



# 2024 Annual Report

Office of Adoption and Child  
Protection

*Executive Office of the Governor*

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State Fiscal Year 2023-2024

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

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

*The Honorable Ben Albritton, President, Florida Senate*

*The Honorable Daniel Perez, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives*

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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 Initiative in the shared mission of better serving vulnerable kids and families. The official functions of the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative are not fully representative of the Office of Adoption and Child protection, just as the functions of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection are not encapsulated within the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative.

### FLORIDA FAITH AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The office staffs and supports the Florida Faith and Community Advisory Council in its mission to facilitate connections to strengthen communities and families in the state of Florida. Below are the activities of the office during FY 2023-2024.

#### *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 2024 calendar year, the Council met four times—once each quarter. These meetings are reflected below:

- February 22<sup>nd</sup>, The Florida Capitol - Tallahassee
- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, City Hall Annex - Destin
- September 3<sup>rd</sup>, JW Marriott - Orlando
- November 7<sup>th</sup>, Christ's Church - Jacksonville

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REGION	COUNCIL MEMBER	LOCATION	EMAIL
<b>NORTHWEST</b> <i>Circuits</i> 01, 02, 14	Commissioner Mel Ponder	Destin	mel@beflorida.net
	Mrs. Tess Dewhirst	Tallahassee	tessdewhirst@gmail.com
	Mr. Michael Sheedy	Tallahassee	msheedy@flacathconf.org
	Pastor Pam Olsen	Tallahassee	Pam@ihoptallahassee.org
	Mr. Chad Poppell	Tallahassee	ChadPoppell@gmail.com
<b>NORTHEAST</b> <i>Circuits</i> 03, 04, 07, 08	Mr. Mike Watkins	Pensacola	mwatkins@nwhealth.org
	Pastor Gerard Duncan	Ocala	Soil3@hotmail.com
	Mr. Calvin Martin	Palatka	Calvin.Martin@ga.fl.gov
	Pastor Jason Cullum	Jacksonville	Jasonc@contheweb.com
	Pastor Kevin Baird	Jacksonville	kevinb@flfamily.org
	Pastor Tom Messer	Jacksonville	tcm@tbc.org
<b>CENTRAL</b> <i>Circuits</i> 05, 09, 10, 18	Pastor Greg Peters	Palm Coast	greg@parkviewlife.com
	Pastor Scott George	Maitland	Scott@belleislecc.org
	Dr. Jerry Haag	Lakeland	Jerry.Haag@onemorechild.org
	Senator Kelli Stargel	Lakeland	kellistargel@msn.com
<b>SUNCOAST</b> <i>Circuits</i> 06, 12, 13, 20	Mr. Chad Garmon	Longwood	Chad.garmon@gmail.com
	Mr. Adam Voran	Palm Harbor	adamvoran@gmail.com
<b>SOUTHEAST</b> <i>Circuits</i> 15, 17, 19	Mrs. Megan Rose	Ft. Myers	megan@bettertogetherus.org
	Senator Erin Grall	Vero Beach	Grall.Erin@flsenate.gov
	First Lady Mami Kisner	West Palm Beach	Mami53@aol.com
<b>SOUTHERN</b> <i>Circuits</i> 11, 16	Rabbi Yosef Weinstock	Hollywood	ryw@yih.org
	Pastor Rob Pacienza	Ft. Lauderdale	rpacienza@crpc.org
<b>STATEWIDE</b>	Pastor Marilyn Rivera	Miami	marilynrivera5@gmail.com
	Mr. Erik Dellenback	Statewide	Erik.Dellenback@myflfamilies.com
	Mr. Joe Knittig	Statewide	joe@goproject.org



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

### **Overview**

In November 2019, Governor DeSantis announced the creation of the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative (GFCI) Office under the direction of Erik Dellenback, the Governor's Liaison for Faith and Community. The office was charged with thanking, communicating, resourcing, and connecting Florida's faith and community networks.

### **Function**

The GFCI Office serves as a dedicated outlet to Florida's faith and non-profit communities within the Executive Office of the Governor. Additionally, the GFCI Office seeks to best involve and connect faith and community networks in serving Florida's most vulnerable populations. The Initiative has relied on building healthy lines of communication and introducing several statewide tools and resources designed to remove barriers, resource, and connect Florida faith and community organizations. Through the simple but profound power of connection, faith and community engagement in child welfare has objectively increased and moved upstream. As a result, child welfare data indicates generationally significant impacts since the inception of the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative in 2019.

### **Some key elements of the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative Office include:**

#### **HOPE FLORIDA - Pathway to Prosperity**

Spearheaded by Casey Desantis, Hope Florida is a philosophically different way for Government to operate. It fosters collaboration between the public and private sector, faith-based communities, and nonprofits, to break down traditional community silos. It is designed to be a one-stop-shop for Floridians who are in need or want to meet needs. The Governor's Faith and Community Initiative has served as a recruitment arm for Hope Florida and is leading the nation with 2,200 faith partners and 5,600 community partners who will see and meet needs with our Florida Agencies.

#### **CarePortal**

CarePortal brings the needs of hurting children and families in a community to the attention of localized faith and community 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.

#### **Florida Faith and Community Red Phone**

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.

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

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

**Sessions with the Secretary Event Series**

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 faith and community specific pathways, resources, and opportunities at the agency.

