



# 2023 Annual Report

## Office of Adoption and Child Protection

*Executive Office of the Governor*

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State Fiscal Year 2022-2023

***This annual report from the Office of Adoption and Child Protection is submitted to:***

*The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor, State of Florida*

*The Honorable Paul Renner, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives*

*The Honorable Kathleen Passidomo, President, Florida Senate*

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## SECTION I - OFFICE ACTIVITIES

On June 12, 2007, the bill creating the Office of Adoption and Child Protection, within the Executive Office of the Governor, was signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush. The office duties and responsibilities of the Office are found in Section 39.001, Florida Statutes. 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 Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council as outlined in Section 14.31, Florida Statutes. The Office also supports the Governor's Faith and Community Based Initiative.

### FLORIDA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY-BASED ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Office provides leadership and administrative support to the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based (FBCB) Advisory Council to advance its mission and fulfill its charge to enlist, equip, enable, expand, and empower the work of faith-based, volunteer, and other community organizations to collaborate with government entities to deliver services more effectively. Below are activities of the Office during FY 2022-2023.

#### *Vision*

To maximize the collaboration between faith-based and community organizations and State agencies to help strengthen individuals and families.

#### *Mission*

The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council exists to facilitate connections to strengthen communities and families in the state of Florida.

#### *Statutory Charge*

To advise the Governor and the Legislature on policies, priorities, and objectives for the state's comprehensive efforts to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the work of faith-based, volunteer, and other community organizations to the full extent permitted by law.

During the 2023 calendar year, the Council met four times—once each quarter. These meetings are reflected below:

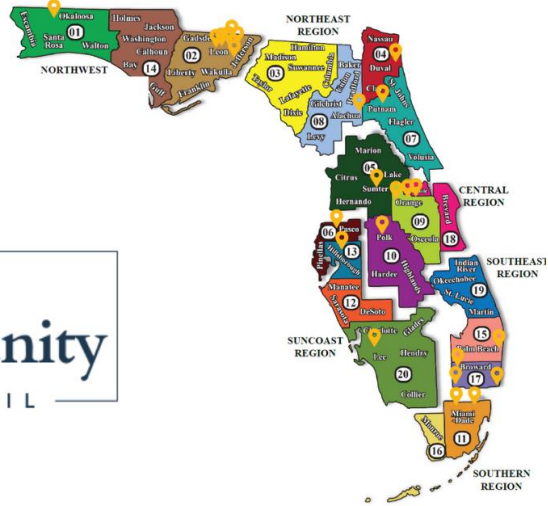
- March 20<sup>th</sup>, The Florida Capitol - Tallahassee
- June 9<sup>th</sup>, Calvary Church - Clearwater
- September 6<sup>th</sup>, JW Marriott - Orlando
- December 12<sup>th</sup>, Sanibel Community Church - Sanibel



**FLORIDA**

# Faith & Community

ADVISORY COUNCIL



| REGION  | COUNCIL MEMBER          | LOCATION        |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>NORTHWEST</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>01, 02, 14     | Commissioner Mel Ponder | Destin          |
|   | Mrs. Denise Harle       | Tallahassee     |
|   | Mr. Michael Sheedy      | Tallahassee     |
|   | Pastor Pam Olsen        | Tallahassee     |
|   | Mr. Chad Poppell        | Tallahassee     |
| <b>NORTHEAST</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>03, 04, 07, 08 | Pastor Gerard Duncan    | Ocala           |
|   | Mr. Calvin Martin       | Palatka         |
|   | Pastor Jason Cullum     | Jacksonville    |
|   | Mr. Erik Dellenback     | Jacksonville    |
| <b>CENTRAL</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>05, 09, 10, 18   | Pastor Scott George     | Maitland        |
|   | Dr. Jerry Haag          | Lakeland        |
|   | Senator Kelli Stargel   | Lakeland        |
|   | Mrs. Lori Bontell       | Orlando         |
|   | Mr. Chad Garmon         | Longwood        |
| <b>SUNCOAST</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>06, 12, 13, 20  | Mr. Adam Voran          | Palm Harbor     |
|   | Mr. Jeff Ford           | Trinity         |
|   | Pastor Reno Zunz        | Lutz            |
| <b>SOUTHEAST</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>15, 17, 19     | Senator Erin Grall      | Vero Beach      |
|   | Mrs. Mami Kisner        | West Palm Beach |
|   | Rabbi Yosef Weinstock   | Hollywood       |
|   | Mr. Stephan Tchividjian | Ft. Lauderdale  |
|   | Pastor Mario Bramnick   | Cooper City     |
| <b>SOUTHERN</b><br><u>Circuits</u><br>11, 16          | Reverend James Drake    | Miami           |
|   | Mr. Anthony Verdugo     | Miami           |

## **GOVERNOR'S FAITH AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE**

In November 2019, Governor DeSantis announced the creation of his Faith and Community Based Initiative under the direction of Erik Dellenback, the Governor's Liaison for Faith and Community. The Governor's Initiative was charged with thanking, communicating, resourcing, and connecting upstream Florida's faith and community networks with vulnerable populations. To support the Initiative, the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative Office was created to operationally support the Initiative and its programs.

The Initiative has developed a number of tools, programs, and initiatives for the purpose of short-term and long-term resourcing and connection of Florida's faith and community networks. Some of the key tools and programs include:

### **Collaboration with DCF for the establishment of the Florida Foster Information Center**

The Florida Foster Information Center enlists specially trained team, all of whom are current or past foster parents, to provide needed customer service and system navigation support to prospective foster care families.

### **CarePortal**

CarePortal brings the needs of hurting children and families in a community to the attention of surrounding involved organizations. Caseworkers uncover the needs and CarePortal makes local faith and community organizations or members aware, giving them a real-time opportunity to respond. CarePortal is a key component of the Hope Florida Initiative.

### **Faith and Community Information Line**

The Florida Faith and Community "Red Phone" is a first-in-the-nation direct phone line specifically created for Florida faith and community leaders to connect with the Executive Office of the Governor. A real person will answer, address questions and concerns regarding state government, and help drive solutions for those serving the vulnerable people of Florida.

### **Sessions with the Secretary**

The Session with the Secretary video-event series connects faith and community organizations with state leaders in shared areas of service. Through statewide video calls, participants have an opportunity to hear directly from state agency heads and other public officials, ask questions, and hear more about ways the work of faith and community organizations can be encouraged, connected, or better resourced.

### **Women of Faith Forum**

Coordinated program between the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative and the First Lady to encourage, educate, and equip influential women from faith and community contexts. The content includes Hope Florida, state faith and community projects, briefings from state officials, and other activities.

### **Governor's Faith and Community Initiative Newsletter**

The monthly *Governor's Faith and Community Initiative Newsletter* was launched to serve as a regular communication between the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative and the faith and community leaders of the state. Its content includes highlights of what Florida's top state leaders are doing to serve faith and community organizations, special tailored messages of

encouragement from the Governor’s Liaison for Faith and Community, and information on valuable resources to enhance ministries that serve vulnerable Floridians.

## **CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND PERMANENCY PLAN**

The Office, under Chapter 39.001, F.S., supports the development of the State Comprehensive Plan in conjunction with the Department of Children and Families and other stakeholder agencies. The vision, mission, and 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.

### **Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council (CAAP)**

The Office engages a broad range of state and local government, agency, faith, and community professionals/partners/stakeholders (representatives) and foster/adoptive families through in-person meetings and participation on multiple state and community workgroups/committees (*Table 1*). These representatives reflect the membership of the CAPP Advisory Council and provide valuable perspectives, strategies, and feedback for the ongoing alignment, development, implementation, and evaluation of the CAPP Plan.

