



**Children
& Youth Cabinet**
FLORENDA



2020
ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM FIRST LADY CASEY DESANTIS



The Florida Children & Youth Cabinet



February 1, 2021

To the people of Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis and members of the Florida Legislature:

As the Chair of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, I formally submit the 2020 Annual Report on behalf of our membership. As outlined in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, the Cabinet is charged with ensuring the public policy of the state for children and youth is best aligned to promote greater collaboration between state agencies with local stakeholders and families.

The enclosed report provides an update of the Cabinet's activities for 2020 undertaken throughout the year. In 2019, the Cabinet set forth with a strong singular mission to address an alarming trend pertaining to our youth: suicide. As the pandemic progressed over the course of 2020, gaining a full understanding of the increased mental toll caused by stress and isolation became increasingly important.

To harness the bandwidth and horsepower of the talented group of individuals serving on the Cabinet, I challenged members to take a holistic approach of addressing the needs of our children. Understanding the implications and ramifications of virus mitigation efforts has been essential, especially as it relates to the mental health of our children and youth.

Our Cabinet members and I are passionate about helping Florida's children reach their full potential. We remain focused on providing all children the necessary tools to become resilient and persevere through any of life's challenges.

Sincerely,

Casey DeSantis

Chair, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet



INSIDE

1

ABOUT THE FLORIDA CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET

- ▶ Cabinet Members
- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Administrative Support & Service

4

FIRST CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

7

SECOND CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

9

THIRD CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

12

FOURTH CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

14

FLORIDA STATUTES

- ▶ Florida Children and Youth Cabinet
- ▶ Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection

FLORIDA CHILDREN AND YOUTH CABINET MEMBERS

Chairman



First Lady Casey DeSantis
Office of the Governor

As set forth in **section 402.56, Florida Statutes**, the Cabinet consists of the following members as of December 2020.

Members



Alan Abramowitz
Executive Director
Guardian ad Litem Program



Jason Barrett
CEO
Flagler Health



Senator Lauren Book
Florida Senate, District 32



Judge Jessica Costello
13th Judicial Circuit
Hillsborough County



Commissioner Richard Corcoran
Department of Education



Carlos de la Cruz
Chairman
Everglades Foundation



Commissioner Rene Garcia
Miami-Dade County



Zackary Gibson
Director
Office of Adoption & Child Protection



Shan Goff
Executive Director
Office of Early Learning

FLORIDA CHILDREN AND YOUTH CABINET MEMBERS

Members



Shevaun L. Harris
Acting Secretary
Agency for Health Care Administration



Superintendent Sandra Himmel
Citrus County Schools



Forough Hosseini
Executive VP of Information Systems
ICI Homes



Belinda Keiser
Vice Chancellor
Keiser University



Simone Marsteller
Secretary
Department of Juvenile Justice



Barbara Palmer
Director
Agency for Persons with Disabilities



Chad Poppell
Secretary
Department of Children and Families



Dr. Scott Rivkees
Surgeon General
Department of Health



Representative Patricia Williams
Florida House, District 92



The Purpose of the Florida Children & Youth Cabinet

In 2007, the Florida Legislature directed all state agencies and programs that touch the lives of children and youth to work in collaboration, emphasizing on providing a continuum of services that benefit children from prenatal to their transition into adulthood. To meet this request, Florida created and signed into the law the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (Cabinet). The Cabinet is codified in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, and charged with ensuring the public policy of the state relating to children and youth is best aligned for promoting interdepartmental collaboration in program implementation. This collaboration helps to ensure that services designed for children and youth are planned, managed, and delivered in a holistic and integrated manner to improve the self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health, and quality of life of children across Florida.

Administrative Support and Service

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is tasked with providing administrative support and services to the Cabinet, as identified in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, and provides the Executive Director to serve as the Cabinet's liaison. The Executive Director reports directly to the Assistant Secretary of DCF's Child Welfare and the Cabinet Chair.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection staff provides administrative and fiscal support to the Executive Director by noticing Cabinet and committee meetings and coordinating travel requests and approvals.

