010: 21.54
2010-2011: 22.78
2011-2012: 22.28
2012-2013: 21.68
2013-2014: 17.23

Circuit 9
Orange and Osceola Counties

2008-2009: 11.58
2009-2010: 13.47
2010-2011: 13.71
2011-2012: 13.24
2012-2013: 12.01
2013-2014: 9.04

Circuit 10
Hardee, Highlands, and Polk Counties

2008-2009: 13.57
2009-2010: 13.07
2010-2011: 12.52
2011-2012: 11.69
2012-2013: 10.71
2013-2014: 9.43

Circuit 11
Miami-Dade County

2008-2009: 4.46
2009-2010: 5.54
2010-2011: 6.70
2011-2012: 6.68
2012-2013: 6.83
2013-2014: 7.71

Circuit 12
Desoto, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties

2008-2009: 14.77
2009-2010: 15.03
2010-2011: 16.92
2011-2012: 16.32
2012-2013: 14.10
2013-2014: 13.70

Circuit 13
Hillsborough County

2008-2009: 9.83
2009-2010: 10.58
2010-2011: 10.12
2011-2012: 10.86
2012-2013: 10.49
2013-2014: 10.03

Circuit 14
Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington Counties

2008-2009: 14.56
2009-2010: 14.78
2010-2011: 11.81
2011-2012: 13.75
2012-2013: 15.26
2013-2014: 12.57

Circuit 15
Palm Beach County

2008-2009: 9.13
2009-2010: 10.71
2010-2011: 10.02
2011-2012: 10.31
2012-2013: 9.84
2013-2014: 11.50

Circuit 16
Monroe County

2008-2009: 16.82
2009-2010: 16.68
2010-2011: 15.57
2011-2012: 15.46
2012-2013: 16.82
2013-2014: 23.02

Circuit 17
Broward County

2008-2009: 7.83
2009-2010: 10.36
2010-2011: 11.18
2011-2012: 13.45
2012-2013: 12.97
2013-2014: 12.53

Circuit 18
Brevard and Seminole Counties

2008-2009: 12.22
2009-2010: 11.74
2010-2011: 12.25
2011-2012: 11.97
2012-2013: 9.35
2013-2014: 7.95

Circuit 19
Indian river, Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie Counties

2008-2009: 13.93
2009-2010: 15.04
2010-2011: 14.89
2011-2012: 13.64
2012-2013: 10.84
2013-2014: 10.84

Circuit 20
Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee Counties

2008-2009: 7.61
2009-2010: 8.92
2010-2011: 8.86
2011-2012: 10.80
2012-2013: 10.26
2013-2014: 10.29

As shown in Chart 1 and Table 1, the younger the child, the more vulnerable the child is to be maltreated.

- The highest percentage of children with verified maltreatment during SFY 2013 – 2014 was in the birth to four year old range.
- This was followed by elementary school aged children (5 – 10 years).
- These two age groups make up 35,423 of 46,319 verifications, over 75% of total verifications.
- It should be noted that there is a very small percentage difference between middle school children and high school children with verified maltreatment during SFY 2013 – 2014 (11.30% vs. 12.08%).
- All identified age groups except unknown, which constitutes a very small proportion of the total, decreased between 5.39% and 8.3% for verified maltreatment year-over-year. This indicates both a general improvement across the age-spectrum as well as a reduction in the age-specific factors that contribute to abuse.

Chart 1. Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, July 2013 – June 2014 Statewide

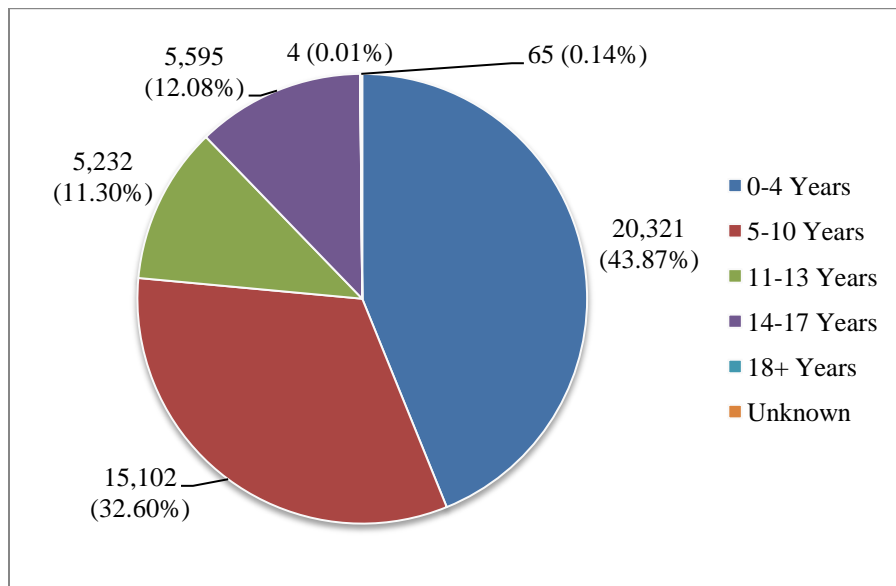


Table 1. Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, July 2013 – June 2014 by Circuit

Circuit	Age of Child						Total
	0-4 Years	5-10 Years	11-13 Years	14-17 Years	18+ Years	Unknown	
1	1,089	777	235	303	-	8	2,412
2	333	246	108	108	-	2	797
3	311	305	124	87	-	-	827
4	1,667	1,251	389	421	-	7	3,735
5	954	756	257	310	-	1	2,278
6	2,141	1,517	499	549	-	4	4,710
7	893	661	241	248	1	1	2,045
8	531	369	135	122	-	-	1,157
9	1,403	990	380	457	-	5	3,235
10	759	520	172	203	-	3	1,657
11	1,805	1,424	503	572	2	12	4,318
12	805	618	232	206	-	1	1,862
13	1,450	960	294	308	-	1	3,013
14	274	270	100	115	-	1	760
15	1,349	1,094	368	347	1	5	3,164
16	97	80	36	40	-	-	253
17	2,204	1,528	510	559	-	9	4,810
18	655	524	211	227	-	1	1,618
19	571	442	150	178	-	-	1,341
20	1,030	770	288	235	-	4	2,327
Statewide	20,321	15,102	5,232	5,595	4	65	46,319
Percentage	43.87%	32.60%	11.30%	12.08%	0.01%	0.14%	100%



Allegations and Investigations of Child Maltreatment

This pattern continues when looking at allegations of child maltreatment. As shown in Chart 2 and Table 2, the largest ranges of allegations is for children between the ages of birth and four years old and those between five and 10 years old.

- These latter two age groups include 157,557 children who were alleged victims of maltreatment, or 70.1% of all children who were alleged victims.
- While the age ranges 0 – 4 years (34.92%) and 5-10 years (35.18%) reflect similar proportions of all allegations, so do the 11 – 13 years (13.7%) and 14 – 17 years (15.81%) ranges.

Chart 2. Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated), July 2013 – June 2014 Statewide

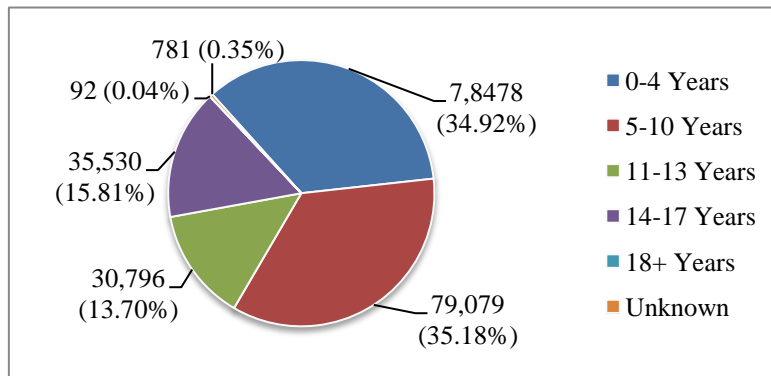


Table 2. Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated) for July 2013 – June 2014 by Circuit

Circuit	Age of Child						Total
	0-4 Years	5-10 Years	11-13 Years	14-17 Years	18+ Years	Unknown	
1	4,315	4,049	1,480	1,772	5	100	11,721
2	1,610	1,518	695	697	2	32	4,554
3	1,110	1,279	484	472	1	3	3,349
4	6,162	6,155	2,306	2,631	6	78	17,338
5	4,968	4,876	1,947	2,179	10	34	14,014
6	6,250	5,866	2,280	2,690	6	46	17,138
7	4,083	4,064	1,615	1,922	4	42	11,730
8	2,131	1,951	705	810	4	15	5,616
9	6,836	7,193	2,785	3,445	4	81	20,344
10	4,147	4,421	1,746	1,922	4	39	12,279
11	5,608	5,793	2,352	2,812	8	76	16,649
12	3,133	3,168	1,228	1,338	-	24	8,891
13	5,157	5,235	1,946	2,294	8	18	14,658
14	1,715	1,806	664	748	1	16	4,950
15	4,785	4,865	1,840	2,060	8	46	13,604
16	261	265	105	112	2	-	745
17	5,690	5,296	2,166	2,577	6	69	15,804
18	4,078	4,353	1,679	1,922	6	21	12,059
19	2,155	2,368	934	1,054	1	6	6,518
20	4,284	4,558	1,839	2,073	6	35	12,795
Statewide	78,478	79,079	30,796	35,530	92	781	224,756
Percentage	34.92%	35.18%	13.70%	15.81%	0.04%	0.35%	100.00%

In Table 3, the highlighted cells in orange indicate the most prevalent segment among alleged victims of maltreatment for race, ethnicity, and gender for each circuit as well as statewide.

- The largest percentage of children and youth who were alleged victims of maltreatment were white (60.0%), representing at least a plurality in 18 of the 20 judicial circuits.
- For ethnicity, the largest portion was Other (non – Hispanic) (82.6%), which represent a majority of alleged maltreatment cases in every circuit in Florida.
- Investigations were conducted for nearly proportional numbers of boys and girls.

Table 3. Race, Ethnicity, and Gender of Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated) July 2013 – June 2014

Circuit	White	Black	Multiracial	Other	Hispanic	Other	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
1	7,470	2,948	518	785	457	11,264	5,846	5,757	118	11,721
2	1,764	2,402	91	297	143	4,411	2,187	2,328	39	4,554
3	2,494	653	145	57	222	3,127	1,670	1,675	4	3,349
4	8,685	7,046	558	1,049	982	16,356	8,651	8,559	128	17,338
5	10,585	2,354	412	663	1,486	12,528	6,968	6,972	74	14,014
6	11,891	3,401	950	896	1,814	15,324	8,585	8,470	83	17,138
7	8,180	2,432	337	781	983	10,747	5,848	5,823	59	11,730
8	3,233	1,959	233	191	280	5,336	2,825	2,768	23	5,616
9	11,038	7,212	499	1,595	5,981	14,363	10,211	9,996	137	20,344
10	8,376	2,905	369	629	2,232	10,047	6,149	6,066	64	12,279
11	8,115	7,071	132	1,331	7,363	9,286	8,110	8,393	146	16,649
12	6,315	1,807	272	497	1,774	7,117	4,428	4,422	41	8,891
13	8,232	5,339	489	598	3,287	11,371	7,244	7,362	52	14,658
14	3,737	797	162	254	160	4,790	2,494	2,424	32	4,950
15	6,548	5,947	219	890	2,959	10,645	6,918	6,592	94	13,604
16	588	90	47	20	218	527	391	354	0	745
17	5,930	8,092	279	1,503	3,116	12,688	7,927	7,754	123	15,804
18	8,047	2,811	691	510	1,518	10,541	6,035	5,970	54	12,059
19	4,274	1,776	204	264	1,052	5,466	3,233	3,263	22	6,518
20	9,244	2,298	335	918	3,145	9,650	6,291	6,448	56	12,795
Statewide	134,746	69,340	6,942	13,728	39,172	185,584	112,011	111,396	1,349	224,756
Percentage	60.0%	30.9%	3.1%	6.1%	17.4%	82.6%	49.8%	49.6%	0.6%	100%



Table 4 shows the number of allegations and verifications, in duplicated counts. The three highest values in each category are highlighted in orange. A child might have been the alleged victim with more than a single allegation attributed to the same incident. Using the updated run from September 2014, statewide there were 46,319 children with verified child maltreatment (unduplicated child count), from among whom 70,710 verified allegations of maltreatment arose.

- Many factors can contribute to the relative rankings of these abuse types. For instance, abandonment is the most easily verified (69.4%) because it is easy to discern and few alternative explanations for a child being left alone.
- The allegations most often raised were for family violence, inadequate supervision, and physical injury. Combined, these three alone represent a total of 218,043 allegations--just over half (50.1%) of all allegations for the year.
- For these same three categories, despite having rates of verification that were relatively low (23.2%, 13.0%, and 8.0%, respectively), they still represent a substantial combined proportion of total verifications (44.2%).

Because family violence, inadequate supervision, and physical injury are such substantive factors contributing to child maltreatment rates, special emphasis should be given to these areas to reduce maltreatment across the state. It should be noted, however, that each individual case is different. Understanding the most direct cause in each case can be important in determining the best plan for addressing it.

Table 4. Allegations and Verifications of Abuse (Duplicated Child Counts) July 2013 – June 2014

Type of Abuse Allegation	Allegations	Verified	Percent of Allegations Verified
Abandonment	1,187	824	69.4%
Asphyxiation	1,789	95	5.3%
Bizarre Punishment	2,199	347	15.8%
Bone Fracture	781	194	24.8%
Burns	1,371	129	9.4%
Death	335	101	30.1%
Environmental Hazards	53,043	5,627	10.6%
Failure to Protect	4,200	2,120	50.5%
Failure to Thrive	357	151	42.3%
Family Violence Threatens Child	89,189	20,709	23.2%
Human Trafficking	36	8	22.2%
Human Trafficking CSEC	628	135	21.5%
Human Trafficking Labor	136	58	42.6%
Inadequate Supervision	72,368	9,383	13.0%
Internal Injuries	54	33	61.1%
Malnutrition/Dehydration	167	60	35.9%
Medical Neglect	7,756	1,256	16.2%
Mental Injury	10,766	513	4.8%
Physical Injury	56,486	4,536	8.0%
Sexual Abuse	5,575	831	14.9%
Sexual Abuse – Sexual Battery	2,737	590	21.6%
Sexual Abuse – Sexual Exploitation	625	98	15.7%
Sexual Abuse – Sexual Molestation	6,483	1,007	15.5%
Substance Misuse	44,410	7,511	16.9%
Substance Misuse – Alcohol	19,457	2,903	14.9%
Substance Misuse – Illicit Drugs	32,010	5,259	16.4%
Substance Misuse – Prescription Drugs	13,642	1,978	14.5%
Threatened Harm	7,407	4,254	57.4%
Statewide	435,194	70,710	16.2%

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 16,015 children entering foster care in the twelve month span from July 2013 – June 2014, the reasons for removal were divided into nine categories, shown in Table 5. A child may have more than one reason for removal noted, thus the counts in this table will represent duplicated child counts. Highlighted in orange, the highest percentage of removals (42.05%) were due to parental drug and alcohol abuse.