*Table 1: State and Community Workgroups/Committees*

| Workgroup/Committee                   | Description   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Building Healthy Military Communities | Provide recommendations, strategies, and facilitate connections to improve the readiness, resiliency and well-being of active duty service members in Florida.<br><a href="https://cms.jointservicessupport.org/bhmc/About-Us">https://cms.jointservicessupport.org/bhmc/About-Us</a>   |
| DELTA Impact Leadership Team          | Provide recommendations and strategies to decrease intimate partner violence risk factors and increase intimate partner protective factors through community and societal level primary prevention activities.<br><a href="https://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/domestic-violence-prevention-enhancement-and-leadership-through-alliances-delta">https://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/domestic-violence-prevention-enhancement-and-leadership-through-alliances-delta</a> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Department of Education – Faith Based and Community Outreach Advisory Council                 | Provide recommendations and strategies to advance efforts to engage faith and community organizations to support Florida schools and students.<br><a href="http://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/faith-community-outreach.stml">http://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/faith-community-outreach.stml</a>  |
| Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems   | Provided recommendations and strategies to strengthen the early childhood system of care to enable children to be safe, healthy and ready to learn.<br><a href="https://mchb.hrsa.gov/earlychildhoodcomprehensivesystems">https://mchb.hrsa.gov/earlychildhoodcomprehensivesystems</a>   |
| Early Steps- Child Find Workgroup   | Provide recommendations and strategies to increase awareness and education for parents on services for infants and toddlers with certain physical and mental conditions known to create a risk of developmental delays.<br><a href="http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/families/early_steps/early_steps.html">http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/families/early_steps/early_steps.html</a>   |
| Florida Children’s System of Care   | Provide recommendations and strategies to improve the children’s mental health system as a coordinated and integrated continuum that is youth guided, family driven, community based and culturally and linguistically competent.<br><a href="http://www.socflorida.com/">http://www.socflorida.com/</a>   |
| Florida Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children | Provide recommendations and strategies regarding Florida’s participation in and compliance with the Interstate Compact.<br><a href="http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/military-families/">http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/military-families/</a>   |
| Florida Injury and Violence Prevention Advisory Council                                       | Provide advice and expertise on the development and implementation of the State Health Improvement Plan and the Florida Injury and Violence Prevention State Plan to include efforts that address child maltreatment.<br><a href="http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/injury-prevention/injury-advisory-council/index.html">http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/injury-prevention/injury-advisory-council/index.html</a> |
| Florida KIDS COUNT Advisory Council   | Provide recommendations and strategies to increase awareness, identify data sources, and disseminate information to expand the reach of Florida KIDS Count.<br><a href="http://www.floridakidscount.org/index.php/about-us/advisory-council">http://www.floridakidscount.org/index.php/about-us/advisory-council</a>   |
| Florida Partnership for Healthy Schools   | Provide recommendations and strategies to implement the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Coordinated School Health approach in all Florida Schools.<br><a href="http://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/building-a-healthy-dis.stml">http://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/building-a-healthy-dis.stml</a>   |
| Heart Gallery Big Bend  | Provide recommendations and implement strategies to promote adoption for children available for adoption with no identified family.<br><a href="http://www.heartgallerybigbend.org/">http://www.heartgallerybigbend.org/</a>   |
| Peace 4 the Big Bend  | Provide recommendations and strategies to advance A Trauma-Informed Initiative raising awareness, promoting resiliency and educating the community about trauma throughout Judicial Circuit 2.<br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/Peace4TheBigBend/">https://www.facebook.com/Peace4TheBigBend/</a>  |
| Restorative Practices Workgroup   | Advance efforts to promote education, awareness, and capacity building to embed restorative practices into agencies serving children, youth and families.  |
| Safe Kids Florida Advisory Council  | Provide recommendations and strategies to prevent/reduce the number of unintentional injuries and death among children.<br><a href="http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/safe-kids-florida/index.html">http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/safe-kids-florida/index.html</a>   |
| State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Care and Education                                  | Implement measures that build upon the existing framework and infrastructure to increase the quality, alignment, and efficiency of Florida’s early childhood care and education mixed-delivery system of programs and services.<br><a href="http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/statewide-initiatives/preschool-development-grant-birth-through-five">http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/statewide-initiatives/preschool-development-grant-birth-through-five</a>           |
| State Review Team   | Provide guidance and support to local and regional review teams through the Cabinet Agreement. Review and present data from case reviews and provide policy recommendations to the Children’s Cabinet.<br><a href="http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/CoordServices.shtml">http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/CoordServices.shtml</a>  |

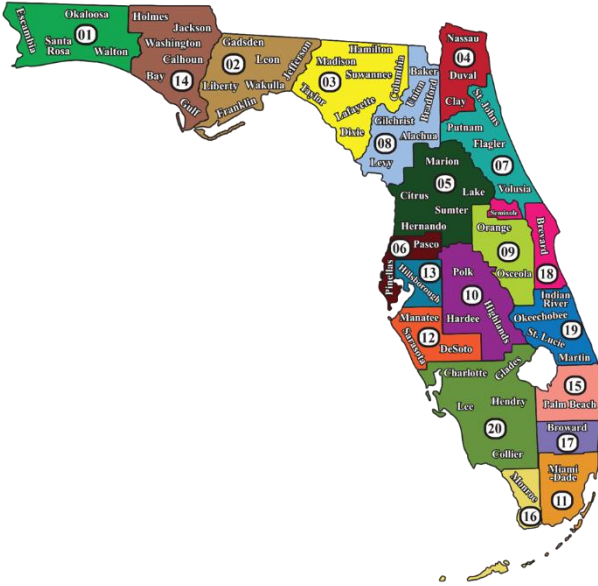


|  |   |
|--|---|
| Statewide Trauma Informed Care Workgroup | Provide recommendations and strategies to implement activities that increase awareness, provide education on adverse childhood experiences, and infuse trauma informed care within all of Florida's systems.<br><a href="http://floridatrauma.org/">http://floridatrauma.org/</a> |
|--|---|

**Circuit Taskforces**

The Office coordinates with 20 Circuit Taskforces to assess community needs, identify strategies, and implement action for the promotion of adoption, support for adoptive families, and prevention of child maltreatment. Taskforces are comprised of agency and multi-sector professionals and stakeholders, including family members who have adopted a child from the child welfare system, within each judicial circuit in Florida (Figure 2). The DCF's Community Development Administrators (CDAs) serve as conveners for their circuit's taskforce. These taskforces may function as a stand-alone team or integrated with other team structures charged with a similar purpose.

*Figure 2: Florida Judicial Circuits*



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## SECTION II – STATUS OF CHILD MALTREATMENT, CHILD MALTREATMENT DEATHS, AND ADOPTIONS IN FLORIDA

This section of the 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 calls for:

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

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the reporting agency for child maltreatment and adoptions and provided data and available information included in this report. Information from the Child Abuse Death Review Annual Report and the DCF Annual Adoption Incentive Report are included as part of this report.