FIRST CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

September 30, 2020



First Lady Casey DeSantis led Cabinet members in a discussion of the mental health ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on Florida's college students. Opening with a video from a COVID-19 roundtable discussion between Governor DeSantis and a group of world-renowned physicians, data regarding risk of the virus to our student age population was presented before the Cabinet.

Members were called upon to analyze state college and universities' responses to the social and emotional challenges brought on by the mitigation efforts and the policies put in place to address the virus. Amid the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data on Americans and their mental health, substance abuse and suicidal ideation. A staggering 75% of respondents in the 18-24 age demographic reported at least one adverse mental health symptom, and in that same age group, 25% considered suicide in the past 30 days.

The Cabinet heard from **Dr. Thomas Joiner**, who oversees Florida State University's Laboratory for the Study and Prevention of Suicide-Related Conditions and Behaviors, on the measures the university is taking to ensure their students' mental wellbeing. He acknowledged the vulnerability of some adults and children but emphasized the inherent resilience that can sometimes be underestimated.

Dr. Joiner further stated that going forward everyone should be watchful of students, monitor them carefully because they have been through something unique, and be ready to facilitate access and ramp up services for them. If a struggling student is identified, then swift action should be taken to provide the needed services. Dr. Joiner also mentioned the rise in telehealth services has proven successful at helping Florida State University students. He encouraged leaders to sustain the telehealth momentum.

Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Chancellor of K-12 Public Education, Jacob Oliva provided an update on education initiatives and conversations happening to ensure a strong system of care for all students from early learning to college. Chancellor Oliva noted in March that staying connected to students was a continual top priority. Whereas some other states provided only virtual options, Florida K-12 schools, colleges, and early learning organizations adapted to phase-in innovative learning, reopen, and stay connected, especially to students who are vulnerable and need care the most. FDOE made sure families had options in the level of services they were receiving. Chancellor Oliva offered the following points:

- 1) FDOE has partnered with DCF to tailor and update the youth mental health training for faculty and students to assist with recognizing signs and symptoms in students.

FIRST CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING September 30, 2020

- 2) FDOE has used data to drive decision making where access to services were found to be a challenge. Telehealth services are ongoing with students as a priority.

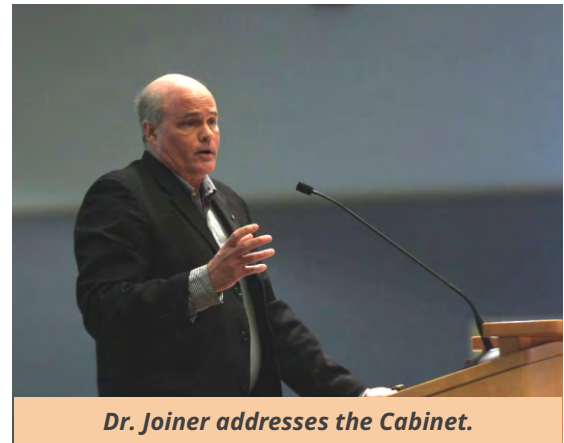
Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director of the Guardian ad Litem, provided a brief update on the Cabinet's Strategy Workgroup research as it relates to the impact of mentoring young adults and teens. Between January and May, the Strategy Workgroup discussed at great length suicide reduction efforts with a focus on mentorship. Director Abramowitz shared a quote from a young woman who spoke to the Strategy Workgroup earlier last year about mentoring, "Let them know you are hearing, you understand. Let them guide the conversation—be a listening ear from the beginning, that's my advice."

National research shows that when it comes to identification and stabilization, over 40% of youth who die by suicide have had a mental health or substance abuse disorder six months prior to their death. DJJ or child welfare-involved youth are 2-4 times more likely to die by suicide based on environmental risk factors. Limited screening and assessment protocols hinders the ability to intervene. Director Abramowitz shared that, nationally, Florida does better as a state with screening and assessment.