Table 5. Reasons for Removal Reported (Duplicated Child Counts) July 2013 – June 2014

Removal Reason	Number of Children	Percent
Parental Drug and Alcohol Abuse	6,735	42.05%
Inadequate Supervision, Medical and Physical Neglect	3,013	18.81%
Physical and Sexual Abuse	2,989	18.66%
Domestic Violence	2,618	16.35%
Death of Parent/Caretaker Unable to Cope	2,410	15.05%
Child Behavior/Relinquishment/Abandonment	2,176	13.59%
Incarceration of Parents	1,926	12.03%
Inadequate Housing	1,745	10.90%
Child Alcohol and Drug Abuse	228	1.42%



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, while there may have been an array of services recommended for a single child, only the first few might have been recorded in the electronic data system. Therefore these data likely under-represent the complete numbers of actual services recommended at disposition for alleged victims of reported abuse. As shown in Table 6, the services most often recommended include counseling services, case management services, and informational referral service, each of which are highlighted in orange.

**Table 6. Services Recommended for Alleged Victims at Investigation Disposition
July 2013 – June 2014**

Recommended Services	Number	Percentage
Counseling Services	31,021	22.26%
Case Management Services	16,758	12.03%
Informational Referral Service	16,585	11.90%
Day Care Services Child	15,067	10.81%
Services Offered Refused	13,486	9.68%
Other Services	11,140	7.99%
Substance Abuse Services	10,001	7.18%
Family Support Services	7,287	5.23%
Mental Health Services	4,103	2.94%
Family Preservation Services	2,333	1.67%
Home Based Services	1,942	1.39%
Foster Care Services	1,359	0.98%
Legal Services	1,344	0.96%
Court Appointed Representative	1,079	0.77%
Housing Services	984	0.71%
Family Builders	843	0.60%
Pregnancy Parenting Services	616	0.44%
Educational Training Services	530	0.38%
Employment Services	517	0.37%
Juvenile Court Petition	456	0.33%
Family Planning Services	337	0.24%
Intensive Crisis Counseling Program	288	0.21%
Health Related Home Services	272	0.20%
Transportation Services	212	0.15%
Respite Care Services	179	0.13%
Special Juvenile Delinquent	154	0.11%
Independent Transition Living	141	0.10%
Adoption Services	135	0.10%
Possible False Report	80	0.06%
Special Services Disabled	55	0.04%
Petition Dismissed By Judge	40	0.03%
Statewide (Duplicated)	139,344	100.00%

Summary of Adoption Data

This subsection comprises of 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 Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in October and November 2014. 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 2013 spans October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014. On the other hand, the current state performance information is based on the 12 month period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014 (SFY 2013 – 2014), using the most recent available data for this report.

During State Fiscal Year 2013 – 2014 Florida finalized 3,244 adoptions throughout the state. This is due to the diligent efforts of the Department of Children and Families, Community Based Care Lead Agencies, Florida Association of Heart Galleries, the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, and many others.

- Of the children adopted last state fiscal year for whom information is available, 840 were nine years of age or older (26.1%), 380 were 13 and older (11.81%), and 146 were 16 or 17 (4.5%).

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

The Department of Children and Families 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 what it means to be "available for adoption." Different interpretations of this term can operationally refer to different populations, or population subsets. These may include:

- a. Children with a primary goal of adoption, who have not been TPR'ed (that is, the termination of their parental rights);
- b. Children who have been TPR'ed, making them legally available for adoption, regardless of whether adoption is a primary goal;
- c. Children who have been both TPR'ed and have a primary goal of adoption;
- d. Children who have been TPR'ed, 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'ed, 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 *Explore Adoption* website.

As shown in Table 7, adoption-related populations overlap or are nested within each other, and each yields a different number. The table provides a point in time chart as of July 1, 2013 and provides a starting base at the beginning of SFY 2013 – 2014.

Table 7. Adoption-Related Populations as of June 30, 2013

Population Description	Number of Children
Children TPR'ed or who have a primary goal of adoption	5,196
Children with a primary goal of adoption regardless of TPR status	1,346
Children TPR'ed, regardless of goal	4,966
Children who have been TPR'ed and have a primary goal of adoption	1,116
Children who have been TPR'ed, have a primary goal of adoption, and are on the website	673*

*The 673 is from the Monthly Adoption Report; all other figures are from the July 1, 2013 AFCARS extract.

Timeliness of Adoption

The *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* has two desired population results for the promotion of adoption. Both speak to the timeliness of adoption – increasing the adoptions that occur within 12 months of TPR and decreasing the length of time for children that have been waiting for adoption for more than 12 months since TPR.

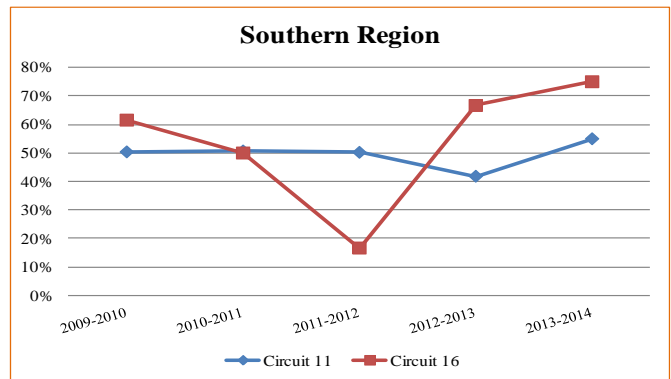
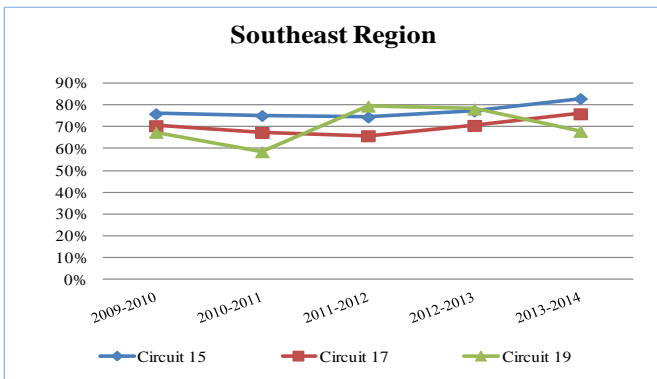
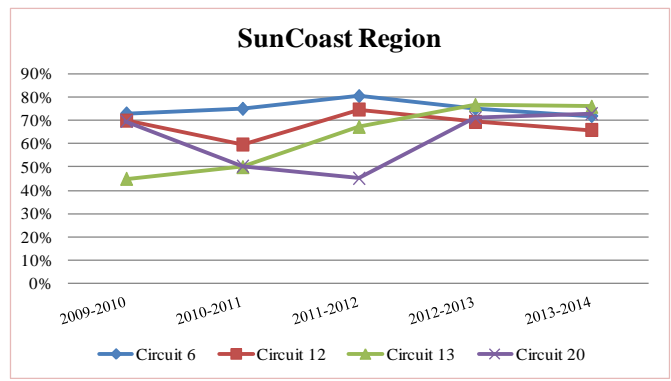
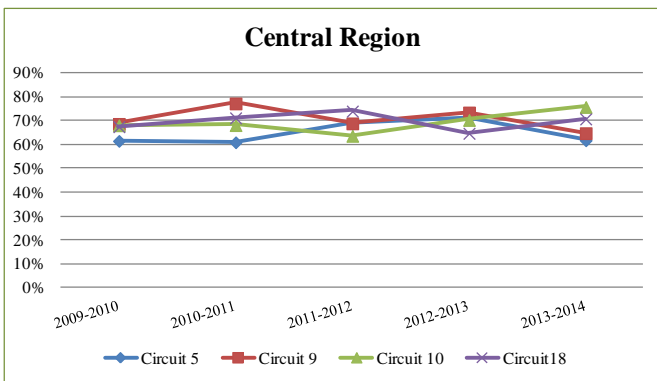
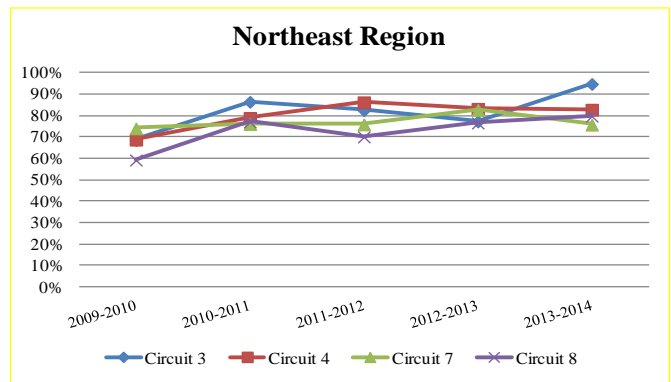
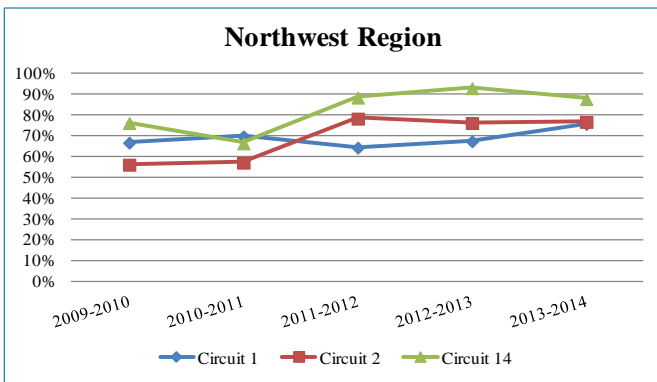
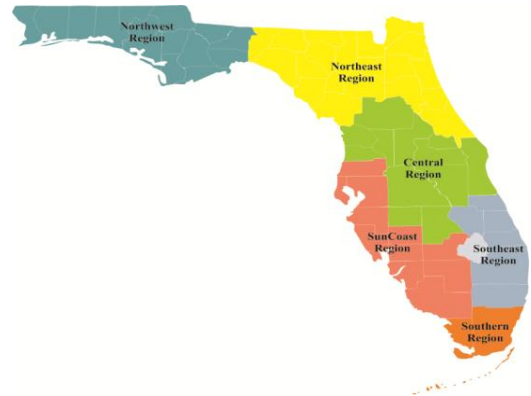
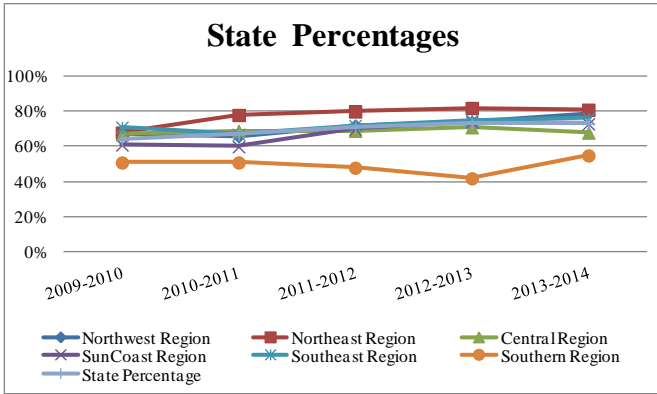
State Plan Desired Result 2 – Promotion of Adoption – By June 30, 2015, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the State Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 rate of 66.4 percent.

As stated later in Chart 7 and reflected in graphs on the following two pages, of children adopted across the state in SFY 2013 – 2014, 73.42 percent were adopted within 12 months of the termination of parental rights—well ahead of the 2008 – 2009 goal of 66.4 percent outlined in the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. In SFY 2008 – 2009, that same classification represented 64.1 percent of all those adopted. In the span between the SFY 2008 – 2009 and SFY 2013 – 2014, that proportion has increased 14.6 percent – with 17 of the 20 circuits seeing increases.