### **SUMMARY OF CHILD MALTREATMENT**

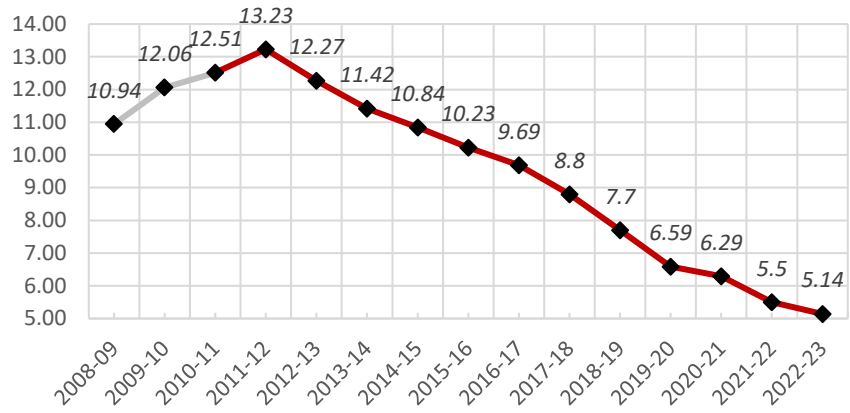
Child maltreatment is an all-inclusive term for child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Data is based on the official published per capita rate for Florida to provide for more in-depth reporting and analysis. Therefore, the numbers may differ slightly because when querying a live data system, used for both case management and reporting, the time lag between different run dates allows for additional data entry and correction.

The incidence of child maltreatment is the *estimated number* of maltreated children in Florida, regardless of the number of children reported as abused. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), child protective services reports may underestimate the true occurrence of abuse and neglect. It is estimated that 1 in 4 children (25%) experience some form of child maltreatment in their lifetimes.

#### **Verified Maltreatment**

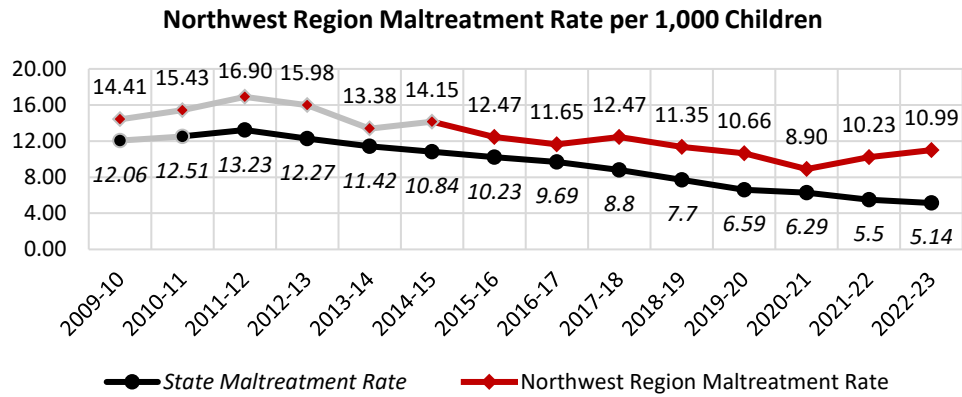
*The rate of children with verified maltreatment during FY 2022-23 was 5.14 per 1,000 children.* On the following pages, rates of verified maltreatment per 1,000 children are presented with infographics at both the regional and judicial circuit levels.

**Chart 1: Florida's Child Maltreatment Rate per 1,000 Children**

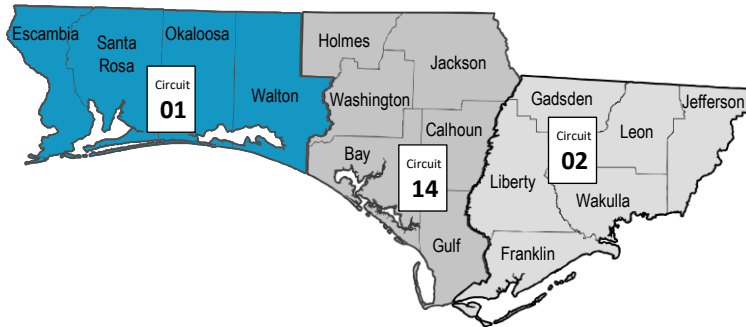


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**Infographic 1: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Northwest Region and Circuits**



*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*



**Circuit 1**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| 2009-10: 15.91        |
| 2010-11: 17.88        |
| 2011-12: 20.26        |
| 2012-13: 19.09        |
| 2013-14: 15.37        |
| 2014-15: 17.59        |
| 2015-16: 14.68        |
| 2016-17: 14.04        |
| 2017-18: 14.54        |
| 2018-19: 14.68        |
| 2019-20: 12.83        |
| 2020-21: 8.67         |
| 2021-22: 11.52        |
| <b>2022-23: 11.78</b> |

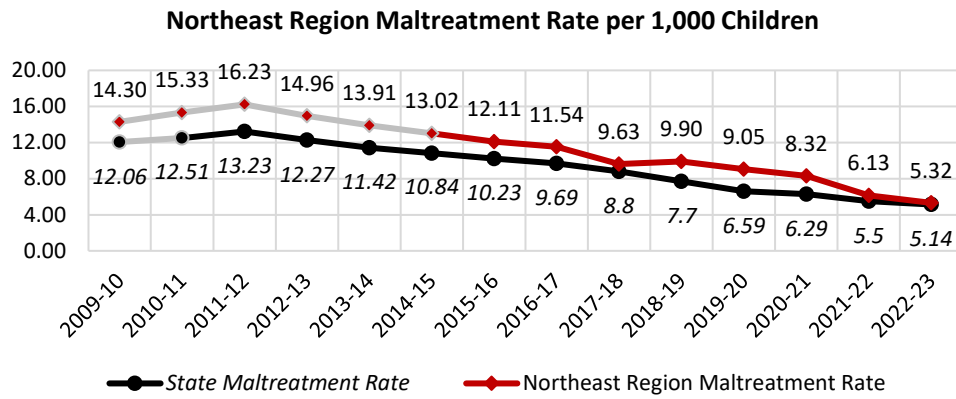
**Circuit 14**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| 2009-10: 14.79        |
| 2010-11: 11.81        |
| 2011-12: 13.75        |
| 2012-13: 15.26        |
| 2013-14: 12.57        |
| 2014-15: 11.06        |
| 2015-16: 13.39        |
| 2016-17: 10.57        |
| 2017-18: 12.1         |
| 2018-19: 7.65         |
| 2019-20: 9.03         |
| 2020-21: 7.80         |
| 2021-22: 9.68         |
| <b>2022-23: 10.41</b> |

**Circuit 2**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

|                      |
|----------------------|
| 2009-10: 11.11       |
| 2010-11: 13.33       |
| 2011-12: 12.81       |
| 2012-13: 10.45       |
| 2013-14: 10.02       |
| 2014-15: 9.73        |
| 2015-16: 7.35        |
| 2016-17: 7.72        |
| 2017-18: 8.36        |
| 2018-19: 7.41        |
| 2019-20: 7.39        |
| 2020-21: 7.80        |
| 2021-22: 7.43        |
| <b>2022-23: 9.69</b> |

**Infographic 2: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Northeast Region and Circuits**



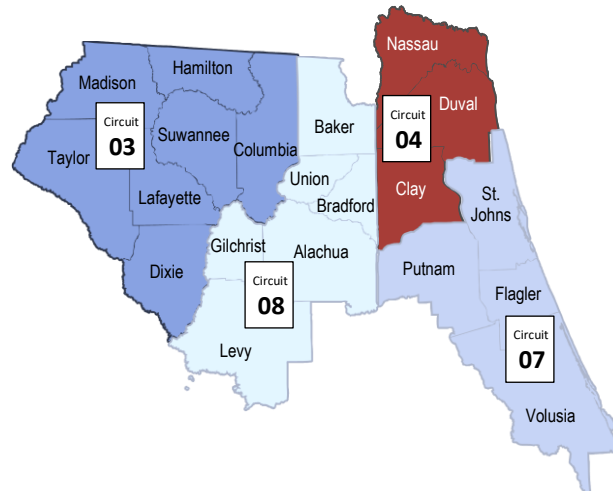
*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**Circuit 3  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 19.34  
 2010-11: 19.15  
 2011-12: 20.63  
 2012-13: 16.83  
 2013-14: 19.90  
 2014-15: 18.87  
 2015-16: 15.04  
 2016-17: 16.54  
 2017-18: 11.34  
 2018-19: 8.50  
 2019-20: 7.85  
 2020-21: 6.58  
 2021-22: 6.61  
**2022-23: 5.58**