Director Abramowitz stated that according to research there is a need to increase post-discharge care for crisis facilities and he also shared that youth sometimes do not show up for the post-discharge care, and this is when telehealth really helps. Telemedicine can fill the gap and be a true lifesaver for youth at risk of suicide.

Suicide is preventable when people can access the resources needed, and a trusted adult mentor is a key factor. Director Abramowitz spoke about a counterbalance to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), which are positive childhood experiences, one of which is mentorship. Director Abramowitz spoke about how to promote mentorship in the state:

- 1) Faith-based and community agencies such as Volunteer Florida and Florida 2-1-1 can find mentors and link youth with mentors. Florida Administrative Code 60L allows state workers to use up to one hour of administrative leave per week to mentor.
- 2) The workgroup collaborated with experts to create training for volunteers to fulfill the need for prospective mentors to know how to find volunteer opportunities, complete the training, and receive access to support available to them. The training is currently posted on YouTube.



Dr. Joiner addresses the Cabinet.

FIRST CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

September 30, 2020

- 3) Director Abramowitz noted that January is Mentoring Month and spoke about the numerous valuable strategies to recruit mentors that includes developing and distributing public service campaigns, identifying volunteer connections to sign up as partners, and to use 2-1-1 to seek or refer people who may need mentoring.

Erik Dellenback, Faith and Community Liaison to the Florida Governor, works with various state agencies to develop partnerships between faith organizations and available state resources. Dellenback spoke about the state's effort to strengthen foster care relationships between religious organizations and state agencies. He described the infrastructure and plan to help make it easier for faith and community-based organizations to get involved with the state and for the state to communicate its needs to those organizations.

Governor DeSantis began the Faith and Community-Based initiative in August 2019 with the mission to connect the faith and community-based organizations in our state. The initiative was launched by a letter from the Governor to faith and community-based organizations in the state to thank them for the work they have been doing to help people and to promise them that the state was committed to open communication.

Dellenback stated that in the past six months, 4,000 faith and community-based institutions responded with interest to the initiative and were sent a survey that contained 21 different vulnerable population groups in the state and asked those organizations to identify which of those populations they were currently serving. The top responses were hunger and homelessness; adoption was second to last and foster care was sixth to last. Dellenback described the need for ongoing steps to provide support to foster families.

In September, the state created MyFloridaMyFamily.com, an online hub that can link families in need to local faith and community-based institutions. The website provides a menu of options for providers to select to offer help that ranges from targeted services to bringing meals to new foster and adoptive families. Other options are available to increase awareness, such as signing up for an app that communicates a community's needs for children (beds, car seats, etc.). MyFloridaMyFamily.com directs visitors to Florida's Foster Information Center, staffed by former and current foster parents, where Floridians can get more information on fostering the state's 23,000+ children in out-of-home care.

MyFloridaMyFamily



SECOND CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING



October 27, 2020

During the October 27 meeting of the Children and Youth Cabinet, a partnership between the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) and the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) was announced to provide nearly 1,000 devices to Florida children in foster care who are in need of a mobile technology device, such as a laptop or notebook, to help address the unique challenges to educational stability that these students confront.

The devices were distributed to children in Bay, Brevard, Broward, Clay, Collier, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Holmes, Lake, Lee, Marion, Miami-Dade, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Seminole counties, based on data reported by the Florida Coalition for Children.

“

I am proud of this cross-agency coordination, which will enable more students to benefit from technology in their education, have access to learn outside of the school day, and gain access to services that can bolster their long-term resiliency.

”

— First Lady Casey DeSantis

Peter Vargas, Director of Public Sector & Education, South Region, presented the following information to Cabinet members: T-Mobile is working to bridge the homework gap around the country with “Project 10 Million”. T-Mobile has been working in education for years, connecting students to the internet by helping schools buy laptops, Chromebooks, and receiving funding for schools to allow internet connectivity. Project 10 Million will take this to the next level in the U.S. and specifically in Florida, due to outreach from Cabinet leadership requesting inclusion in the program.