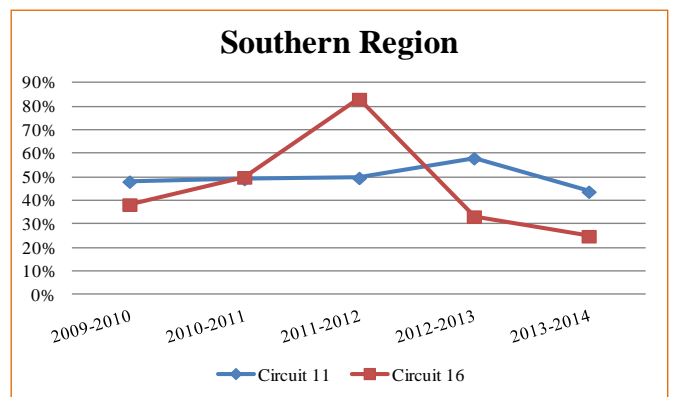
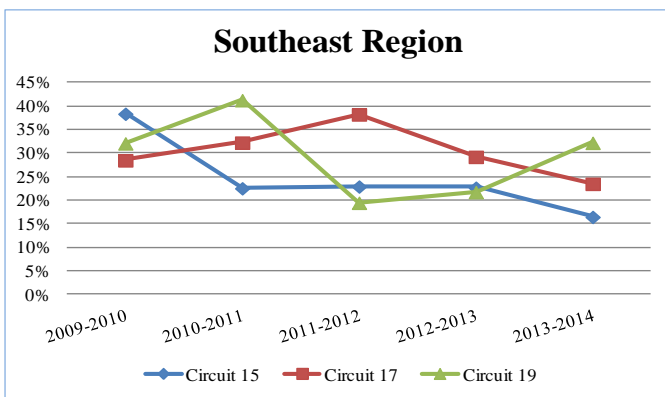
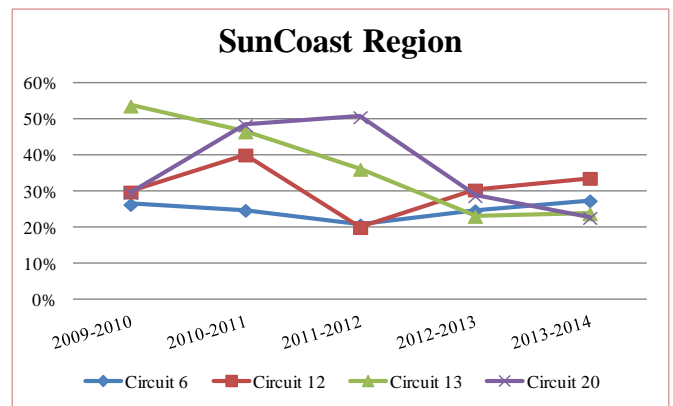
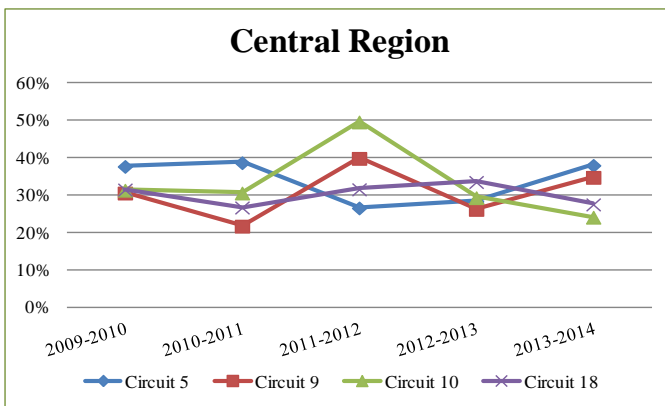
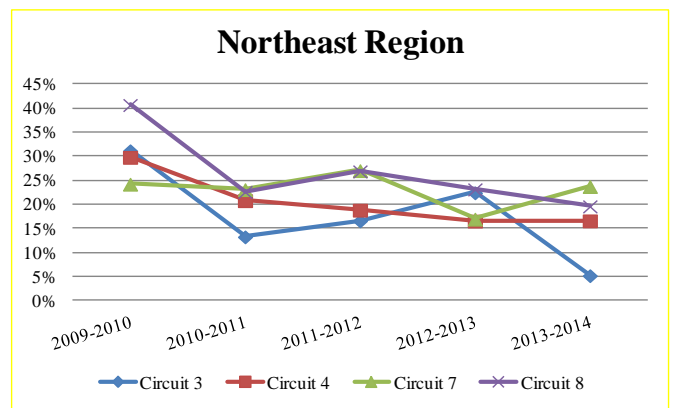
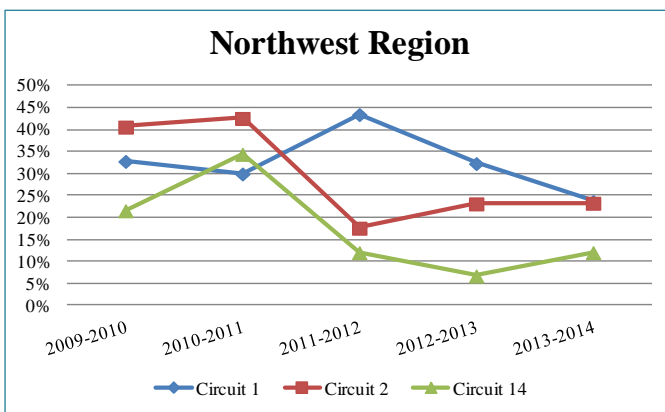
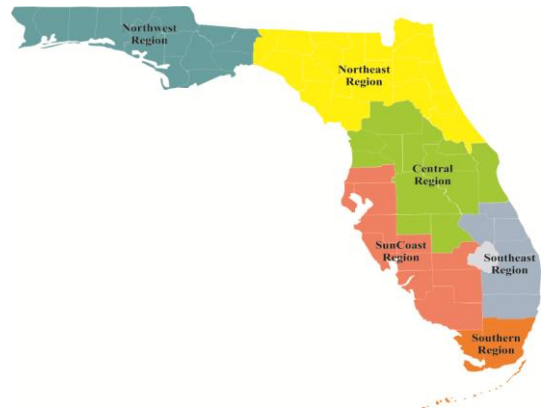
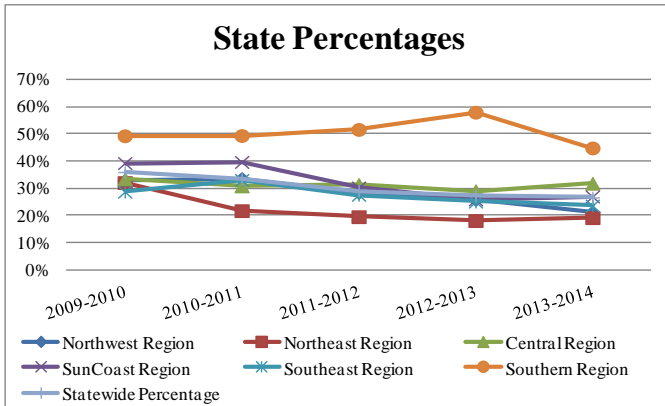
On the next two pages are infographs showing the recent history of adoptions occurring both within 12 months and adoptions taking place after than 12 months of TPR. The first examines the proportion adopted within 12 months of TPR, and the second presents the proportion after 12 months from the time of TPR. Both present these trends at the state, regional, and circuit levels as identified by Department of Children and Families. Shifting from the broad to the more specific may help communities identify which efforts are most effective to address each community’s unique needs.



Infograph 3. Percentage of Children Adopted within 12 Months of Termination of Parental Rights



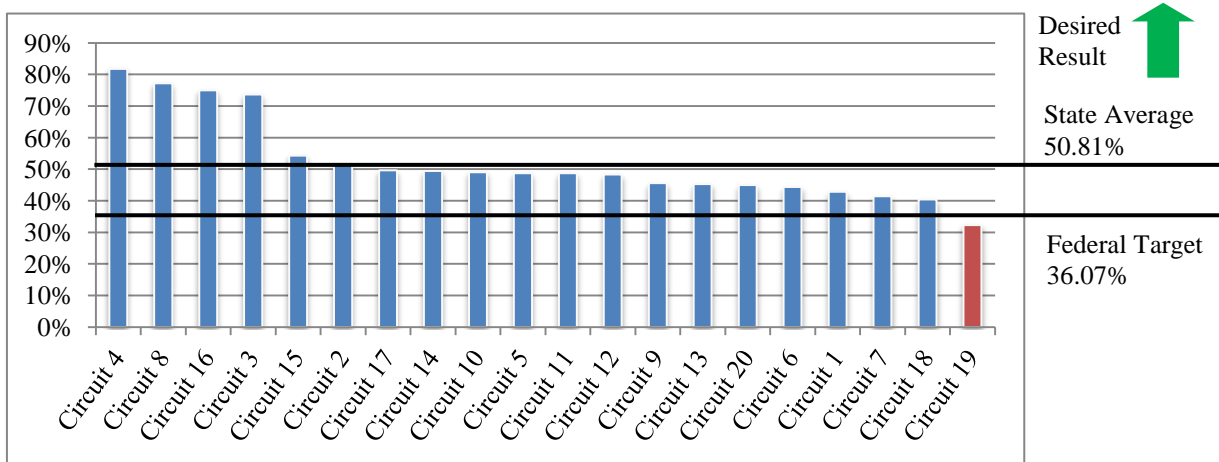
Infograph 4. Percentage of Children Adopted After 12 Months of Termination of Parental Rights



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 2013 through June 2014, on average, *50.81 percent were discharged in fewer 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 36.07 percent. *Florida has met and exceeded this target for the sixth consecutive year.*

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—as opposed to recruiting adoptive families for younger children more recently introduced into foster care. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below. As shown in Chart 3, all but one of the 20 Florida circuits exceeded the federal target.

Chart 3. Percent Discharged to Adoption in Less than 24 Months by Circuit



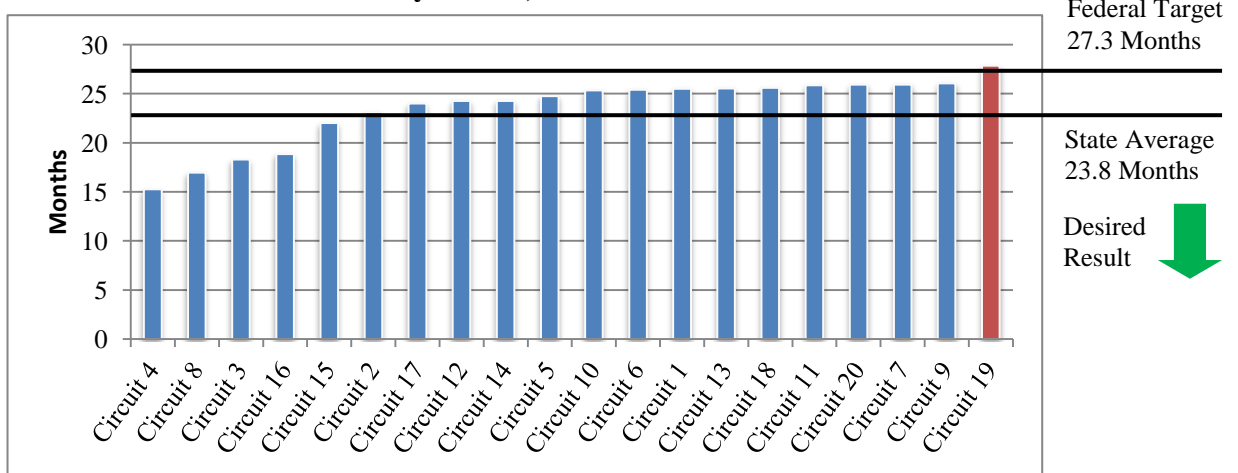
Note: 26 AFCARS reported adoptions are excluded due to being private adoptions. County is based on county of courtesy worker or primary worker at time of adoption.



AFCARS Measure 2 – Median Length of Stay in Foster Care. Of all children adopted from foster care during the period July 2013 through June 2014, the *median length of stay in foster care was 23.8 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.

- **Florida met and exceeded the federal target.**
- Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below, and **all of Florida’s circuits but one was below the federal target in SFY 2013 – 2014.**
- On average, the time spent by a child in foster care in Florida was **3.5 months shorter than the federal target.**

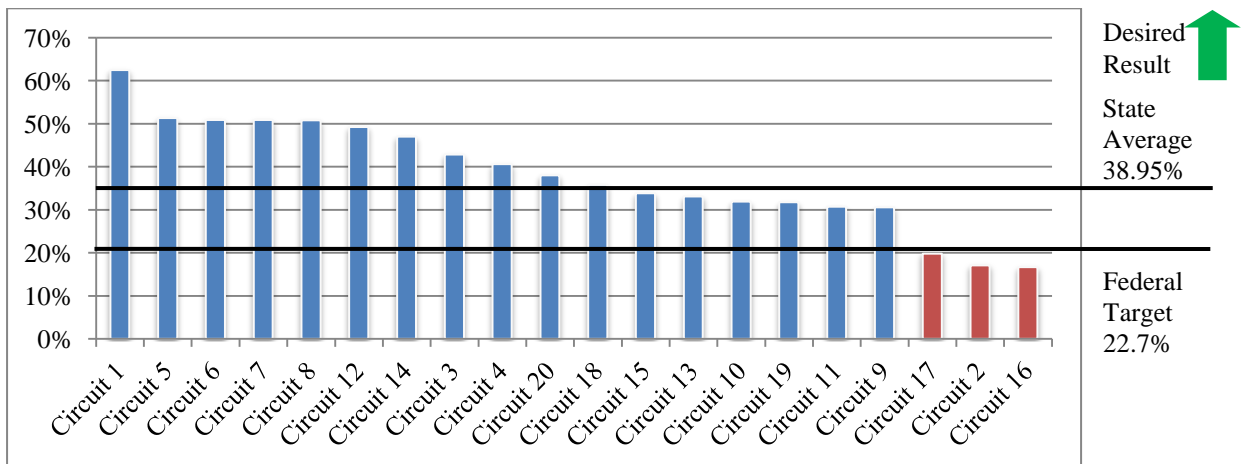
Chart 4. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care for Children Discharged to Adoption by Circuit, in Months



AFCARS Measure 3 – Finalized Adoptions. Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 2013, and who had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, **38.95 percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption by June 30, 2014.** The target, established in FFY 2007 was to reach 22.7 percent, the national 75th percentile for FFY 2004.

- **Florida has met and exceeded this target.**
- This measure provides a means for examining 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 determine if 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 Chart 5, of the 20 Florida circuits, 17 (85%) met or exceeded the federal target during SFY 2013 – 2014. The circuits that did not meet the target are shown in red below.
- ***It should be noted that Florida, for the sixth year in a row, has received an adoption incentive award from the Department of Health and Human Services for the number of finalized adoptions of children with special needs.***

Chart 5. Percent of Finalized Adoptions by Circuit



AFCARS Measure 4 – Legally Free for Adoption. Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of July 2013 or January 2014, had been in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, and were not legally free for adoption prior to that day, **32.39 percent became legally free for adoption** by December 31, 2013 or June 30, 2014 respectively—nearly double the percentage during that same span during the previous year. The target was to reach the national 75th percentile for FFY 2004, established in FFY 2007 which is 10.9 percent.

- **Florida met and exceeded this target.**
- As shown in Chart 6, all 20 of Florida’s circuits exceeded this goal.

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 whom, during that six month period, achieved permanency through reunification with parents or primary caretakers, living with other relatives, or guardianship. Individual circuit performance of the measure is reflected below.

Chart 6. Percent of Children Legally Free for Adoption by Circuit

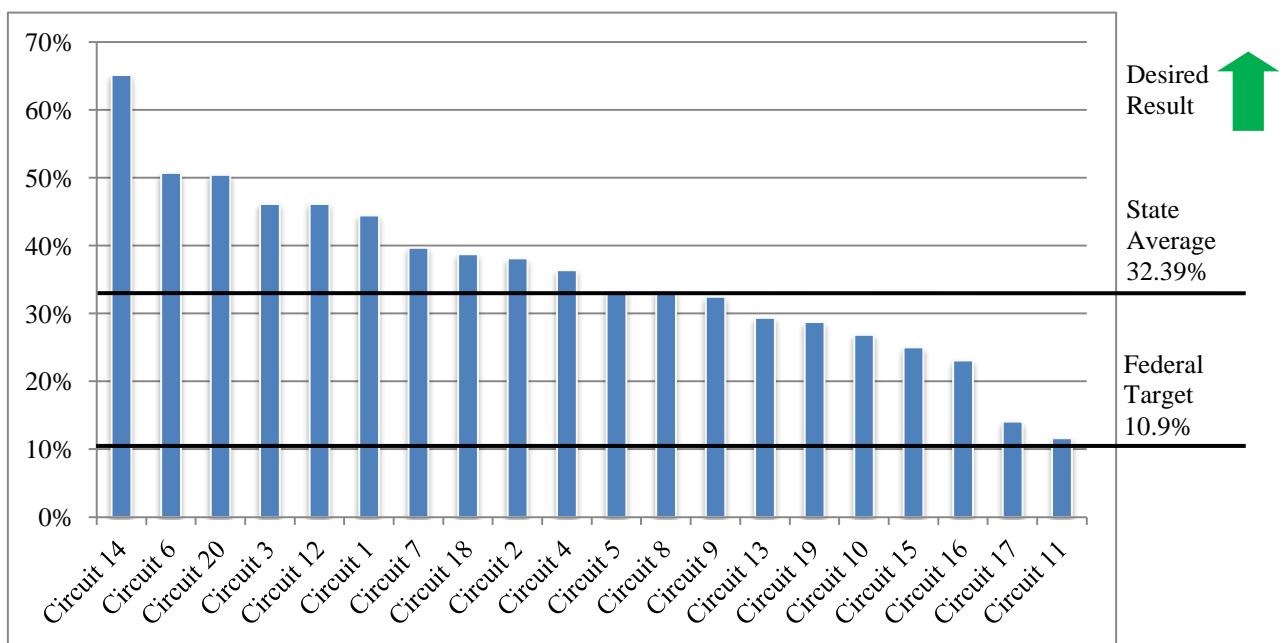
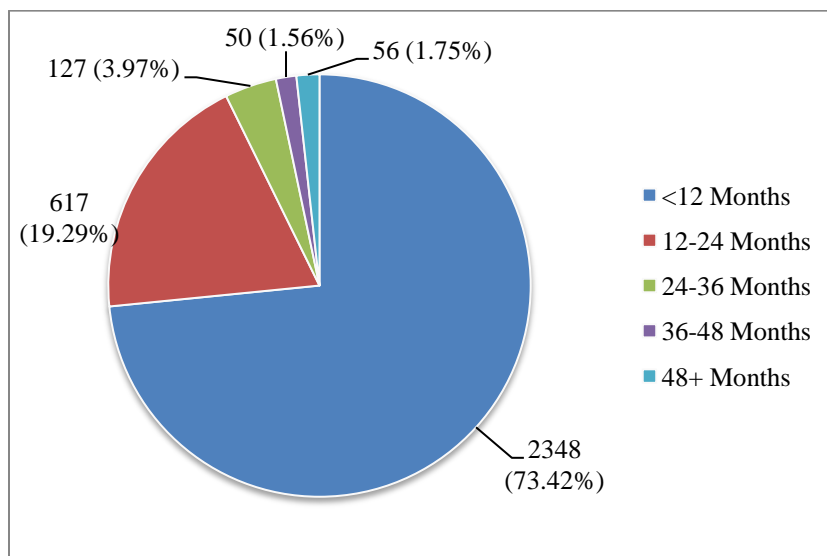


Chart 7 shows the length of time from the last TPR date until the adoption finalization for all children adopted during SFY 2013 – 2014. The date of TPR was recorded in the system for 3,198 out of the 3,244 of the children adopted.