**Circuit 4  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 12.63  
 2010-11: 13.35  
 2011-12: 14.09  
 2012-13: 13.83  
 2013-14: 13.84  
 2014-15: 12.06  
 2015-16: 10.99  
 2016-17: 11.11  
 2017-18: 10.46  
 2018-19: 9.86  
 2019-20: 9.25  
 2020-21: 8.94  
 2021-22: 6.11  
**2022-23: 5.04**



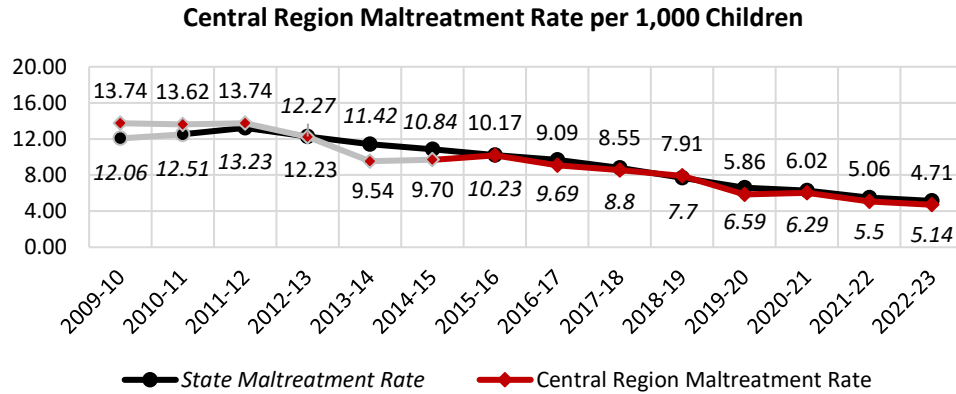
**Circuit 7  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 12.62  
 2010-11: 14.32  
 2011-12: 15.97  
 2012-13: 13.45  
 2013-14: 11.25  
 2014-15: 12.22  
 2015-16: 12.06  
 2016-17: 11.40  
 2017-18: 11.01  
 2018-19: 11.18  
 2019-20: 10.07  
 2020-21: 8.58  
 2021-22: 6.17  
**2022-23: 5.69**

**Circuit 8  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 21.54  
 2010-11: 22.78  
 2011-12: 22.28  
 2012-13: 21.68  
 2013-14: 17.23  
 2014-15: 15.32  
 2015-16: 14.87  
 2016-17: 10.80  
 2017-18: 8.25  
 2018-19: 7.59  
 2019-20: 6.30  
 2020-21: 6.19  
 2021-22: 5.80  
**2022-23: 5.31**

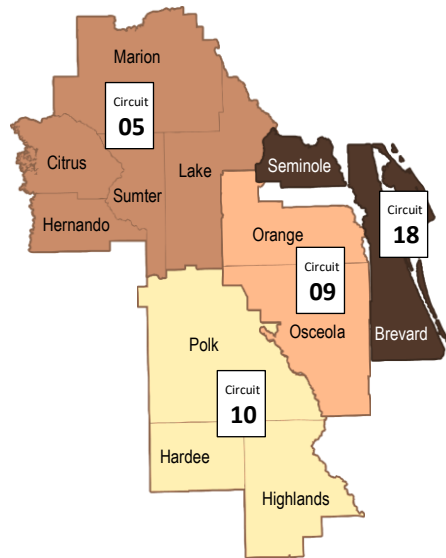
**Infographic 3: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Central Region and Circuits**



*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**Circuit 5  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 16.98  
 2010-11: 15.84  
 2011-12: 18.32  
 2012-13: 17.02  
 2013-14: 12.25  
 2014-15: 10.66  
 2015-16: 11.88  
 2016-17: 9.69  
 2017-18: 10.7  
 2018-19: 9.72  
 2019-20: 6.51  
 2020-21: 6.50  
 2021-22: 5.53  
**2022-23: 5.09**



**Circuit 18  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 11.74  
 2010-11: 12.25  
 2011-12: 11.97  
 2012-13: 9.35  
 2013-14: 7.95  
 2014-15: 11.23  
 2015-16: 1.07  
 2016-17: 9.35  
 2017-18: 8.9  
 2018-19: 7.63  
 2019-20: 5.50  
 2020-21: 7.89  
 2021-22: 5.45  
**2022-23: 4.67**

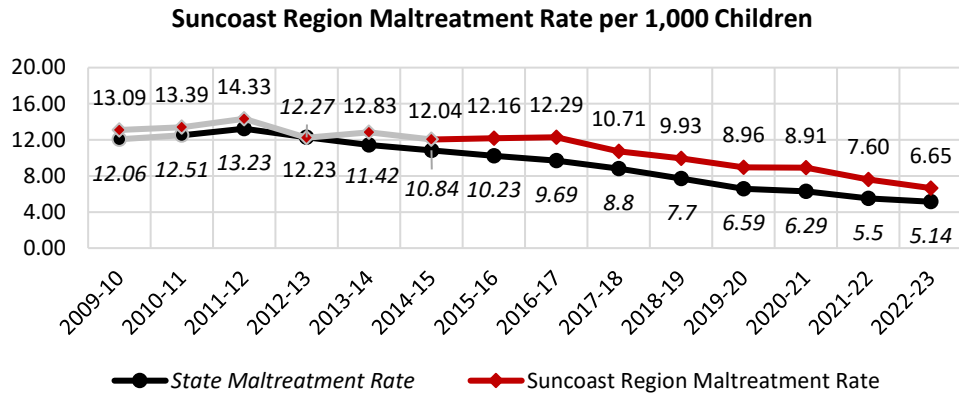
**Circuit 10  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 13.07  
 2010-11: 12.52  
 2011-12: 11.69  
 2012-13: 10.71  
 2013-14: 9.43  
 2014-15: 8.78  
 2015-16: 10.72  
 2016-17: 10.87  
 2017-18: 9.56  
 2018-19: 10.23  
 2019-20: 8.32  
 2020-21: 7.77  
 2021-22: 7.20  
**2022-23: 7.52**

**Circuit 9  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 13.47  
 2010-11: 13.71  
 2011-12: 13.24  
 2012-13: 12.01  
 2013-14: 9.04  
 2014-15: 8.80  
 2015-16: 8.78  
 2016-17: 7.84  
 2017-18: 6.84  
 2018-19: 6.16  
 2019-20: 4.67  
 2020-21: 4.23  
 2021-22: 3.69  
**2022-23: 3.27**

**Infographic 4: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Suncoast Region and Circuits**



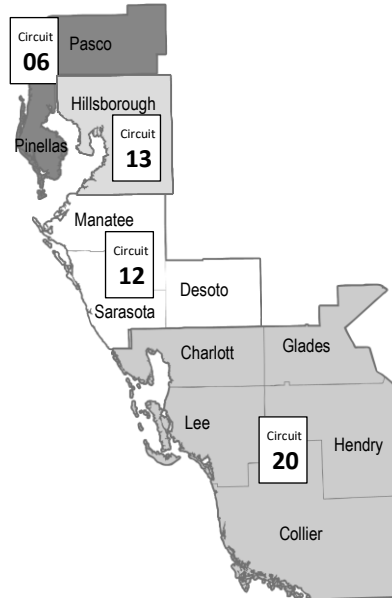
*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**Circuit 6  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 18.64  
 2010-11: 19.29  
 2011-12: 20.31  
 2012-13: 18.77  
 2013-14: 17.92  
 2014-15: 16.02  
 2015-16: 14.66  
 2016-17: 15.63  
 2017-18: 14.26  
 2018-19: 12.94  
 2019-20: 11.48  
 2020-21: 11.52  
 2021-22: 9.69  
**2022-23: 6.92**