Kids without home internet access have consistently lower grades in reading and math. T-Mobile is investing 10 billion dollars to eradicate the homework gap in the U.S. by providing internet to 10 million U.S. households with hotspot devices to households that qualify. The devices provide filtered internet which is safe for kids to use at home.

SECOND CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING October 27, 2020



Phillip Adams shares his story with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet.

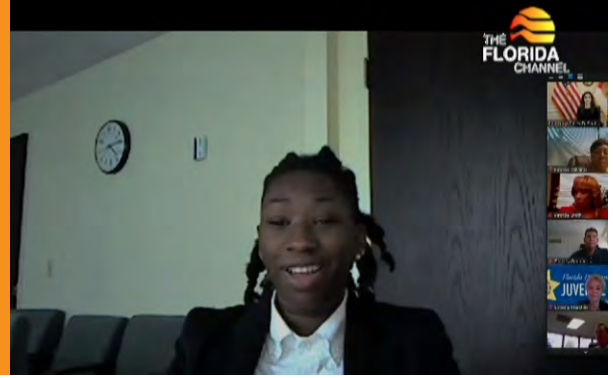
In Florida, T-Mobile will connect 632,000 households to the internet in the next five years and are ready now to start with the first 126,000. The project is an application-based process and T-Mobile is currently accepting applications from schools. They are working with FDOE in a coordinated effort to help reach out to the households that have the most need.

Phillip Adams, a survivor of child abuse, shared his powerful testimony and stressed the importance of in-person schooling, especially for children who are at high risk of being abused at home. Adams highlighted the significant role that teachers have in identifying child abuse. Further, he emphasized that some kids go to school because they cannot eat at home, and that school is more than learning; it's about being somewhere safe. Schools are more than a building, they are teachers. Teachers are the primary reporters of abuse and neglect because they have eyes on the students. Adams stated he survived abuse because he had great teachers in his life. He is now a child advocate.

First Lady Casey DeSantis charged **Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Simone Marstiller** with creating a workgroup to examine stigma within many minority communities about mental health and develop strategies to overcome these issues. Secretary Marstiller accepted this charge and will report back to the Cabinet with the findings of the workgroup.

THIRD CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

December 14, 2020



Nineteen-year-old **DJJ Youth Ambassador Stephanie Godbolt** shared a moving testimony about challenges she faced, overcoming adversity, and the power of mentorship. Stephanie’s grades were good as a child, but they started dropping in high school when her dad became ill. Her dad was her biggest supporter, and he died in her freshman year of high school. The stress and everyday pressures of life became too hard for her to handle and was the beginning of her emotional struggles. Stephanie explained that she didn’t have the basic resources for therapy and avoided talking to others about her problems.

Stephanie’s life took a turn for the worse; she went from being an honor roll student to getting D’s and F’s. Her life got better when she enrolled in the Pace Center for Girls, and Stephanie credits the program for helping her become successful in life. Through Pace she learned leadership skills and the value of getting a good education. After graduating from Pace, she became a Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Youth Ambassador and now travels the state inspiring other young girls.

Now currently attending Edward Waters College in Jacksonville on an athletic scholarship, Stephanie was elected the freshman class president. In her closing comments, she thanked the state for helping her to improve her life and desires to “pay it forward.” Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Simone Marstiller commended Ms. Godbolt on all that she has accomplished in her young life. Stephanie is a shining example of what a prevention program can do.



Secretary Marstiller commends Ms. Godbolt on her accomplishments.

Dr. Eric Hall, Senior Chancellor of Education, Department of Education and **Dr. Christy England, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Florida Board of Governors**, presented on how colleges and universities support mental health and well-being of students in postsecondary education.

Dr. Hall stated that FDOE’s goal with education is to create conditions for success, like the ones Ms. Godbolt experienced, and opportunities to excel and thrive academically and personally through programs like Pace. These goals are why Florida supported schools re-opening and continues to provide parents with options. FDOE continues to work on closing academic achievement gaps and addressing non-academic barriers for all of Florida’s students.