- Of these 3,198 children, most (73.42%) were adopted in fewer than twelve months and almost all (91.71%) were adopted within 24 months of their TPR dates.
- This exceeds the 66.4 percent target rate established in the current five-year plan.
- Of the children adopted during SFY 2013 – 2014, 233 children (7.29%) were adopted after waiting two or more years and, of these, 56 children (1.75% of the total) 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 with an adoptive family.

Chart 7. Length of Time between TPR and Adoption Finalization, July 2013 – June 2014



* The percentages only include the children for whom the TPR was entered.

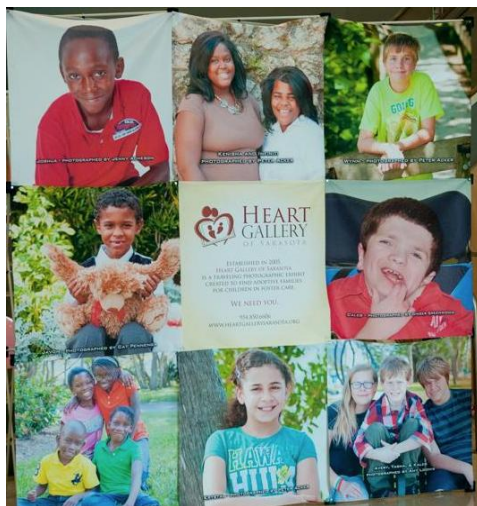
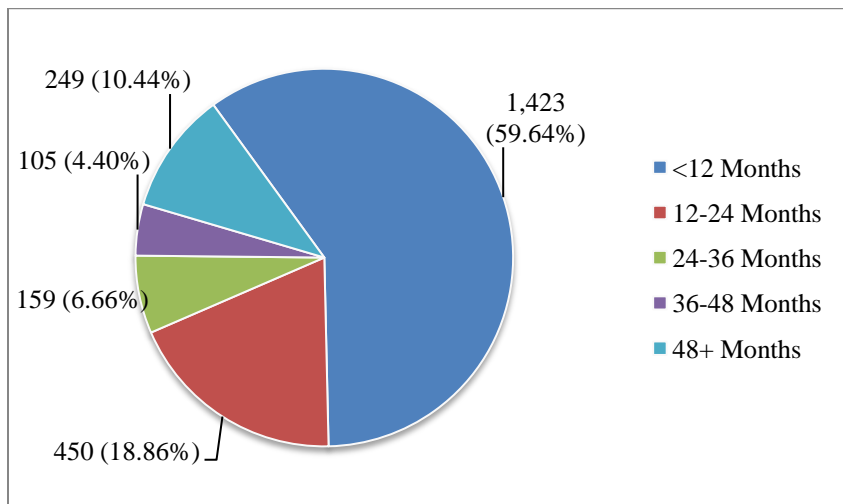


Chart 8 shows the length of time from the last TPR date until June 30, 2014 for the children who were legally free for adoption as of the end of the State Fiscal Year. The date of TPR was available for 2,386 of the 2,533 children who were legally free for adoption by June 30, 2013.

- Of these 2,386 children, fewer than half (40.36%) have been waiting longer than 12 months to be adopted.
- 354 children (14.84%) who were available for adoption at the end of the SFY 2013 – 2014 have been waiting longer than three years to be adopted.

Chart 8. Length of Time Since TPR for Children Remaining Available for Adoption as of June 30, 2014



* The percentages only include the children for whom the TPR was entered.

As stated earlier, during 2013 – 2014 SFY, 3,244 adoptions from the child welfare system were finalized in Florida.

- Of those, 3,156 had the adoptive parent relationship data available (98.69%).
- Just greater than three-quarters of the 3,156 children were adopted by the families known to them and where they were already living – by either their foster parents or relative caregivers: **27.25 percent** were adopted by foster parents and **50.29 percent** were adopted by relatives.
- The remaining **22.47 percent** of these children were adopted by families who were recruited for them.
- As documented in Table 8, the percentages of these three adoptive populations do vary by circuit, with the orange highlighted cells showing the highest percentage for each circuit. These reflect a need for local Community Based Care Lead Agencies to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach for maximizing adoption in their areas—instead allocating efforts which best meet the unique needs of their communities.



Chart 9. Percentage of Adoptions by Type of Adoptive Family – Statewide

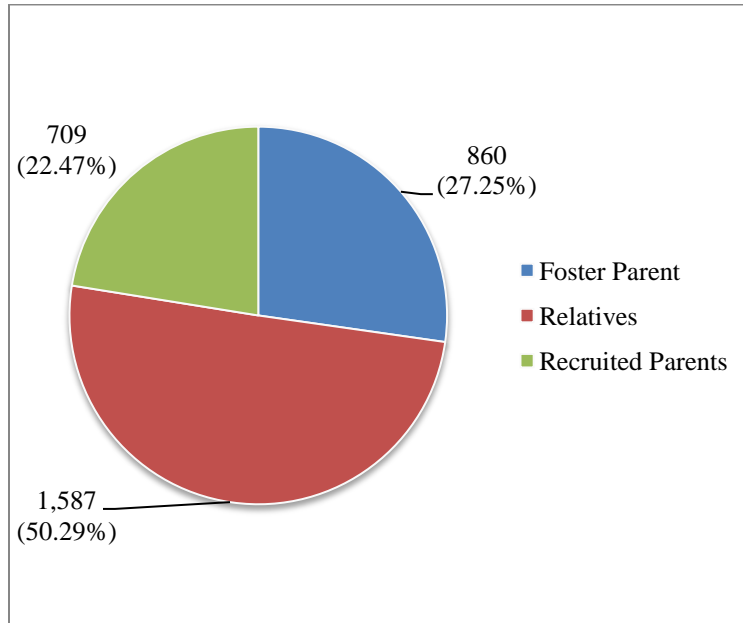


Table 8. Percentage of Adoption by Type of Adoptive Family by Circuit

Circuit	Foster Parents	Relatives	Recruited Parents
1	29.13%	53.15%	17.72%
2	21.67%	63.33%	15.00%
3	26.32%	42.11%	31.58%
4	22.36%	58.79%	18.85%
5	21.38%	50.31%	28.30%
6	31.94%	46.67%	21.39%
7	30.77%	47.60%	21.63%
8	11.20%	59.20%	29.60%
9	25.88%	38.24%	35.88%
10	22.98%	47.20%	29.81%
11	26.97%	56.93%	16.10%
12	25.35%	47.89%	26.76%
13	26.69%	47.41%	25.90%
14	29.67%	49.45%	20.88%
15	36.51%	48.41%	15.08%
16	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%
17	38.02%	42.98%	19.01%
18	15.66%	54.22%	30.12%
19	17.71%	63.54%	18.75%
20	43.84%	38.36%	17.81%
State	27.25%	50.29%	22.47%

Table 9 shows the same categories found in Table 7 but for a different snapshot of time. These counts were taken on June 30, 2014 and provide for end of SFY 2013 – 2014 counts as well as a starting base for SFY 2014 – 2015. As of June 30, 2014 3,031 children were legally available with a primary goal of adoption, and waiting to be adopted.

Table 9. Adoption-Related Populations as of June 30, 2014

Population Description	Number of Children
Children TPR'ed or who have a primary goal of adoption	5,415
Children with a primary goal of adoption regardless of TPR status	4,975
Children TPR'ed, regardless of goal	3,482
Children who have been TPR'ed and have a primary goal of adoption	3,031
Children who have been TPR'ed, have a primary goal of adoption, and are on the website	657*

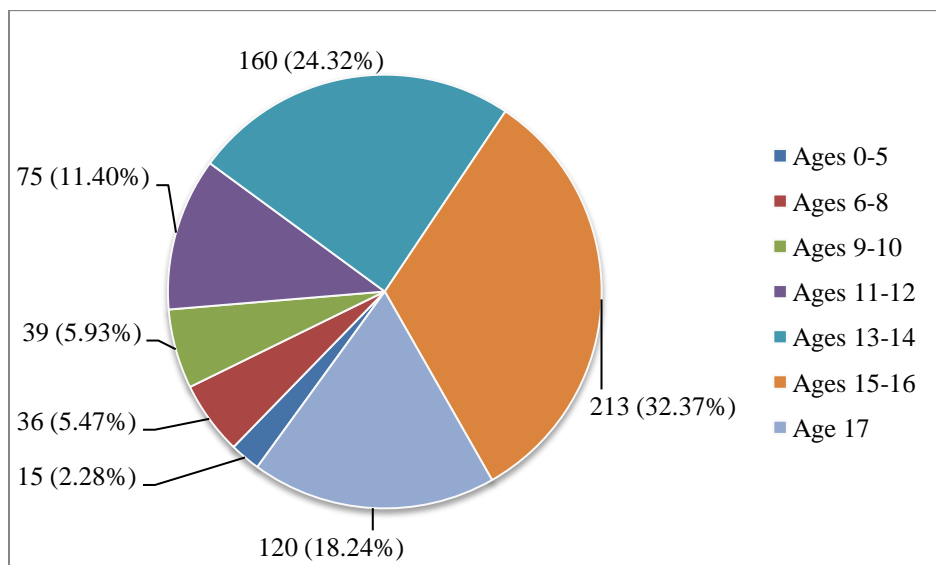
**From the Monthly Adoption Report and includes all children who are legally free for adoption, have the goal of adoption, are listed on the adoption web site, and do not have an identified family.*

Chart 10 shows the ages of children available for adoption, without an identified family, regardless of Termination of Parental Rights date.

Of the 673 children available without identified adoptive families, data was available for 658 children. Of these:

- Children ages 13 – 17 make up 74.93% of the children, with 18.24% being 17 year olds.
- Youth who are 15 – 16 years old represent a plurality (213; 32.37%) of the waiting children.
- 7.75 percent of the available children are eight years of age or younger while 92.25 percent are between the ages of nine and seventeen.

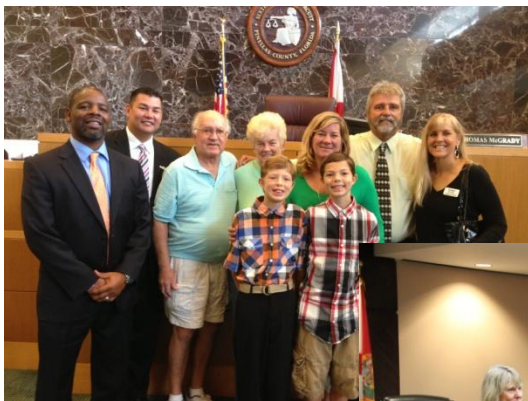
Chart 10. Age Groups of Children without Identified Adoptive Families Awaiting Adoption



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.

As stated later in Chart 12, of children adopted across the state in SFY 2013 – 2014, 40.36 percent of those children awaiting adoption have been waiting longer than 12 months—well below the 2008-2009 goal of 53.19 percent outlined in the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. This points to a far greater emphasis on children finding permanency within the first 12 months after TPR, which can also indirectly be seen in both Chart 7 earlier, which shows the length of TPR for finalized adoptions, and in Infographs 3 and 4. On the next page, Infograph 5 presents trend lines for the proportion of children waiting longer than 12 months for adoption across judicial circuits, regions, and the state.

Care should be taken when interpreting this information using charts in an attempt to assess causality — particularly within circuit level data. It should be noted that, over the five SFYs covered in the infograph, 1,240 children available for adoption were not represented due to missing TPR dates – with the number being excluded from this data falling especially after 2010 – 2011, meaning a greater proportion of the population of children in foster care are represented by the sample. In addition, some counties having significantly smaller numbers of children available for adoption, making any comparison of rates between dissimilarly sized circuits more challenging. Because the rate of children waiting longer than 12 months since TPR is a percentage of all children available for adoption, the rate can also be affected by any proportional change in new TPRs. All else equal, any proportional rise in TPRs from one year to another would also cause the proportion waiting greater than 12 months to rise.