**Circuit 12  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 15.03  
 2010-11: 16.92  
 2011-12: 16.32  
 2012-13: 14.10  
 2013-14: 13.70  
 2014-15: 15.11  
 2015-16: 15.78  
 2016-17: 14.14  
 2017-18: 10.51  
 2018-19: 11.14  
 2019-20: 10.12  
 2020-21: 9.77  
 2021-22: 9.28  
**2022-23: 7.59**



**Circuit 13  
Maltreatment Rate**

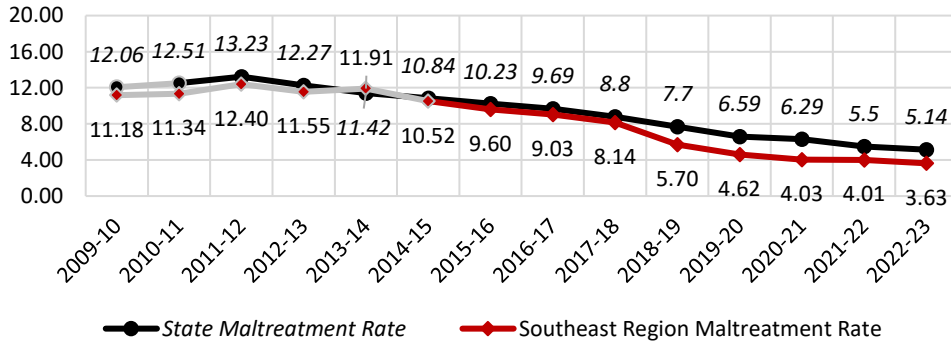
2009-10: 10.58  
 2010-11: 10.12  
 2011-12: 10.86  
 2012-13: 10.49  
 2013-14: 10.03  
 2014-15: 9.83  
 2015-16: 10.37  
 2016-17: 9.97  
 2017-18: 8.58  
 2018-19: 7.72  
 2019-20: 7.04  
 2020-21: 7.49  
 2021-22: 6.49  
**2022-23: 6.61**

**Circuit 20  
Maltreatment Rate**

2009-10: 8.92  
 2010-11: 8.86  
 2011-12: 10.80  
 2012-13: 10.26  
 2013-14: 10.29  
 2014-15: 8.70  
 2015-16: 9.66  
 2016-17: 10.57  
 2017-18: 9.78  
 2018-19: 8.89  
 2019-20: 8.12  
 2020-21: 7.53  
 2021-22: 5.85  
**2022-23: 5.82**

**Infographic 5: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Southeast Region and Circuits**

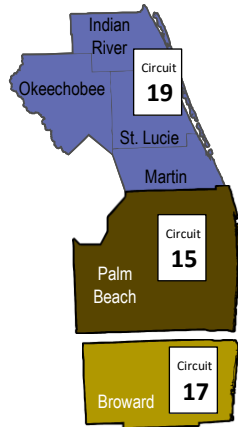
**Southeast Region Maltreatment Rate per 1,000 Children**



*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**Circuit 19**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

- 2009-10: 15.04
- 2010-11: 14.89
- 2011-12: 13.64
- 2012-13: 10.84
- 2013-14: 10.84
- 2014-15: 11.74
- 2015-16: 9.61
- 2016-17: 9.95
- 2017-18: 9.58
- 2018-19: 8.16
- 2019-20: 6.10
- 2020-21: 5.43
- 2021-22: 6.03
- 2022-23: 6.53**



**Circuit 15**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

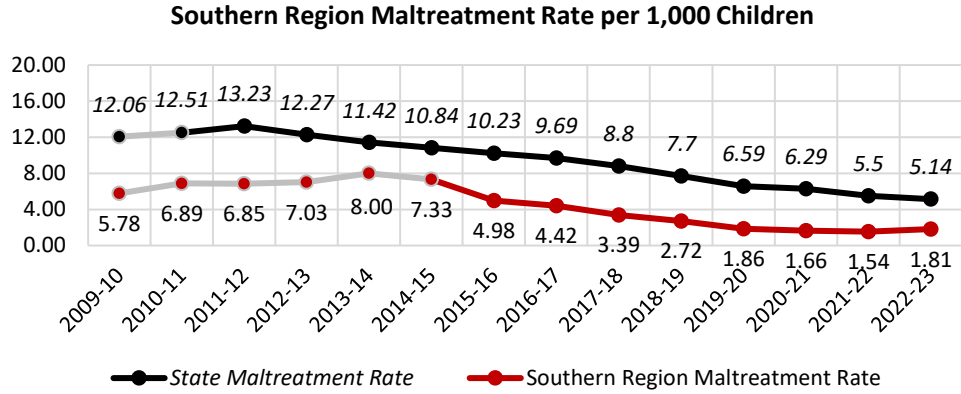
- 2009-10: 10.71
- 2010-11: 10.02
- 2011-12: 10.31
- 2012-13: 9.84
- 2013-14: 11.50
- 2014-15: 7.07
- 2015-16: 5.37
- 2016-17: 5.11
- 2017-18: 5.12
- 2018-19: 4.30
- 2019-20: 4.10
- 2020-21: 4.03
- 2021-22: 3.38
- 2022-23: 2.93**

**Circuit 17**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

- 2009-10: 10.36
- 2010-11: 11.18
- 2011-12: 13.45
- 2012-13: 12.97
- 2013-14: 12.53
- 2014-15: 12.54
- 2015-16: 12.52
- 2016-17: 11.47
- 2017-18: 9.77
- 2018-19: 5.90
- 2019-20: 4.52
- 2020-21: 3.85
- 2021-22: 3.79
- 2022-23: 3.18**



**Infographic 6: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Southern Region and Circuits**

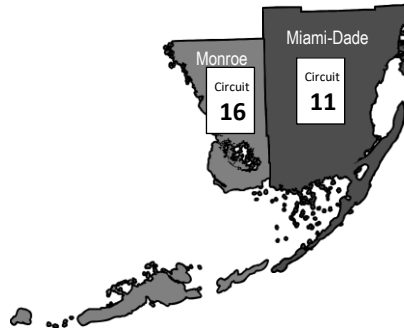


*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**Circuit 16**

**Maltreatment Rate**

- 2009-10: 16.68
- 2010-11: 15.57
- 2011-12: 15.46
- 2012-13: 16.82
- 2013-14: 23.02
- 2014-15: 21.17
- 2015-16: 14.39
- 2016-17: 10.92
- 2017-18: 10.08
- 2018-19: 8.44
- 2019-20: 6.74
- 2020-21: 5.37
- 2021-22: 5.77
- 2022-23: 7.06**



**Circuit 11**

**Maltreatment Rate**

- 2009-10: 5.54
- 2010-11: 6.70
- 2011-12: 6.68
- 2012-13: 6.83
- 2013-14: 7.71
- 2014-15: 7.06
- 2015-16: 4.80
- 2016-17: 4.29
- 2017-18: 3.26
- 2018-19: 2.61
- 2019-20: 1.77
- 2020-21: 1.59
- 2021-22: 1.46
- 2022-23: 1.69**

### Age Ranges with Verified Maltreatment

As shown in Chart 2 and Chart 3 below, the younger the child, the more vulnerable the child is to be maltreated.