THIRD CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

December 14, 2020

At the October Cabinet meeting, First Lady DeSantis asked Chancellor Oliva about the 18 to 24-year-old age group because of concerning trends and data about their mental health. Dr. Hall showed a data comparison of the last decade from the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (2009 to 2019) concerning depression and suicide risk with the awareness that these trends help inform postsecondary staff of what they need to expect. According to the CDC, 40% of Americans are struggling with mental health or substance abuse challenges related to COVID-19, with young adults disproportionately impacted. The majority of those surveyed indicated increased stress or anxiety levels and less than half indicated that they were able to cope. Below outlines how Florida is addressing these trends.

Technical Colleges

- ▶ In Florida there are 48 technical colleges with nearly 90,000 students.
- ▶ Kognito Mental Health Training Program is being used to train and support staff at all technical colleges.
- ▶ Over 1,400 staff members have been trained through Kognito to teach them how to identify and support students if they are navigating mental health risks/challenges. Kognito is facilitating staff to be responsive to those concerns and, because of its success, similar strategies are emerging in state colleges and universities.

State Colleges

- ▶ In Florida, there are 28 state colleges with 100% offering mental health services to students.
- ▶ Colleges may be offering these services in different ways – some by providing the services directly and others through a student mental health referral partnership with a mental health facility or community-based organization.
- ▶ Colleges are working to use existing organizations to support the mental well-being of students, and to address and mitigate issues among students.

Universities

- ▶ There are 12 universities in the state university system, and Dr. England shared information regarding how the state university system has made advances in student mental health over the last five years.
- ▶ The universities' focus on mental well-being began in March 2015 during a conversation about campus safety. Initially focusing on safety surrounding hurting themselves or others, the focus expanded to include all student mental health issues. In November 2017, universities were charged with three-year plans to

THIRD CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

December 14, 2020

increase student access to counselors and to train faculty and staff on mental health literacy.

- ▶ A drug, alcohol, and mental health task force was created in 2018 and charged with reviewing evidence about the most critical substance and mental health issues challenging students, and to provide recommendations for addressing them. The task force and the Board of Governors approved a plan in August 2019 to improve student wellness on 10 of the recommendations surrounding student wellness, drug and alcohol use, and mental health.
- ▶ A dashboard was created to provide annual updates tracking the recommendations. There were three other recommendations in addition to the 10 on the dashboard: Kognito, College Health Surveys, and a Bi-Annual System Student Wellness Summit.
- ▶ Universities have the goal to train all faculty and staff on Kognito by the end of January 2021, and the State University System of Florida received an award from Kognito on its use of the platform and mental health literacy. Planning for the first summit for universities to share best mental health practices is underway.

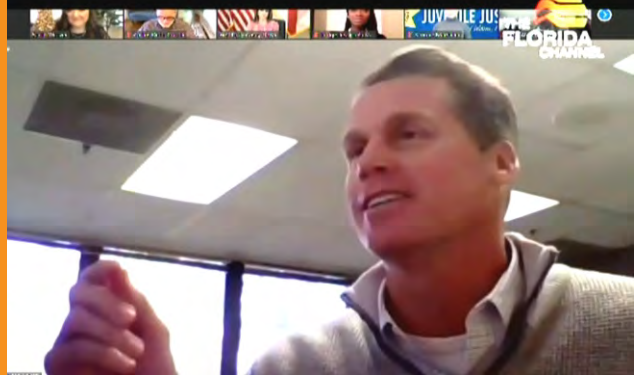
Currently...

- ▶ 11 of 12 universities have implemented student life skills/wellness courses.
- ▶ 12 of 12 have created or reoriented campus services to focus on proactive and responsible mental health wellbeing.
- ▶ 11 of 12 have peer education programs.
- ▶ 12 of 12 have administered a comprehensive needs assessment for incoming freshman.