Infograph 5. Percentage of Children Available for Adoption After 12 Months of Termination of Parental Rights

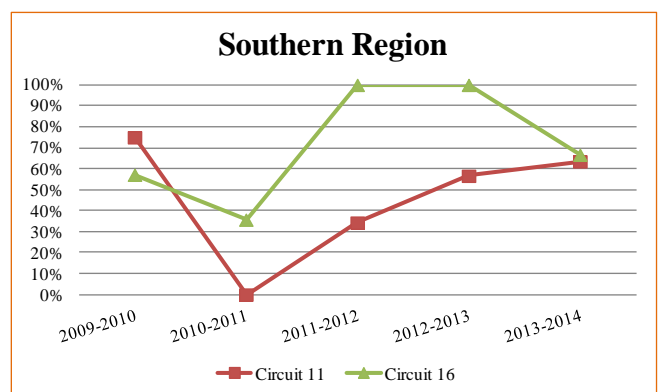
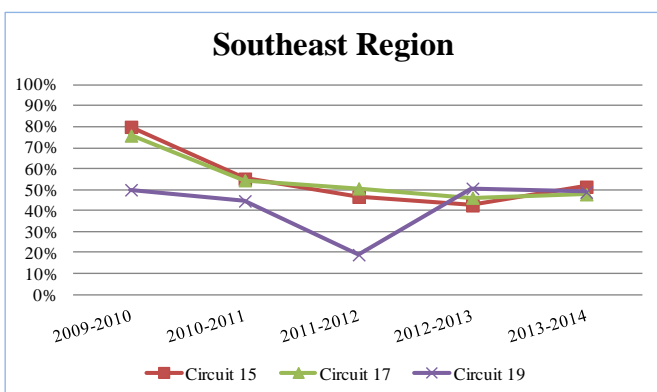
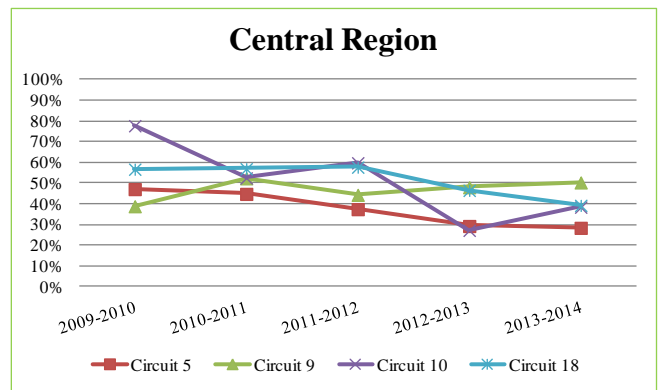
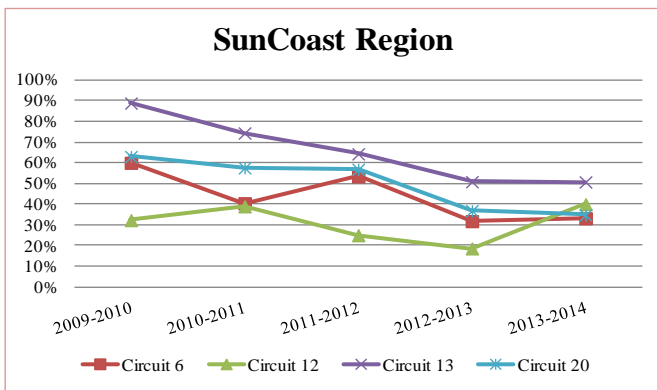
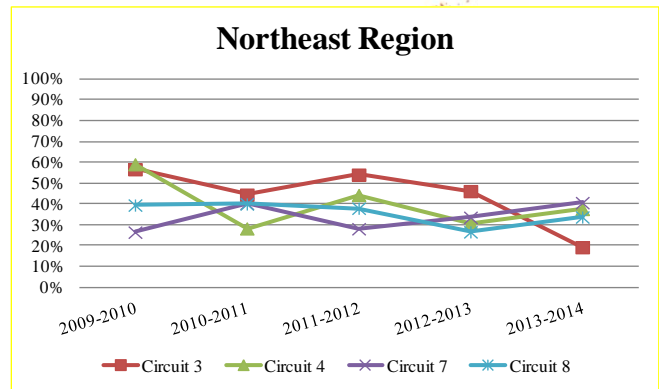
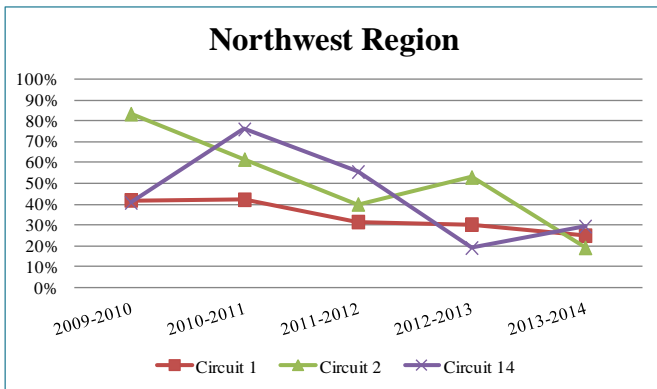
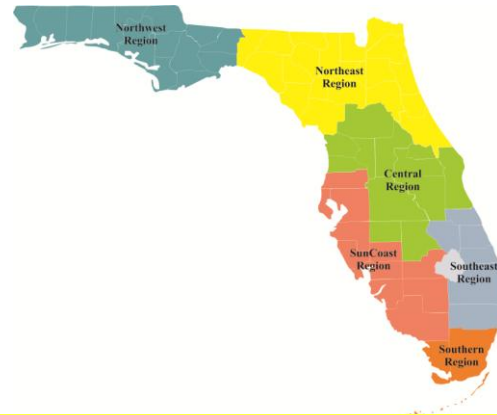
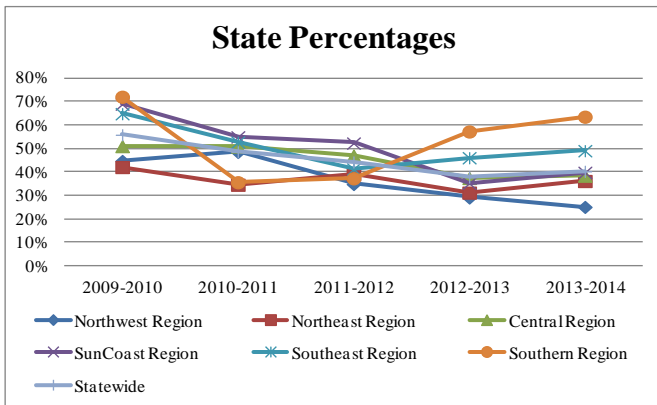
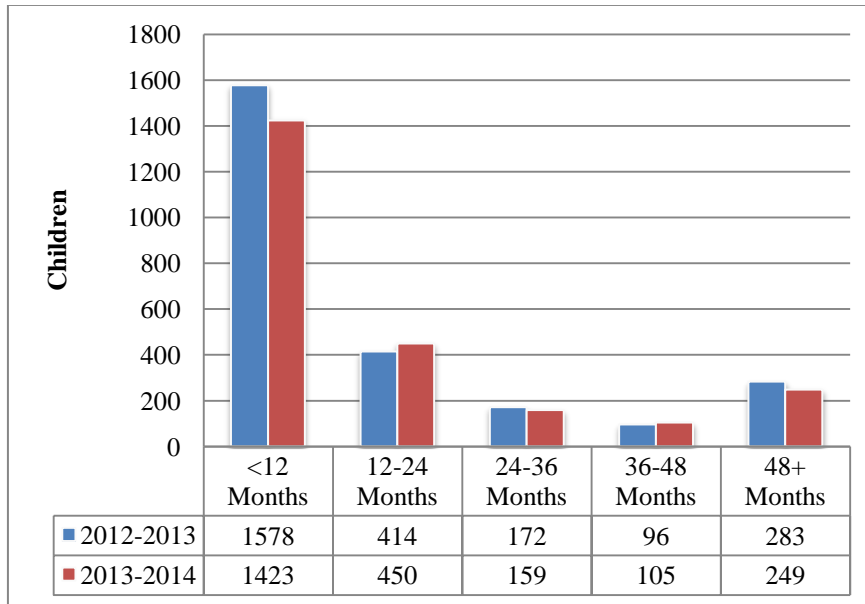


Chart 11 below, examines changes in the total composition of children currently awaiting adoption by the length of time since TPR occurred.

- Perhaps the most notable change in total numbers of children between SFY 2012 – 2013 and SFY 2013 – 2014 is that nearly 10% fewer children currently awaiting adoption have been waiting fewer than 12 months since TPR.

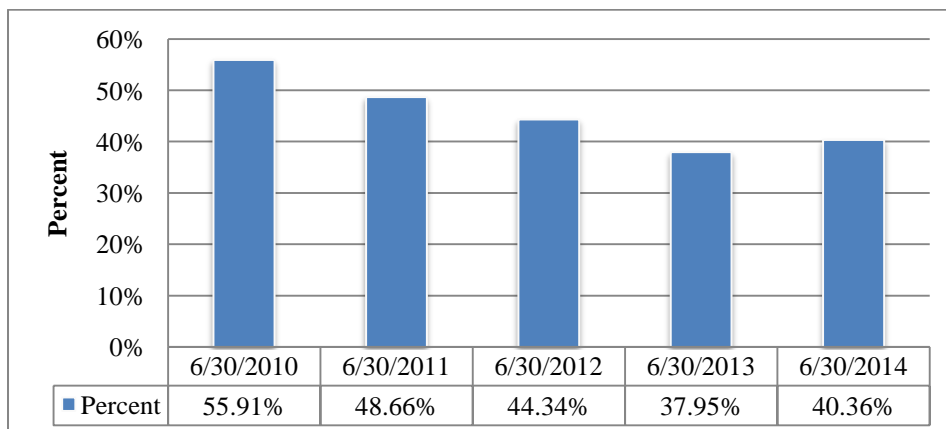
Chart 11. Children Awaiting Adoption by Length of Time Since TPR



Desired Result ↓

As shown in Chart 12, the percentage of children waiting longer than 12 months has consistently decreased year-over-year for four of the last five years. While there was a slight increase in the most recent year-over-year rate, the decrease in the proportion of children waiting longer than 12 months from the snapshot in June 2010 to the snapshot in 2014 represents a greater than 15% decrease in the proportion of children waiting longer than 12 months.

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



Desired Result ↓

Charts 13, 14, and 15 describe the races, genders, and length of time for children waiting to be adopted without identified adoptive families and are eligible to be featured on the website. It should be noted first, however, that Chart 15 represents a different population than the one represented in Charts 11 and 12, previously. While Charts 11 and 12 are drawn from the 2,386 children awaiting adoption, regardless of whether or not a family has been identified, Chart 15 is a sub-population which only examines the length since TPR for children that do not have an identified family. This distinction is important because it helps to better identify any unique needs that might exist among the population of children for whom families need to be recruited for.

- Over half (53.73%) of the available children with race data are non-white.
- Of these children, 58.14% are male and 41.86% are female.
- Nearly half (46.46%) of the children in Chart 15 are legally available and have been waiting for three or more years without an identified family.

Chart 13. Race of Children without Identified Adoptive Families Awaiting Adoption

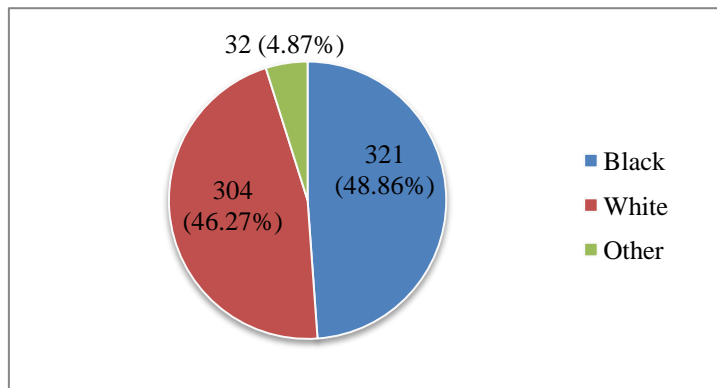


Chart 14. Gender of Children without Identified Adoptive Families Awaiting Adoption

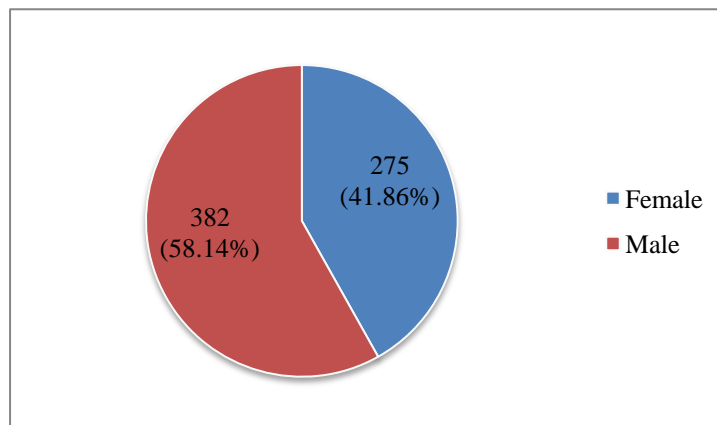
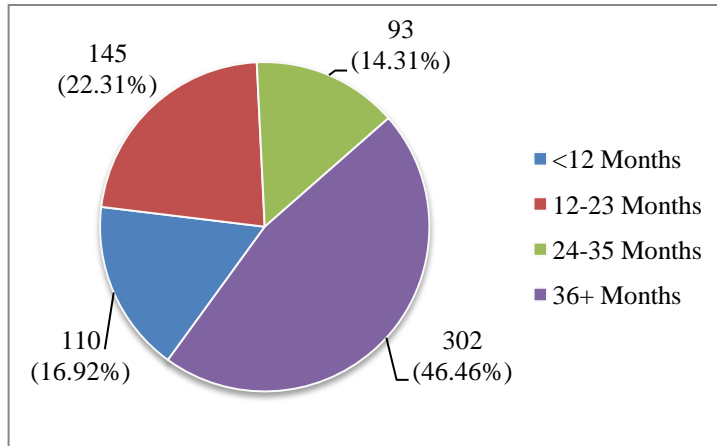


Chart 15. Of Children without an Identified Family, Amount of Time Since TPR



* Includes only the 650 children for whom the TPR was entered.