- The highest percentage of children with verified maltreatment 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 16,452 of 23,233 verifications, over 70.81% 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 FY 2022 – 2023 (13.59% vs. 15.20%).

Chart 2: Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, FY 2022-2023 Statewide

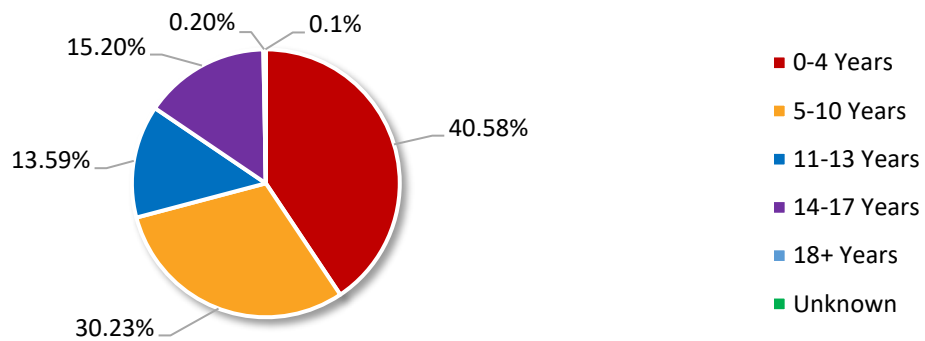
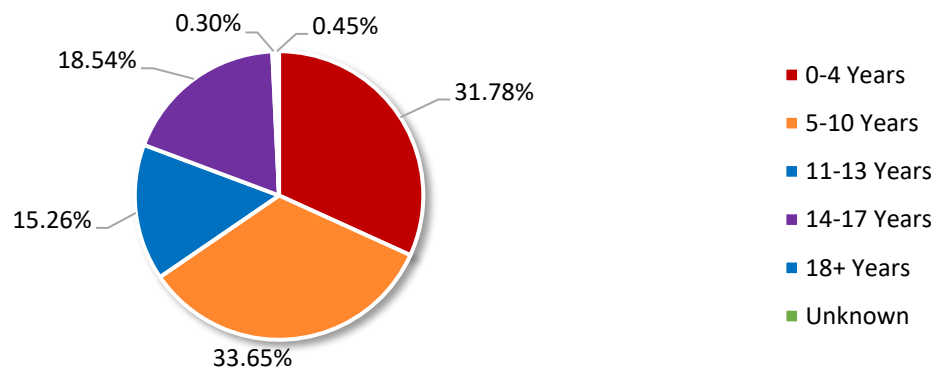


Chart 3: Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated), FY 2022-2023 Statewide



In Table 2, the highlighted cells in orange show the highest numbers of race, ethnicity, and sex per circuit as well as statewide.

- The largest percentage of children and youth who were alleged victims of maltreatment were white (51.16%).
- For ethnicity, the largest portion was “Other” (non – Hispanic) (82.37%).
- For sex, the largest percentage of children was female (50.29%)

*Table 2: Race, Ethnicity, and sex of Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated), FY 2022–2023, Statewide*

| Circuit           | Race          |               |              |               | Ethnicity     |                | Sex           |               |              | Total          |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
|                   | White         | Black         | Multiracial  | Other         | Hispanic      | Other          | Female        | Male          | Unknown      |                |
| 1                 | 5,504         | 2,179         | 476          | 1,502         | 543           | 9,118          | 4,790         | 4,698         | 173          | 9,661          |
| 2                 | 1,544         | 2,256         | 131          | 548           | 146           | 4,333          | 2,218         | 2,158         | 105          | 4,481          |
| 3                 | 1,802         | 530           | 115          | 418           | 157           | 2,708          | 1,415         | 1,380         | 75           | 2,870          |
| 4                 | 5,834         | 6,369         | 578          | 2,376         | 1,066         | 14,091         | 7,589         | 7,266         | 299          | 15,154         |
| 5                 | 8,770         | 2,189         | 501          | 1,926         | 1,616         | 11,770         | 6,665         | 6,507         | 210          | 13,382         |
| 6                 | 7,283         | 2,716         | 664          | 1,696         | 1,240         | 11,119         | 6,180         | 6,066         | 118          | 12,364         |
| 7                 | 5,872         | 2,199         | 434          | 1,657         | 1,0087        | 9,154          | 5,112         | 4,867         | 193          | 10,172         |
| 8                 | 2,493         | 1,578         | 229          | 747           | 309           | 4,738          | 2,513         | 2,412         | 111          | 5,036          |
| 9                 | 7,098         | 5,538         | 427          | 3,359         | 4,793         | 11,629         | 8,326         | 7,790         | 306          | 16,422         |
| 10                | 6,399         | 2,815         | 424          | 1,189         | 2,562         | 8,265          | 5,456         | 5,250         | 124          | 10,830         |
| 11                | 5,253         | 4,238         | 136          | 2,938         | 4,822         | 7,743          | 6,459         | 5,773         | 339          | 12,571         |
| 12                | 4,092         | 1,253         | 295          | 882           | 1,284         | 5,238          | 3,267         | 3,182         | 77           | 6,526          |
| 13                | 6,552         | 5,152         | 584          | 1,098         | 3,195         | 10,191         | 6,758         | 6,540         | 80           | 13,378         |
| 14                | 2,880         | 782           | 256          | 639           | 177           | 4,380          | 2,293         | 2,159         | 104          | 4,556          |
| 15                | 4,108         | 3,975         | 245          | 1,639         | 2,266         | 7,701          | 5,082         | 4,758         | 128          | 9,968          |
| 16                | 309           | 89            | 30           | 71            | 126           | 373            | 236           | 247           | 16           | 499            |
| 17                | 3,686         | 6,060         | 352          | 1,870         | 2,425         | 9,543          | 6,009         | 5,724         | 220          | 11,953         |
| 18                | 6,204         | 2,624         | 714          | 1,004         | 1,695         | 8,851          | 5,253         | 5,205         | 94           | 10,552         |
| 19                | 3,232         | 1,529         | 257          | 982           | 935           | 5,065          | 3,053         | 2,866         | 85           | 6,004          |
| 20                | 7,039         | 1,812         | 353          | 1,972         | 2,695         | 8,481          | 5,647         | 5,381         | 144          | 11,172         |
| <b>Statewide</b>  | <b>95,954</b> | <b>55,883</b> | <b>7,201</b> | <b>28,513</b> | <b>33,060</b> | <b>154,491</b> | <b>94,321</b> | <b>90,229</b> | <b>3,001</b> | <b>187,551</b> |
| <b>Percentage</b> | <b>51.16%</b> | <b>29.79%</b> | <b>3.84%</b> | <b>15.20%</b> | <b>17.63%</b> | <b>82.37%</b>  | <b>50.29%</b> | <b>48.10%</b> | <b>1.60%</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

Table 3 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.

- For these children, there were 39,755 verified allegations of child maltreatment (duplicated child count).
- The highest numbers of allegations were for household violence threatens child, inadequate supervision, and physical injury.
- It should be noted that the top three most reported allegations (household violence, inadequate supervision, and physical injury) have fairly low verification rates (11.16%, 10.96%, and 4.90%, respectively).