The state universities are concerned about national mental health issues with students, but because of the three-year plan, the drug, alcohol, and substance abuse task force and ongoing conversations between the Board of Governors and the 12 state universities, the universities have been able to meet the increasing needs of students. Expanded outreach, trained staff, and explored and implemented telehealth services allowed universities to expand and adapt to the changing times.

FOURTH CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

December 22, 2020



First Lady Casey DeSantis and the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet heard from **Christmas for Fosters**, a nonprofit organization that provides foster children gifts for the holiday. The Pinellas County-based organization is run by **Sarah Weaver**. Sarah shared her journey of becoming a foster parent and how Christmas for Fosters was created. Early in her marriage, Sarah and her husband tried everything they could to have children and, unfortunately, after trying fertility treatments, they were told she was unable to carry children.



Sarah Weaver shares her journey of becoming a foster parent and her non-profit, Christmas for Fosters.

Through spiritual counseling in 2016, Sarah and her husband were encouraged to consider options like fostering children. They went to A Door of Hope, a Christian licensing home for foster families, and almost immediately were fortunate to have their first placement of two boys, ages 2 and 3.

A few years later, the Weavers adopted both boys and their sister, and they also continue to foster. Sarah works with **A Door of Hope**, helping recruit more foster

families, and her husband works at Safe Families for Children, which provides extended family support to help prevent more children from entering the foster care system.

All of this happened because they said “yes.” They said “yes” to becoming foster parents. They said “yes” to their first placement. Sarah stated that what God had done because of saying “yes” has been incredible. Christmas for Fosters, in its first year, served 45 children. It has grown every year and this year, to date, they provided Christmas gifts to more than 460 foster children.

A Door of Hope serves more than 250 children, and that is where she started – their families were able to sign up first. They later opened sign ups to other licensing organizations, who funneled the information to their families. They fill out a profile for each child – their name, age, wish list items and interests. They focus on quality over quantity, but this year they were able to get a lot—every child who is sponsored gets several outfits, a jacket, pajamas, and then a wish list where they can dream as big as their friends at school, even if it’s a Nintendo Switch. They had 321 sponsors this year, but close to 1,000 people gave to make this year happen, as the sponsors use crowdfunding efforts for gifts.

FOURTH CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET MEETING

December 14, 2020

Judge Jessica Costello shared that in November she had the honor of presiding over adoption proceedings, some of the most joyful events that occur in courthouses across the state. One of the most inspiring aspects was learning the stories and paths that bring these forever families together.

Department of Children and Families Secretary Chad Poppell provided an overview of Florida's child welfare system and MyFloridaMyFamily.com. This website was outlined at the first 2020 Children & Youth Cabinet Meeting by Erik Dellenback,

Faith and Community Liaison to the Florida Governor. It is designed to help support families who are fostering and adopting in our state. Secretary Poppell also highlighted Florida's Foster Information Center, a hotline staffed with current or former foster parents who can answer callers' questions based on their own experiences and provide information about fostering one of the 23,000 children throughout the state who are currently in out-of-home care.



Judge Costello discusses her experiences presiding over adoption proceedings.

The Florida Children & Youth Cabinet
is *committed* to improving the
self-sufficiency, safety,
economic stability, health, and
quality of life
of children across Florida.

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 16 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. A representative of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection;
10. A superintendent of schools, appointed by the Governor; and
11. Five members who represent children and youth advocacy organizations and who are not service providers, 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 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; s. 1, ch. 2016-19; s. 70, ch. 2019-3; s. 11, ch. 2019-142.

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. Post-adoptive 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; s. 1, ch. 2016-127; s. 82, ch. 2016-241; s. 28, ch. 2018-111; s. 10, ch. 2019-3; s. 1, ch. 2019-128.

1Note.—As amended by s. 82, ch. 2016-241. The amendment by s. 1, ch. 2016-127, uses the reference “s. 394.47892” instead of the reference “chapter 394.”

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