Dissolutions of Adoptions

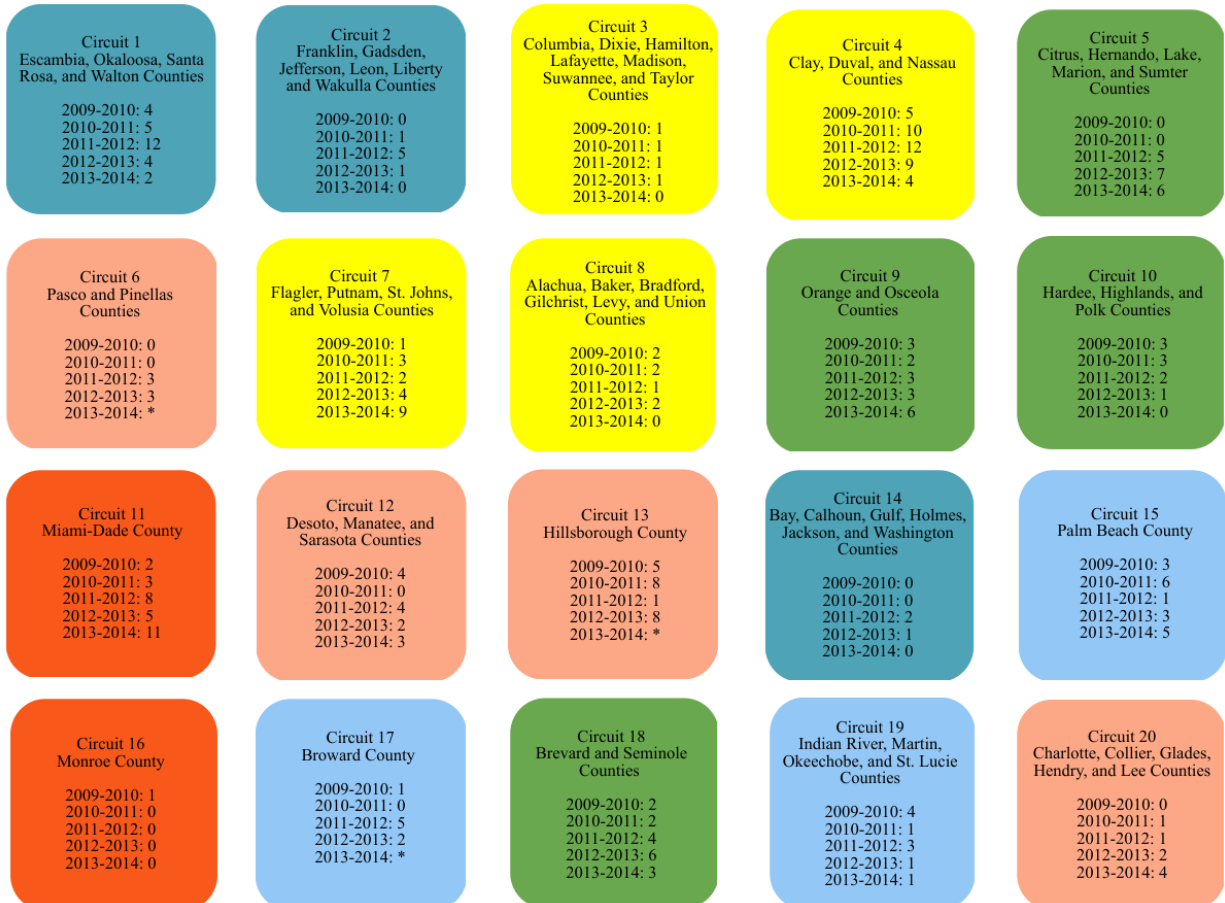
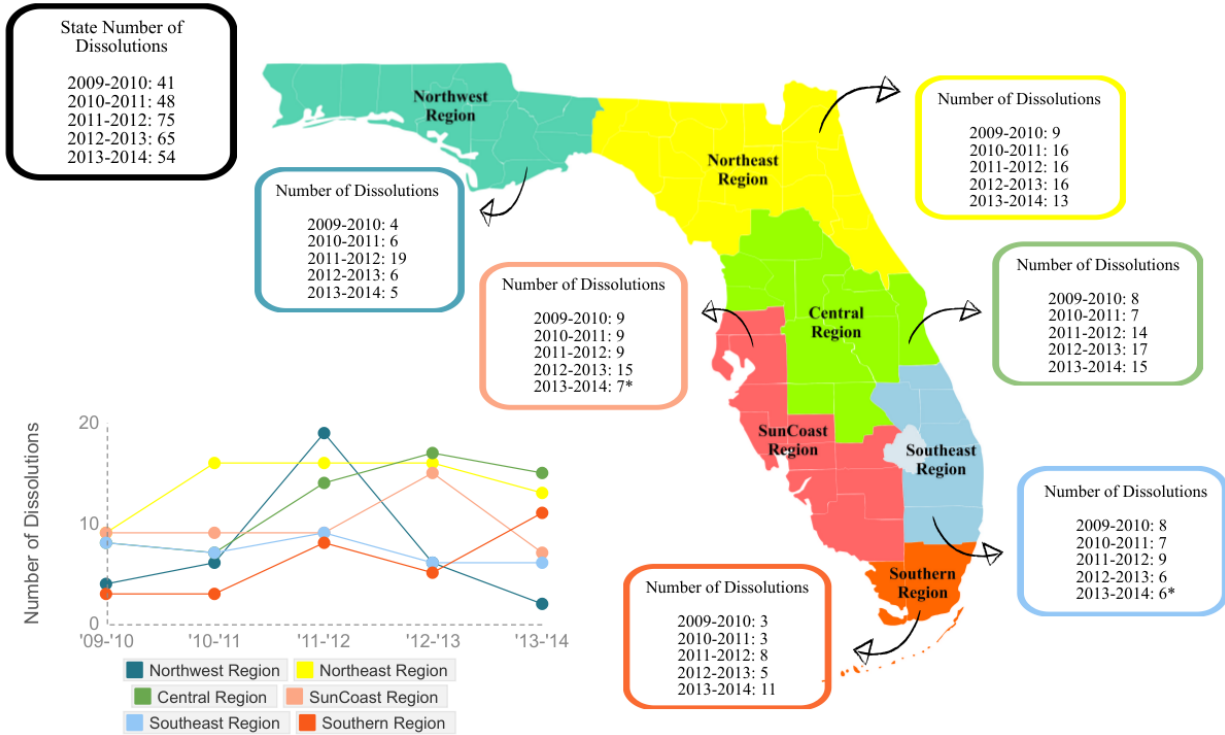
The Department of Children and Families Office of Child Welfare submitted data provided by the circuits on the number of children who were returned to foster care after finalized adoptions and the parental rights of the adoptive parents were terminated.

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 annual number of adopted children who were returned to foster care permanently for SFY 2013 – 2014 was 54 – well below the 2008 – 2009 goal of fewer than 98 children outlined in the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*. From this, it can be inferred that circuits have been more effective addressing issues ranging from physical and mental health to juvenile justice and behavioral issues. Because these numbers can fluctuate and are caused by a wide variety of circumstances, caution should be used when looking at trends. This information is perhaps better used as a general benchmark than for spotting trends.



Infograph 6. Number of Dissolutions



*Incomplete data due to reporting system error.

Table 10. Dissolutions and Child-Related Reasons Cited by Circuit

Circuit	Number of Dissolutions (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Families (Unduplicated Count)	Behavioral Issues	Educational Issues	Juvenile Justice Issues	Mental Health Issues	Physical Health Issues	Safety of Others
Circuit 01	1	1				1		
Circuit 02	0							
Circuit 03	0							
Circuit 04	2	2	1			1		
Circuit 05	1	1	1					
Circuit 06	*							
Circuit 07	4	3	3		1			
Circuit 08	0							
Circuit 09	0							
Circuit 10	0							
Circuit 11	8		1		3	2		2
Circuit 12	0							
Circuit 13	*							
Circuit 14	0							
Circuit 15	1	1						1
Circuit 16	0							
Circuit 17	*							
Circuit 18	1	1				1		
Circuit 19	1	1	1					
Circuit 20	3	3	3					
Statewide Total	22	13	10	0	4	5		3

The 32 children with abuse/neglect investigations listed in Table 11 represent 25 adoptive families. It should be noted that not every adoptive parent with an abuse investigation resulted in a case of verified child maltreatment, and numerous investigations involved sibling groups.

- 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, investigations were initiated after an adoptive parent refused to allow an adopted child to return home after being released from a mental health facility or Department of Juvenile Justice facility.

Table 11. Dissolutions and Adoptive Parent-Related Reasons Cited by Circuit

Circuit	Number of Dissolutions (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Families (Unduplicated Count)	Abuse Or Neglect Report by the Adoptive Parent	Other
Circuit 1	1	1	1	
Circuit 2	0			
Circuit 3	0			
Circuit 4	2	2	2	
Circuit 5	5	1	5	
Circuit 6	*			
Circuit 7	5	3	5	
Circuit 8	0			
Circuit 9	6	6	4	2 Private adoption
Circuit 10	0			
Circuit 11	3	2	2	1
Circuit 12	3	3	2	1
Circuit 13	*			
Circuit 14	0			
Circuit 15	4	2	1	3
Circuit 16	0			
Circuit 17	*			
Circuit 18	2	2	2	
Circuit 19	0			
Circuit 20	1	1	1	
Statewide Total	32	25	25	7

The dissolution number is counted by child and includes sibling groups. Large sibling groups can be more difficult to assimilate within a family, especially when the family may have a limited support network and one or more children in the sibling group are experiencing significant behavioral issues. In addition to four sibling groups of two, there was one large sibling group of five included in the dissolution data. This large sibling group of five children was adopted by a relative who became involved in illegal drug activity and the single adoptive father was unwilling to accept services.

The most prominent reasons for dissolutions of adoption were the adopted child’s violent behaviors or significant mental health issues and most of the dissolutions (65%) occurred during the adopted child’s teen years – ages 13 or older.

- Because the behaviors and mental health issues are so closely related, many of the reported dissolutions cited both reasons. In those cases, the counts are provided for both.

Chart 16. Ages of Children at Time of Dissolution

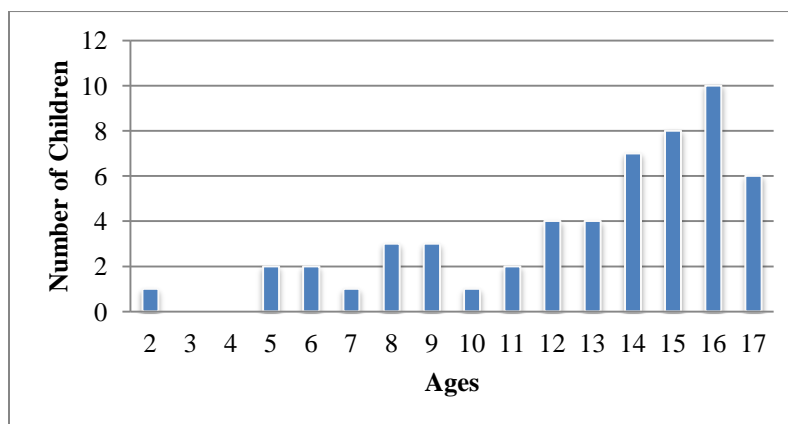


Chart 16, above, shows the ages of children at the time of dissolution and includes sibling groups. A comprehensive analysis of adoption dissolutions by the post adoption services program for each Community Based Care Agency will assist in assessing the effectiveness of their post adoption services program.

- The most prominent reasons for dissolutions of adoption were the adopted child’s violent behaviors or significant mental health issues, and most of the dissolutions (55%) occurred during the adopted child’s teen years—ages 13 or older.
- Because the behaviors and mental health issues are so closely related, many of the reported dissolutions cited both reasons.
- An analysis of the dissolution data reveals that a significant number of the dissolutions involved teens – 35 of the 54 children were 13 years of age or older.
- In addition to the developmental challenges of teen years, many begin to “start wondering about their birth families”. This may require that a training curriculum be developed to directly address these concerns.

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.

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 meeting once a month. These groups are designed to meet the needs of participating adoptive families in the languages and cultures of the communities they serve, receiving 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 to provide an avenue for adoptive families to communicate with each other.



- The twenty circuits reported 54 adoptive parent support groups this year and 10 teen support groups.
- There are fifteen more adoptive parent support groups than last year, and three new teen support groups.
- All support groups have local training opportunities as well as newsletters for adoptive families.
- It should be noted that support groups are easy to start but difficult to maintain over time.

Table 12. Quantity of Adoptive Parent Support Groups by Circuit

Circuit	Number of Adoptive Parent Support Groups	Number of Teen Support Groups	Training Opportunities Included	Newsletters, Flyers, E-Mails Sent
Circuit 1	5		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 2	3	1	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 3	3		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 4	4	1	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 5	5		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 6	4		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 7	2		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 8	2		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 9	2	2	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 10	5		Yes	Monthly
Circuit 11	1		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 12	3		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 13	2	4	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 14	3		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 15	3	1	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 16	1		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 17	1		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 18	2	1	Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 19	1		Yes	Quarterly
Circuit 20	2		Yes	Quarterly
Statewide Total	54	10	20	20

Over 23,000 children have been adopted from Florida’s child welfare system in the last nine 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. 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. Each teen support group has an adoption competent mental health professional facilitating.

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 State Fiscal Year 2012 – 2013, three more trainers of the Rutgers University Adoption Competency curricula were transferred to new positions. Therefore, limited training occurred during the past State Fiscal Year. More trainers are needed in order to continually build a sufficient number of mental health professionals who are adoption competent. A third train the trainer class was held during June 2014 and July 2014. In addition to losing trainers for the curricula, mental health professionals who completed the training moved to new positions and some are no longer accepting the Medicaid adoptive families utilize. For adoptive families in some areas of the state, this has created a significant loss of a needed service. The Department of Children and Families was able to provide train the trainer for approximately 35 new trainers. These trainers will start training Mental Health professionals in their local area during State Fiscal Year 2014 – 2015.

Fortunately, the Department of Children and Families 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 an incentive for mental health professionals to attend the Adoption Competency training. Table 14 describes by circuit, the mental health professionals who completed the adoption competency training this past State Fiscal Year, with 87 new mental health professionals established statewide.

- The post adoption staff has stated that many mental health professionals who completed the training over a year ago are no longer in their county or are no longer working for the Medicaid provider or community mental health center.

Table 13. Quantity of New Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals by Circuit

Circuit	Number of New Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals
Circuit 1	0
Circuit 2	0
Circuit 3	0
Circuit 4	2
Circuit 5	0
Circuit 6	0
Circuit 7	4
Circuit 8	0
Circuit 9	37
Circuit 10	10
Circuit 11	0
Circuit 12	10
Circuit 13	3
Circuit 14	0
Circuit 15	0
Circuit 16	0
Circuit 17	0
Circuit 18	18
Circuit 19	3
Circuit 20	0
Statewide Total	87

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 should include, 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.

All post adoption services staff assisted child protective investigators when an investigation involved an adoptive family. The post adoption services counselor assisted by conducting an assessment of the needs and potential services for the adopted child and adoptive family.

- It is significant that 47 adoption services staff have been identified to assist adoptive parents and their families, which is an increase of 7 positions from last year.
- Four circuits continue to assign the responsibilities for post adoption services to one or more staff as a part of their job duties rather than having at least one full time position for post adoption services.
- As noted, additional positions are being identified, including full and part time positions.

Table 14. Quantity of Post Adoption Services Counselors by Circuit

Circuit	Total Number of Post Adoption Services Counselors	Number of Full Time Post Adoption Services Counselors	Number of Part Time/Partial Job Duty Post Adoption Services Counselors
Circuit 1	5	3	2
Circuit 2	1	1	0
Circuit 3	1	1	0
Circuit 4	6	6	0
Circuit 5	2	2	0
Circuit 6	2	0	2
Circuit 7	2	2	0
Circuit 8	1	1	0
Circuit 9	2	2	2
Circuit 10	1	1	0
Circuit 11	3	0	3
Circuit 12	9	0	9
Circuit 13	2	2	0
Circuit 14	1	1	0
Circuit 15	1	1	0
Circuit 16	1	0	1
Circuit 17	1	1	0
Circuit 18	3	2	1
Circuit 19	1	1	0
Circuit 20	2	2	0
Statewide Total	47	29	18

With over 3,000 children adopted from foster care during each of the last nine 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. 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.

The state agencies below 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

Medicaid provides health insurance for children adopted from foster care, providing comprehensive coverage of medically necessary medical, behavioral health, and dental care services at no cost to the family. This benefit lends strong support for adoptions. We have no further recommendations at this time.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Governor and the Legislature gave the Agency \$20 million dollars in total funds between General Revenue and the Trust Fund for moving clients from the waiting list to the Home and Community Based (HCBS) Medicaid Waiver. One of the categories within the waiting list is Children in the system that are being adopted or reunified.

The Agency priority is to move these children that are in foster care from the APD waiting list to the waiver when an adoption or reunification has been deemed imminent by the court. Potential adoptive and reunified parents have the assurance that APD will provide Medicaid Waiver funds, which further enhances the decision to adopt a child with special needs.

Further funding of the APD waiting list will ensure that the trend of moving foster children with known adoption or reunification dates will continue.

Department of Children and Families

Maintenance Adoption Subsidy

The Department recognizes that maintenance adoption subsidies (MAS) enable families to consider adoption of special needs children who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect, are unable to safely return home to their birth parents and must remain in foster care until an approved adoptive family has been identified. Subsidies have enabled a new population of families to adopt special needs children, especially foster parents and relative caregivers who develop a committed and nurturing relationship with these children. Each year, foster parents and relative caregivers represent 75% of Florida's adoptions from foster care (Fifth Annual Report of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection, 2012). As a result, thousands of children each year are being nurtured by permanent adoptive families in Florida's communities rather than being raised in foster care. At this time, there are over 30,000 children receiving maintenance adoption subsidies.