*Table 3: Allegations and Verifications of Abuse (Duplicated Child Counts), FY 2022-2023, Statewide*

| Type of Abuse Allegation                                    | Allegations    | Verified      | Percent of Allegations Verified |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Abandonment   | 2,600          | 707           | 27.19%                          |
| Asphyxiation  | 1,873          | 81            | 4.32%                           |
| Bizarre Punishment  | 1,760          | 184           | 6.47%                           |
| Bone Fracture   | 769            | 147           | 19.11%                          |
| Burns   | 957            | 74            | 7.73%                           |
| Death   | 408            | 83            | 20.34%                          |
| Environmental Hazards                                       | 35,470         | 3,262         | 9.19%                           |
| Failure to Protect  | 3,054          | 1,393         | 45.61%                          |
| Failure to Thrive/Malnutrition/Dehydration                  | 419            | 152           | 36.27%                          |
| Inactive: Family Violence Threatens Child                   | 2              | 0             | 0%                              |
| Household Violence Threatens Child                          | 71,019         | 7,929         | 11.16%                          |
| Human Trafficking   | 0              | 0             | 0%                              |
| Human Trafficking CSEC                                      | 1,657          | 426           | 25.71%                          |
| Human Trafficking Labor                                     | 171            | 21            | 12.28%                          |
| Inadequate Supervision                                      | 60,807         | 6,665         | 10.96%                          |
| Internal Injuries   | 134            | 56            | 41.79%                          |
| Intimate Partner Violence Threatens                         | 3,492          | 598           | 17.12%                          |
| Medical Neglect   | 6,346          | 998           | 15.72%                          |
| Mental Injury   | 7,712          | 224           | 2.90%                           |
| Physical Injury   | 45,688         | 2,239         | 4.90%                           |
| Sexual Abuse – Sexual Battery                               | 3,399          | 844           | 24.83%                          |
| Sexual Abuse – Sexual Exploitation by Parent/Legal Guardian | 1,080          | 199           | 18.42%                          |
| Sexual Abuse – Sexual Molestation                           | 7,913          | 1,202         | 15.19%                          |
| Substance Exposed Newborn                                   | 5,573          | 1,073         | 19.25%                          |
| Substance Misuse  | 4,468          | 280           | 6.26%                           |
| Substance Misuse – Alcohol                                  | 22,572         | 2,740         | 12.14%                          |
| Substance Misuse – Illicit Drugs                            | 33,934         | 5,784         | 17.04%                          |
| Substance Misuse – Prescription Drugs                       | 3,089          | 590           | 19.10%                          |
| Threatened Harm   | 2,764          | 1,804         | 65.26%                          |
| <b>Statewide</b>  | <b>329,130</b> | <b>39,755</b> | <b>12.07%</b>                   |

Reasons for Removal

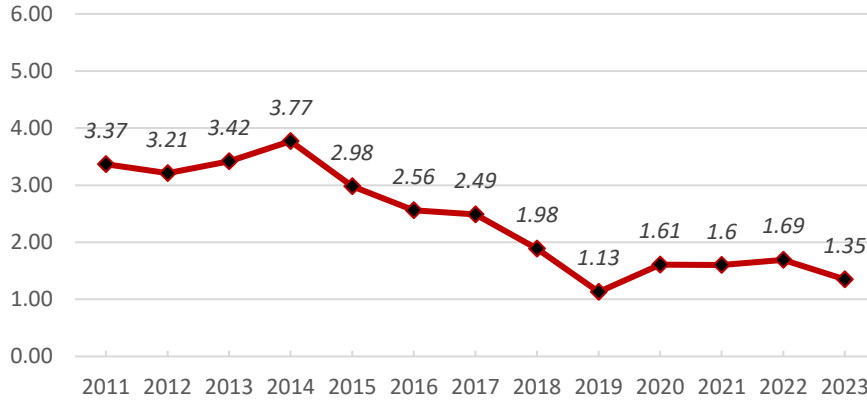
The Department of Children and Families' *Florida Safe Families Network* (FSFN) data system recorded the primary reasons for removal of the children entering foster care. If a child was removed more than once during the year, all sets of reasons are included in this analysis. Of the children entering foster care in the 12-month span from July 2022 – June 2023, the reasons for removal were divided into 23 categories, shown in Table 4 below. A child may have more than one reason for removal noted, thus the counts in this chart will represent duplicated child counts.

- Highlighted in orange, the highest percentage of removals (23.65%) was due to Parental Drug Abuse.
- The second most cited service reason for a removal (15.15%) was due to Inadequate Supervision.
- The least cited reason for a child removal was Labor Trafficking (0.02%), followed by Adoption Dissolution (0.03%).

*Table 4: Reasons for Removal Reported (Duplicated Child Counts), FY 2022-2023, Statewide*

| Removal Reason                     | Number of Children | Percent |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Parental Drug Abuse                | 5,462              | 23.65%  |
| Inadequate Supervision             | 3,498              | 15.15%  |
| Domestic Violence                  | 2,737              | 11.85%  |
| Caretaker's Inability to Cope      | 1,412              | 6.11%   |
| Physical Abuse                     | 1,655              | 7.16%   |
| Inadequate Housing                 | 2,106              | 9.11%   |
| Incarceration of Parents           | 1,059              | 4.58%   |
| Abandonment                        | 1,392              | 6.02%   |
| Parental Alcohol Abuse             | 959                | 4.15%   |
| Sexual Abuse                       | 425                | 1.84%   |
| Medical Neglect                    | 640                | 2.77%   |
| Physical Neglect                   | 784                | 3.39%   |
| Child's Behavioral Problem         | 356                | 1.54%   |
| Death of Parent(s)                 | 241                | 1.04%   |
| Child Drug Abuse                   | 150                | 0.65%   |
| Relinquishment                     | 82                 | 0.35%   |
| Child's Disability                 | 49                 | 0.21%   |
| Sexual Abuse-Sexual Exploitation   | 33                 | 0.14%   |
| Child Alcohol Abuse                | 18                 | 0.07%   |
| Comm. Sexual Exploitation of Child | 15                 | 0.06%   |
| Emotional Abuse and Neglect        | 9                  | 0.03%   |
| Adoption Dissolution               | 7                  | 0.03%   |
| Labor Trafficking                  | 6                  | 0.02%   |

Chart 4: Florida's Child Maltreatment Death Rate per 100,000 Children



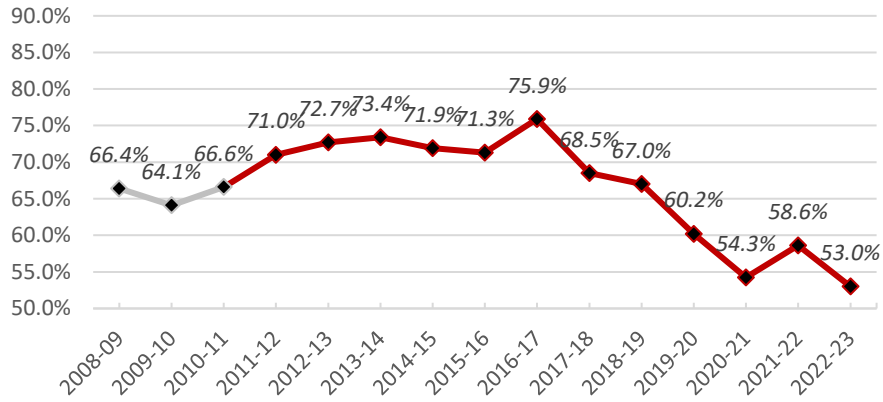
*\* The number of verified child maltreatment cases are not complete given the number of cases still open and not yet transferred to local CADR Committees for review. Past year figures may have changed as cases were closed following the submission of past CADR reports.*

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## SUMMARY OF ADOPTION AND ADOPTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