These requests align with the agency's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan to protect the vulnerable people we serve; promote personal and economic self-sufficiency; and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency. Every resident desires and deserves to reclaim their right to prosper and to raise their children responsibly.

1. The Department requests \$7,945,911 of budget authority (\$4,608,586 in General Revenue and \$3,337,325 in Federal Grants Trust Fund) to annualize funding for maintenance adoption subsidies for children adopted from foster care in Fiscal Year 2015-1016. (Issue number 4006020)
 - MAS Benefits Received For Eligible Children, s.409.166(4)(b), F.S.,
 - A. Subsidies of \$5,000 annually or an amount agreed upon by the adoptive parents and the Department. This amount may be adjusted or enhanced based on the increased needs of a child. For example, a child with multiple physical problems or severe/increasing mental health issues may need additional services over time, especially as the child becomes an adolescent when some physical and mental health issues are exacerbated.
 - B. The Legal Fee for Finalization is a one-time payment that the State is able to provide up to \$1,000 per child per adoption for the costs/expenses related to adopting a foster child such as court costs, attorney fees, new birth certificate, and travel for the parent if required.
 - Total Need for 2015-2016 fiscal year is \$175,947,838 Recurring Appropriation 2014-2015 \$168,001,927 Additional Request- \$7,945,911
2. The Department requests to fund shift \$4,153,475 of Federal Grants Trust Fund to General Revenue budget authority to continue the current level of funding for Maintenance Adoption Subsidies. (Issue numbers: Deduct – 3401110; Add - 3401120)
 - In Fiscal Year 2014-2015, the Department received recurring appropriations to fully fund the total amount needed for Maintenance Adoption Subsidies. \$4,153,475 of the recurring appropriation was supported by the Adoption Incentive Award, which has not yet been re- authorized by the U.S. Congress. It is not known when and if the re- authorization of the Award will occur and, therefore, a viable plan for a fund shift must be established.

Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections does not have any recommendations for the annual report.

Department of Education

In 2014, the department continued its participation on the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency (CAPP) Council with support from all relevant bureaus and program areas; specifically, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, the Bureau of Standards and Instruction and the Bureau of Family and Community Outreach. The department's efforts have included securing federal grant funds that will be used in part to combat trafficking of children, to promote child abuse prevention resources via training sessions and our agency website, and to provide technical assistance to school district administrators on compliance with the current anti-bullying statute.

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

Department of Health

The Department of Health recommends continued support for the following prevention campaigns:

- The Safe Sleep Campaign – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-welfare/safesleep>
- Eyes on the Kids – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-welfare/water-safety-tips>
- Who's Really Watching Your Child – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-welfare/whoswatching>
- Summer Safety Tips – High Temperatures and Hot Cars – <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-welfare/high-temperatures>

We are participating in these activities with existing resources and do not have any budget requests at this time.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) submits the following 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.

- Recurring funding in the amount of \$780,952 is requested to provide Stop Now and Plan at four sites in Florida and create a "train the trainer" program to ensure long-term sustainability. Stop Now and Plan is an evidence-based, gender-specific cognitive behavioral intervention model that has proven effective for children under the age of 12 who are at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. The young children targeted by the program have shown signs of anti-social and risky behavior as early as elementary school and are at most risk of becoming system-involved serious, violent and chronic delinquents. The Stop Now and Plan model teaches these children -

and their families - emotion regulation, self-control and problem solving skills. Providing effective interventions, including assessments, case management, intensive behavioral modification, social skills training and parenting skills education can build stronger families, with a tremendous cost savings to the state.

Over the past twelve months there were 2,588 children under the age of 12 referred to the Florida Network for services. With federal funds now exhausted, state funds are requested so that DJJ, in partnership with the Florida Network, will conduct Stop Now and Plan six times a year, in thirteen-week sessions, at each of the four sites to serve 384 participants (192 families) statewide.

- Recurring funding in the amount of \$850,000 is requested to support 50 additional slots for the PACE Center for Girls to provide prevention and early intervention services, improve girls' success in school, home and their community and stem the tide of girls referred to the juvenile justice system. Most girls entering the juvenile justice system are non-violent, but high-need, with histories of trauma, violence, neglect, mental and physical problems, family conflict, residential and academic instability, and school failure. In particular, school failure and dropout are risk factors for multiple problematic outcomes among girls, including delinquency.

Of the girls who attended PACE in 2013-2014, 74% had previously been suspended from school, 12% had been expelled and 33% coped with a learning disability. While at PACE, 94% of the girls increased their academic functioning, 65% advanced a full grade level and 97% earned credits and/or completed courses during the school year. Of the participants who completed the PACE program, 91% had no involvement in the criminal justice system one year after completion of the program and 93% maintained positive placement after transitioning from PACE.

Department of Law Enforcement

FDLE remains committed to the belief that training of local agencies and state social service and health agencies with regard to crimes against children remains an important endeavor. These training goals are outlined in the Florida Cooperative Law Enforcement Child Abuse Prevention Plan (CAPP), and FDLE feels that the crimes against children training objectives within the CAPP (Item #5) have been met.

However, with changing leadership at DOH, DJJ, and DCF, we would suggest that these agencies be re-engaged with regard to the existing MOU. We recently provided an update to the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection on the curriculum related to crimes against children as taught in basic law enforcement recruit training programs, as well as in advanced and specialized courses. FDLE works with the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission and the forty training center directors statewide to ensure that this curriculum is consistently updated. Inspector Terry Thomas has been providing statewide training on child abuse investigations, and much of this training is provided to partner agencies, including DOH, DCF, and local law enforcement agencies. Inspector Thomas remained a Reserve Special Agent following his retirement earlier this year and continues to assist with this training.

FDLE has, to date, been able to provide this training upon request to Florida law enforcement and child protection workers; however, due to budgetary constraints, any additional training would require an increased funding to offset the associated costs.

As you know, we have previously recommended expansion of the scope of the State Child Death Review Teams. FDLE continues to support these review teams on a statewide basis with the assignment of regional special agents.

We would again recommend consideration of a requirement for background screenings for private adoptions and persons who house foreign exchange students. Because a government agency would be required to complete the screenings necessary to authorize the adoption of a child or placement of a student, there would likely be a fiscal impact associated with the establishment of such a requirement.

Guardian ad Litem

Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program Budget Requests and Recommendations for FY 2015/2016

- For Fiscal Year 2015/2016, the GAL Program is requesting \$5.6 million in new recurring funds and 77.5 additional full time equivalent (FTE) positions to reach 100% representation for Florida's most vulnerable children. Florida leads the nation for every abused, abandoned or neglected child to have a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer. This funding would allow Florida to meet the Federal and State requirements for every child being represented by a Guardian ad Litem.
- The GAL Program is requesting \$1,131,303 in salaries and benefits to increase the minimum starting salary for GAL Attorneys. Turnover is high for Program Attorneys (30%) and for Supervising Attorneys (25%). GAL Senior Attorney salary minimums are 14% lower and GAL Supervising Attorney salary minimums are 36% lower than comparable positions in the State Personnel System (SPS). GAL attorneys are also the only attorneys in state government who do not receive paid insurance benefits.
- The GAL Program has also contracted for an independent study to address pay equity for its staff that recruit and manage volunteer guardians. Turnover for these classes range from 57% for Volunteer Recruiters to 18% for Child Advocacy Managers who oversee and direct the work of up to 38 volunteers. The GAL Program intends to submit a supplemental LBR issue addressing these needs in January, based on the results of the independent study. The GAL Program is moving forward with certification for our Child Advocacy Managers. As the Legislature focused on increased professionalism with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Protective Investigators and Community Based Care (CBC) Case Managers, they raised the bar this year for the benefit of children who come to the attention of the abuse hotline. Reflecting on the legislative hearings, all who are involved with child welfare should increase their professionalism. Although we certify our volunteers, we do not currently have a process to certify our staff. Our Child Advocacy Managers support, manage, are subject matter experts in child welfare, and give guidance to GAL volunteers; the Program feels that they too, deserve a certification similar to what is required for DCF Protective Investigators and CBC Case Managers. As child welfare professionals, our only priority is the child's best interest; therefore, a professional certification is even more crucial as the stakes are so high for the children we represent.
- Within the foster care system, a high number of children have mental health diagnoses or disabilities. Often, their mental health or cognitive disabilities place them in a vulnerable position, and they need someone to make decisions on their behalf or guide them through the process. The GAL Program is developing legislation to promote guardianship services to youth in foster care turning 18 who lack the ability to make essential life decisions as an adult because they are incapacitated. The following are key principles in developing this legislation:
 - ✓ A process must be in place that will satisfy all necessary legal and administrative requirements so that, when appropriate, guardianship services will begin for youth in foster care on their 18th birthdays.

- ✓ The rights of incapacitated youth in foster care must be protected by adhering to existing law that requires use of the least restrictive type of decision making assistance for these young adults.

Office of Early Learning

The Office of Early Learning will continue to communicate the Protective Factors through Florida's 30 Early Learning Coalitions. OEL staff have participated in training on the Protective Factors as well hosted a webinar on the Protective Factors for Coalition staff. The Protective Factors have been incorporated into the Family Guide which is disseminated to all families requesting assistance from early learning coalitions. Further plans to continue to promote the Protective Factors by OEL are being developed.

During the 2013-2014 fiscal year, OEL worked with groups across the state to create a coordinated statewide structure—a framework—for professional development and prioritize how to implement the framework over the next two to four years.

OEL has submitted a legislative budget request of \$4 million to enhance and expand the new Help Me Grow initiative that identifies children birth through 8 at risk for developmental or behavioral challenges and connects their family with information and community-based resources.

Appendix

Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection
Florida Statute 39.001, Sections 8 – 12

(8) **LEGISLATIVE INTENT FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE, ABANDONMENT, AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN.**—The incidence of known child abuse, abandonment, and neglect has increased rapidly over the past 5 years. The impact that abuse, abandonment, or neglect has on the victimized child, siblings, family structure, and inevitably on all citizens of the state has caused the Legislature to determine that the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect shall be a priority of this state. To further this end, it is the intent of the Legislature that an Office of Adoption and Child Protection be established.

(9) **OFFICE OF ADOPTION AND CHILD PROTECTION.**—

(a) For purposes of establishing a comprehensive statewide approach for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect, the Office of Adoption and Child Protection is created within the Executive Office of the Governor. The Governor shall appoint a Chief Child Advocate for the office.

(b) The Chief Child Advocate shall:

1. Assist in developing rules pertaining to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and implementation of child abuse prevention efforts.
2. Act as the Governor’s liaison with state agencies, other state governments, and the public and private sectors on matters that relate to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.
3. Work to secure funding and other support for the state’s promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention efforts, including, but not limited to, establishing cooperative relationships among state and private agencies.
4. Develop a strategic program and funding initiative that links the separate jurisdictional activities of state agencies with respect to promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention. The office may designate lead and contributing agencies to develop such initiatives.
5. Advise the Governor and the Legislature on statistics related to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention trends in this state; the status of current adoption programs and services, current child abuse prevention programs and services, the funding of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention programs and services; and the status of the office with regard to the development and implementation of the state strategy for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.
6. Develop public awareness campaigns to be implemented throughout the state for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.

(c) The office is authorized and directed to:

1. Oversee the preparation and implementation of the state plan established under subsection (10) and revise and update the state plan as necessary.
2. Provide for or make available continuing professional education and training in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
3. Work to secure funding in the form of appropriations, gifts, and grants from the state, the Federal Government, and other public and private sources in order to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention efforts.
4. Make recommendations pertaining to agreements or contracts for the establishment and development of:
 - a. Programs and services for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect.
 - b. Training programs for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
 - c. Multidisciplinary and discipline-specific training programs for professionals with responsibilities affecting children, young adults, and families.
 - d. Efforts to promote adoption.
 - e. Postadoptive services to support adoptive families.
5. Monitor, evaluate, and review the development and quality of local and statewide services and programs for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect and shall publish and distribute an annual report of its findings on or before January 1 of each year to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the head of each state agency affected by the report, and the appropriate substantive committees of the Legislature. The report shall include:
 - a. A summary of the activities of the office.
 - 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.
 - e. Recommendations, by state agency, 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.

- f. Budget requests, adoption promotion and support needs, and child abuse prevention program needs by state agency.
6. Work with the direct-support organization established under s. 39.0011 to receive financial assistance.
- (10) PLAN FOR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH.—
- (a) The office shall develop a state plan for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of abuse, abandonment, and neglect of children and shall submit the state plan to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Governor no later than December 31, 2008. The Department of Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Law Enforcement, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities shall participate and fully cooperate in the development of the state plan at both the state and local levels. Furthermore, appropriate local agencies and organizations shall be provided an opportunity to participate in the development of the state plan at the local level. Appropriate local groups and organizations shall include, but not be limited to, community mental health centers; guardian ad litem programs for children under the circuit court; the school boards of the local school districts; the Florida local advocacy councils; community-based care lead agencies; private or public organizations or programs with recognized expertise in working with child abuse prevention programs for children and families; private or public organizations or programs with recognized expertise in working with children who are sexually abused, physically abused, emotionally abused, abandoned, or neglected and with expertise in working with the families of such children; private or public programs or organizations with expertise in maternal and infant health care; multidisciplinary child protection teams; child day care centers; law enforcement agencies; and the circuit courts, when guardian ad litem programs are not available in the local area. The state plan to be provided to the Legislature and the Governor shall include, as a minimum, the information required of the various groups in paragraph (b).
 - (b) The development of the state plan shall be accomplished in the following manner:
 - 1. The office shall establish a Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council composed of an adoptive parent who has adopted a child from within the child welfare system and representatives from each state agency and appropriate local agencies and organizations specified in paragraph (a). The advisory council shall serve as the research arm of the office and shall be responsible for:
 - a. Assisting in developing a plan of action for better coordination and integration of the goals, activities, and funding pertaining to the promotion and support of adoption and the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect conducted by the office in order to maximize staff and resources at the state level. The plan of action shall be included in the state plan.
 - b. Assisting in providing a basic format to be utilized by the districts in the preparation of local plans of action in order to provide for uniformity in the district plans and to provide for greater ease in compiling information for the state plan.
 - c. Providing the districts with technical assistance in the development of local plans of action, if requested.