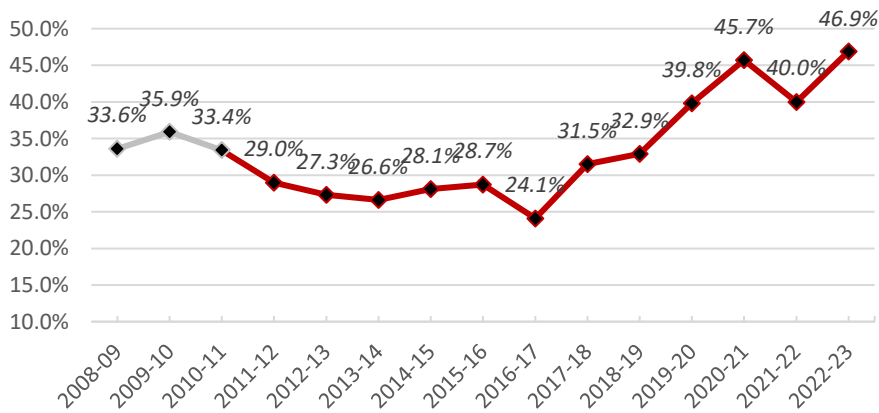
During FY 2022 – 2023, Florida finalized 3,526 adoptions throughout the state. *The percentage of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption during FY 2022 – 2023 was 53%. The chart below reflects the state’s performance since FY 2008 – 2009 as provided by the Department of Children and Families.*

*Chart 5: Percentage of Children Adopted Within 12 months of becoming Legally Free for Adoption*



*The percentage of children adopted more than 12 months from becoming legally free for adoption during FY 2022 – 2023 was 46.9%. Chart 6 reflects the state’s performance since FY 2008 – 2009 as provided by the Department of Children and Families.*

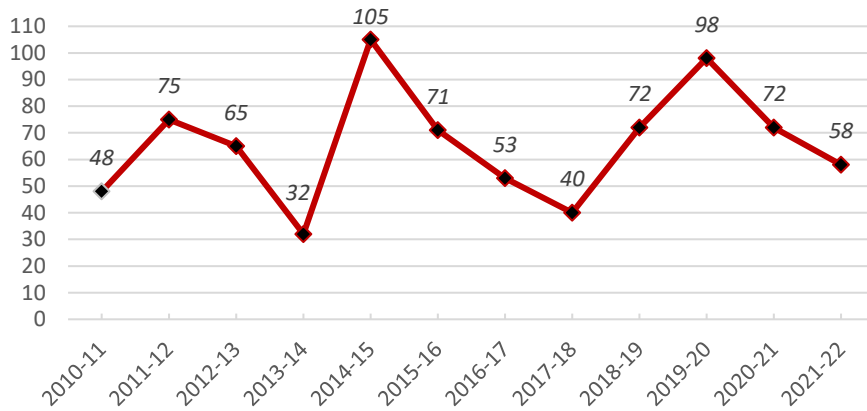
*Chart 6: Percentage of Children Adopted More Than 12 months from becoming Legally Free for Adoption*



Adoption Dissolutions

Section 65C-16.001(12), Florida Administrative Code, defines dissolutions as the return of a child to out-of-home care and the subsequent termination of the parental rights of the adoptive parents. **The number of adopted children who were returned to foster care during FY 2021-2022 was 58.** Chart 7 reflects the state's performance since FY 2010 – 2011 as provided by the Department of Children and Families.

Chart 7: Number of Adoption Dissolutions



\* The number of Dissolutions by State Fiscal Year is reported up to the previous fiscal year due to data entry limitations.

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## **SECTION III - 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.

### **Agency for Persons with Disabilities**

Continued interagency collaboration to best support children within the child welfare system, regardless of need or silo.

Hope Florida—A Pathway to Possibilities, was launched in 2023 under First Lady Casey DeSantis and implemented by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. This initiative serves individuals with unique abilities by building paths towards economic self-sufficiency and creating deeper community connections. It was created to help individuals meet their goals and God-given potential.

### **Department of Children and Families**

The maintenance adoption subsidy program has proven to be an important support in the adoption of children with special needs from foster care in Florida and nationally. 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. The Department appreciates Governor DeSantis' support for funding maintenance adoption subsidies and adoption incentive benefits.

Hope Florida—A Pathway to Prosperity, spearheaded by First Lady Casey DeSantis and implemented by the Florida Department of Children and Families, utilizes Hope Navigators to guide Floridians on an individualized path to prosperity by focusing on community collaboration between the private sector, faith-based community, nonprofits and government entities. These Hope Navigators are essential in helping individuals identify their unique and immediate barriers to prosperity, develop long-term goals, map out a strategic plan, and work to ensure all sectors of the community have a are part of the solution. The Department appreciates the Governor and First Lady's support to better connect individuals in need with services that best align with their circumstances.

### **Department of Corrections**

The Florida Department of Corrections recognizes that family and family members are vital to the successful restoration and transition of individuals returning to the community. Maximizing the role of families in the reentry process increases public safety. By focusing on family reunification and parenting skills, the Department continues to promote stronger relationships between returning citizens and their families which correlates with increased post-release success. In addition to strengthening families' protective factors to reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with effective parenting strategies the Florida Department of Corrections continues to:

- Foster visitation of family members by moving inmates closer to home, when suitable

- Partner with organizations, such as Children of Inmates
- Utilize volunteers to implement the Parenting from Inside curriculum at our institutions
- Employ video visitation and email to maintain family ties while individuals are incarcerated through both an interactive kiosk, available in each general population housing unit, and secure tablets
- Incorporate family reunification/parenting programs into each contract for substance use disorder treatment services in our institutions
- Identify risk factors associated with family dynamics using the Department's evidence driven assessment, CINAS, and delivering programs and services to mitigate these risks for both inmates and offenders
- Utilize a vast list of community providers to provide offenders with programs and services designed to teach positive parenting skills and prevent abuse and neglect

### **Department of Education**

Florida offers a number of K-12 scholarships for students of which children in foster care or out of home care are eligible for. The Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options provides additional educational options for all K-12 students, such as attending a participating private school. Families apply and annually renew through one of the approved scholarship funding organizations (SFO), which are responsible for determining and distributing funding. FES EO also offers families of eligible students the option to receive a \$750 scholarship to provide transportation to a public school different from the school to which the student was assigned.

The Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship Program is designed to offer families of students with disabilities, as young as 3 years of age, access to additional education options. Families may choose to enroll their student in another public school, or they may choose to take the opportunity to receive a personal education savings account (ESA) for their student. With an ESA, instead of having their child attend a public school, parents receive a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple, uses. An ESA can be used to fund not only items such as private school tuition and fees, but also online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses and other approved customized learning services and materials. Families apply and annually renew for participation in FES UA through one of the approved SFOs, which are responsible for determining eligibility, awarding and distributing funding to eligible student accounts, and approving eligible expenditures.

Florida children in the foster care system receive priority in these scholarship programs. More information on these scholarship programs and others can be found at <https://www.fl DOE.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/>.

### **Department of Juvenile Justice**

The Department of Juvenile Justice recognizes that proactive prevention and data-driven interventions for at risk youth can save taxpayer dollars, while saving the futures of youth and keeping communities safe. Many of the youth involved in the juvenile justice system are also involved in the dependency system or have a history of DCF out-of-home placement. For this population, it is important that both agencies utilize their resources and respond to a youth's behavior from a trauma informed perspective to positively impact the future of these youth.

Hope Florida- a Pathway to Potential was launched in 2023 under First Lady Casey DeSantis and implemented by the Department of Juvenile Justice. The Pathway to Potential includes Hope Navigators who will assist Florida families in need by connecting them to local resources in their community. Those benefiting from this initiative are youth involved with DJJ or who are transitioning out of DJJ care, parents and families concerned with their child's behavior, and parents and families of children who have run away, are truant from school, or who are struggling academically.

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# APPENDIX

**Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection**  
**Florida Statutes 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 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