- d. Assisting in examining the local plans to determine if all the requirements of the local plans have been met and, if they have not, informing the districts of the deficiencies and requesting the additional information needed.
 - e. Assisting in preparing the state plan for submission to the Legislature and the Governor. Such preparation shall include the incorporation into the state plan of information obtained from the local plans, the cooperative plans with the members of the advisory council, and the plan of action for coordination and integration of state departmental activities. The state plan shall include a section reflecting general conditions and needs, an analysis of variations based on population or geographic areas, identified problems, and recommendations for change. In essence, the state plan shall provide an analysis and summary of each element of the local plans to provide a statewide perspective. The state plan shall also include each separate local plan of action.
 - f. Conducting a feasibility study on the establishment of a Children's Cabinet.
 - g. Working with the specified state agency in fulfilling the requirements of subparagraphs 2., 3., 4., and 5.
2. The office, the department, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health shall work together in developing ways to inform and instruct parents of school children and appropriate district school personnel in all school districts in the detection of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and in caring for a child's needs after a report is made. The plan for accomplishing this end shall be included in the state plan.
 3. The office, the department, the Department of Law Enforcement, and the Department of Health shall work together in developing ways to inform and instruct appropriate local law enforcement personnel in the detection of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
 4. Within existing appropriations, the office shall work with other appropriate public and private agencies to emphasize efforts to educate the general public about the problem of and ways to detect child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. The plan for accomplishing this end shall be included in the state plan.
 5. The office, the department, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health shall work together on the enhancement or adaptation of curriculum materials to assist instructional personnel in providing instruction through a multidisciplinary approach on the identification, intervention, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The curriculum materials shall be geared toward a sequential program of instruction at the four progressional levels, K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Strategies for encouraging all school districts to utilize the curriculum are to be included in the state plan for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect.
 6. Each district of the department shall develop a plan for its specific geographical area. The plan developed at the district level shall be submitted to the advisory council for utilization

in preparing the state plan. The district local plan of action shall be prepared with the involvement and assistance of the local agencies and organizations listed in this paragraph, as well as representatives from those departmental district offices participating in the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and treatment and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. In order to accomplish this, the office shall establish a task force on the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The office shall appoint the members of the task force in accordance with the membership requirements of this section. The office shall ensure that individuals from both urban and rural areas and an adoptive parent who has adopted a child from within the child welfare system are represented on the task force. The task force shall develop a written statement clearly identifying its operating procedures, purpose, overall responsibilities, and method of meeting responsibilities. The district plan of action to be prepared by the task force shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- a. Documentation of the magnitude of the problems of child abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, and child abandonment and neglect in its geographical area.
- b. A description of programs currently serving abused, abandoned, and neglected children and their families and a description of programs for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect, including information on the impact, cost-effectiveness, and sources of funding of such programs.
- c. Information concerning the number of children within the child welfare system available for adoption who need child-specific adoption promotion efforts.
- d. A description of programs currently promoting and supporting adoptive families, including information on the impact, cost-effectiveness, and sources of funding of such programs.
- e. A description of a comprehensive approach for providing postadoption services. The continuum of services shall include, but not be limited to, sufficient and accessible parent and teen support groups; case management, information, and referral services; and educational advocacy.
- f. A continuum of programs and services necessary for a comprehensive approach to the promotion of adoption and the prevention of all types of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect as well as a brief description of such programs and services.
- g. A description, documentation, and priority ranking of local needs related to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect based upon the continuum of programs and services.
- h. A plan for steps to be taken in meeting identified needs, including the coordination and integration of services to avoid unnecessary duplication and cost, and for alternative funding strategies for meeting needs through the reallocation of existing resources, utilization of volunteers, contracting with local universities for services, and local government or private agency funding.

- i. A description of barriers to the accomplishment of a comprehensive approach to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect.
- j. Recommendations for changes that can be accomplished only at the state program level or by legislative action.

(11) FUNDING AND SUBSEQUENT PLANS.—

- (a) All budget requests submitted by the office, the department, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrections, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, or any other agency to the Legislature for funding of efforts for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect shall be based on the state plan developed pursuant to this section.
- (b) The office and the other agencies and organizations listed in paragraph (10)(a) shall readdress the state plan and make necessary revisions every 5 years, at a minimum. Such revisions shall be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate no later than June 30 of each year divisible by 5. At least biennially, the office shall review the state plan and make any necessary revisions based on changing needs and program evaluation results. An annual progress report shall be submitted to update the state plan in the years between the 5-year intervals. In order to avoid duplication of effort, these required plans may be made a part of or merged with other plans required by either the state or Federal Government, so long as the portions of the other state or Federal Government plan that constitute the state plan for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect are clearly identified as such and are provided to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate as required under this section.

(12) LIBERAL CONSTRUCTION.—It is the intent of the Legislature that this chapter be liberally interpreted and construed in conformity with its declared purposes.

History.—s. 1, ch. 26880, 1951; s. 1, ch. 73-231; s. 1, ch. 78-414; s. 1, ch. 82-62; s. 62, ch. 85-81; s. 1, ch. 85-206; s. 10, ch. 85-248; s. 19, ch. 86-220; s. 1, ch. 90-53; ss. 1, 2, ch. 90-208; s. 2, ch. 90-306; s. 2, ch. 91-33; s. 68, ch. 91-45; s. 13, ch. 91-57; s. 5, ch. 93-156; s. 23, ch. 93-200; s. 19, ch. 93-230; s. 14, ch. 94-134; s. 14, ch. 94-135; ss. 9, 10, ch. 94-209; s. 1332, ch. 95-147; s. 7, ch. 95-152; s. 8, ch. 95-158; ss. 15, 30, ch. 95-228; s. 116, ch. 95-418; s. 1, ch. 96-268; ss. 128, 156, ch. 97-101; s. 69, ch. 97-103; s. 3, ch. 97-237; s. 119, ch. 97-238; s. 8, ch. 98-137; s. 18, ch. 98-403; s. 1, ch. 99-193; s. 13, ch. 2000-139; s. 5, ch. 2000-151; s. 5, ch. 2000-263; s. 34, ch. 2004-267; s. 2, ch. 2006-97; s. 1, ch. 2006-194; s. 2, ch. 2006-227; s. 1, ch. 2007-124; s. 3, ch. 2008-6; s. 1, ch. 2010-114; s. 42, ch. 2011-142; s. 2, ch. 2012-105; s. 19, ch. 2012-116; s. 4, ch. 2013-15; s. 9, ch. 2014-19; s. 2, ch. 2014-224.

Note.—Former s. 39.20; subsections (3), (5), and (6) former s. 39.002, s. 409.70, subsections (7)-(9) former s. 415.501.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet
Florida Statute 402.56

- (1) **SHORT TITLE.**—This act may be cited as the “Children and Youth Cabinet Act.”
- (2) **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.**—
- (a) The Legislature finds that all state agencies and programs that touch the lives of children and youth must work in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion, with an emphasis on providing a continuum of services that benefit children from prenatal care through programs supporting successful transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The Legislature further finds that creating a Children and Youth Cabinet is the best method by which the state might achieve the visions and plans necessary to ensure that this state is the first place families think of when asked, “Where do you want to raise a child?”
- (b) The Legislature, in collaboration with the Governor, intends to develop and implement a shared vision among the branches of government in order to improve child and family outcomes in this state. By working collaboratively, the Legislature intends to invest in the education and skills of our children and youth, develop a cohesive vision and plan that ensures a long-term commitment to children and youth issues, align public resources serving children and youth to support their healthy growth and development, and promote increased efficiency and improved service delivery by all governmental agencies that provide services for children, youth, and their families.
- (3) **ORGANIZATION.**—There is created the Children and Youth Cabinet, which is a coordinating council as defined in s. 20.03.
- (a) The cabinet shall ensure that the public policy of this state relating to children and youth is developed to promote interdepartmental collaboration and program implementation in order that services designed for children and youth are planned, managed, and delivered in a holistic and integrated manner to improve the children’s self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health, and quality of life.
- (b) The cabinet is created in the Executive Office of the Governor, which shall provide administrative support and service to the cabinet.
- (c) The cabinet shall meet at least four times each year, but no more than six times each year, in different regions of the state in order to solicit input from the public and any other individual offering testimony relevant to the issues considered. Each meeting must include a public comment session.
- (4) **MEMBERS.**—The cabinet shall consist of 14 members including the Governor and the following persons:
- (a) 1. The Secretary of Children and Families;
2. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice;
3. The director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
4. The director of the Office of Early Learning;
5. The State Surgeon General;
6. The Secretary of Health Care Administration;

7. The Commissioner of Education;
8. The director of the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office;
9. The director of the Office of Child Abuse Prevention; and
10. Five members representing children and youth advocacy organizations, who are not service providers and who are appointed by the Governor.

(b) The President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, and the Chief Financial Officer, or their appointed designees, shall serve as ex officio members of the cabinet.

(c) The Governor or the Governor's designee shall serve as the chair of the cabinet.

(d) Nongovernmental members of the cabinet shall serve without compensation, but are entitled to receive per diem and travel expenses in accordance with s. 112.061 while in performance of their duties.

(5) DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Children and Youth Cabinet shall:

(a) Develop and implement a shared and cohesive vision using integrated services to improve child, youth, and family outcomes in this state.

(b) Develop, no later than December 31, 2007, a strategic plan to achieve the goals of the shared and cohesive vision. The plan shall be centered upon a long-term commitment to children and youth issues and align all public resources to serve children and youth and their families in a manner that supports the healthy growth and development of children. The plan shall prepare the children and youth to be responsible citizens and productive members of the workforce. The plan shall include a continuum of services that will benefit children from prenatal care through services for youth in transition to adulthood.

(c) Develop and implement measurable outcomes for each state department, agency, and program that are consistent with the strategic plan. The cabinet shall establish a baseline measurement for each outcome and regularly report on the progress made toward achieving the desired outcome.

(d) Design and implement actions that will promote collaboration, creativity, increased efficiency, information sharing, and improved service delivery between and within state governmental organizations that provide services for children and youth and their families. In particular, the efforts shall include the long-range planning process mandated by s. 216.013.

(e) Foster public awareness of children and youth issues and develop new partners in the effort to serve children and youth.

(f) Create a children and youth impact statement for evaluating proposed legislation, requested appropriations, and programs. The impact statement shall be shared with the Legislature in their deliberative process.

(g) Identify existing and potential funding streams and resources for children's services, including, but not limited to, public funding, foundation and organization grants, and other forms of private funding opportunities, including public-private partnerships.

- (h) Develop a children-and-youth-based budget structure and nomenclature that includes all relevant departments, funding streams, and programs. The budget shall facilitate improved coordination and efficiency, explore options for and allow maximization of federal financial participation, and implement the state’s vision and strategic plan.
 - (i) Engage in other activities that will implement improved collaboration of agencies in order to create, manage, and promote coordinated policies, programs, and service delivery systems that support children and youth.
- (6) **ADVISORY BOARD.**—The Governor may appoint an advisory board to assist the cabinet in its tasks. The board shall include persons who can provide to the cabinet the best available technical and professional research and assistance. If an advisory board is created, it shall include representatives of children and youth advocacy organizations and youth, wherever practicable, who have been recipients of services and programs operated or funded by state agencies.
- (7) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—The Children and Youth Cabinet shall, by February 1 of each year, provide an annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the public concerning its activities and progress towards making this state the first place families think of when asked, “Where do they want to raise their children?” The annual report may include recommendations for needed legislation or rulemaking authority.

History.—s. 1, ch. 2007-151; s. 53, ch. 2008-6; s. 284, ch. 2011-142; s. 61, ch. 2012-96; s. 16, ch. 2012-178; s. 152, ch. 2014-19.

Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council
Florida Statute 14.31

- (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:
- (a) Compassionate groups of individuals have selflessly aided this state in serving our most vulnerable residents and our most debilitated neighborhoods.
 - (b) Inspired by faith and civic commitment, these organizations have accomplished much in changing the lives of thousands and resurrecting neighborhoods torn by the strife of crime and poverty.
 - (c) It is essential that this state cooperate with these organizations in order to provide an opportunity to participate on an equal basis, regardless of each organization’s orientation, whether faith-based or secular.
- (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.—It is therefore the intent of the Legislature to recognize the contributions of these organizations and to encourage opportunities for faith-based and community-based organizations to work cooperatively with government entities in order to deliver services more effectively. The Legislature further intends that the purpose of the council is to advise the Governor and the Legislature on policies, priorities, and objectives for the state’s comprehensive effort to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the work of faith-based, volunteer, and other community organizations to the full extent permitted by law.
- (3) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COUNCIL.—
- (a) The Florida Faith-based and Community-based Advisory Council, an advisory council as defined in s. 20.03, is established and assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor. The council shall be administratively housed within the Executive Office of the Governor.
 - (b) The council shall consist of 25 members. Council members may include, but need not be limited to, representatives from various faiths, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, foundations, corporations, and municipalities.
 - (c) The council shall be composed of the following members:
 - 1. Seventeen members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor.
 - 2. Four members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the President of the Senate.
 - 3. Four members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
 - (d) Council members shall serve 4-year terms, except that the initial terms shall be staggered as follows:
 - 1. The Governor shall appoint six members for a term of 3 years, six members for a term of 2 years, and five members for a term of 1 year.
 - 2. The President of the Senate shall appoint two members for a term of 3 years and two members for a term of 2 years.
 - 3. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members for a term of 3 years and two members for a term of 2 years.

- (e) A vacancy shall be filled by appointment by the original appointing authority for the unexpired portion of the term.
- (4) MEETINGS; ORGANIZATION.—
- (a) The first meeting of the council shall be held no later than August 1, 2006. Thereafter, the council shall meet at least once per quarter per calendar year. Meetings may be held via teleconference or other electronic means.
 - (b) The council shall annually elect from its membership one member to serve as chair of the council and one member to serve as vice chair.
 - (c) Thirteen members of the council shall constitute a quorum.
 - (d) Members of the council shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses pursuant to s. 112.061.
- (5) SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES.—The council shall review and recommend in a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives:
- (a) How faith-based and community-based organizations can best compete with other organizations for the delivery of state services, regardless of an organization's orientation, whether faith-based or secular.
 - (b) How best to develop and coordinate activities of faith-based and community-based programs and initiatives, enhance such efforts in communities, and seek such resources, legislation, and regulatory relief as may be necessary to accomplish these objectives.
 - (c) How best to ensure that state policy decisions take into account the capacity of faith-based and other community-based initiatives to assist in the achievement of state priorities.
 - (d) How best to identify and promote best practices across state government relating to the delivery of services by faith-based and other community-based organizations.
 - (e) How best to coordinate public awareness of faith-based and community nonprofit initiatives, such as demonstration pilot programs or projects, public-private partnerships, volunteerism, and special projects.
 - (f) How best to encourage private charitable giving to support faith-based and community-based initiatives.
 - (g) How best to bring concerns, ideas, and policy options to the Governor and Legislature for assisting, strengthening, and replicating successful faith-based and other community-based programs.
 - (h) How best to develop and implement strategic initiatives to strengthen the institutions of families and communities in this state.
 - (i) How best to showcase and herald innovative grassroots nonprofit organizations and civic initiatives.

- (j) How best to eliminate unnecessary legislative, regulatory, and other bureaucratic barriers that impede effective faith-based and other community-based efforts to address social problems.
 - (k) How best to monitor implementation of state policy affecting faith-based and other community-based organizations.
 - (l) How best to ensure that the efforts of faith-based and other community-based organizations meet objective criteria for performance and accountability.
- (6) **RESTRICTED ACTIVITIES.**—The council may not make any recommendation that conflicts with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or the public funding provision of s. 3, Art. I of the State Constitution.
- (7) **REPORT.**—By February 1 of each year, the council shall prepare a written report for the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives containing an accounting of its activities and recommended policies, priorities, and objectives for the state’s comprehensive effort to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the work of faith-based, volunteer, and other community-based organizations to the full extent permitted by law.

History.—s. 1, ch. 2006-9; s. 1, ch. 2011-155.



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