**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 GFCI Office 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, specially 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.

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# FLORIDA

*Is the most faith & community friendly state in the nation*

ALL  
**67**  
COUNTIES  
with churches serving the state's most  
vulnerable through CarePortal.

## HOPEFLORIDA

There are **2,000** faith and community organizations that are a part of the **Hope Florida Initiative** who will see and meet needs with our Florida Agencies: DCF, APD, DJJ, DOEA, DVA, DEM, GAL

- **\$900 Million** in taxpayer savings in over **10** years.
- The **Hope Florida Hope Line** (833- GET HOPE) is a nation leading "one stop shop" phone number. Anyone in need can call and connect with one of the 120+ Hope Navigators for immediate and customized assistance.
- Over **28,000** children have been served by faith and community networks through **Hope Florida's CarePortal**.

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Florida** is the only state in the nation to have a **Faith & Community Office** located in the Executive Office of the Governor.



**Florida** has the first-in-the-nation Faith & Community **Red Phone** *exclusively* for the faith & community leaders. **(850) 717-9494**



**Florida** is the fastest growing CarePortal state in the nation.



**Governor DeSantis** declared faith institutions in **Florida** are essential and kept them **open** during COVID.



Since 2019, **Florida** has seen a **30% reduction (over 7,000 kids)** in the child welfare system.



**Florida** has a **first of its kind** Foster Information Center, a direct line connecting prospective foster parents to with a former adoptive or foster parent. **1-800-962-2873**

## HOPE FLORIDA BY THE NUMBERS

**100K+**

Floridians referred for assistance

**5.6K**

Hope Florida Network partners, non-profits, and businesses

**2K**

Faith-based partners

**27.5K**

Floridians with reduced reliance or no longer relying on public assistance

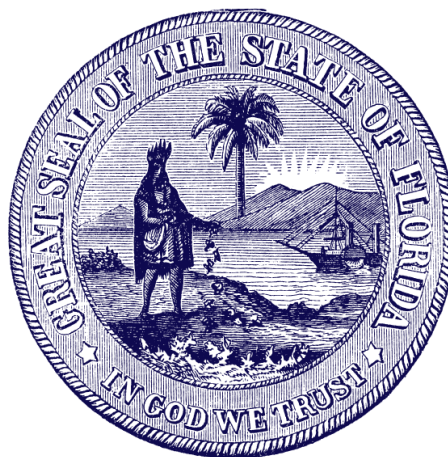


# The Governor's Faith & Community Initiative

01.

The Governor's Faith & Community Initiative directly connected with

**130,000+**  
people in 2024.



02.



Florida's first-in-the-nation Faith & Community Red Phone has directly served over

**500**

faith & community leaders.

Since its inception,

**5,148**

organizations have joined the Governor's Faith & Community Initiative.



03.

04.

The Initiative hosted

**80**

events across the state to better serve, encourage, connect, and equip faith & community leaders.

01.

Hope Florida's Hope Line **(833) GET-HOPE** is a nation-leading one-stop-shop phone number for Floridians who are in need or want to meet needs.



02.

# HOPEFLORIDA

is now seeing and meeting requests through

## 7 Florida Agencies:

**Department of Children & Families, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Elder Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, Guardian Ad Litem, Department of Emergency Management**

*Pathway to Prosperity, Pathway to Possibilities, Pathway to Potential, Pathway to Purpose, Pathway to Patriots, Pathway to Promise, & Activate Hope*

Hope Florida is leading the nation with

**2,200**

faith partners &

**5,600**

community partners who will see and meet needs with our Florida Agencies.

03.

04.



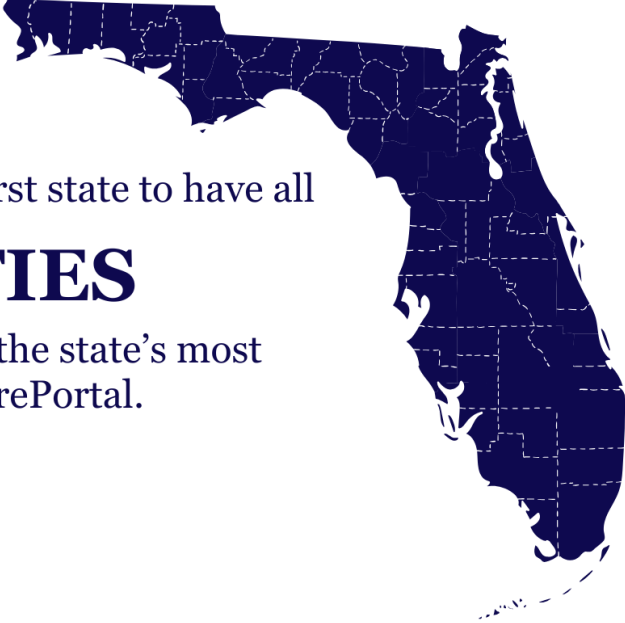
Since Hope Florida's inception, Hope Florida has seen:

**27.5K**

Floridians with reduced reliance or no longer relying on public assistance.

# Hope Florida's CarePortal

01.



Florida becomes the first state to have all

## 67 COUNTIES

with churches serving the state's most vulnerable through CarePortal.


02.



## 28,000

Children have been served through CarePortal in Florida.

03.



## FLORIDA

Is the fastest growing CarePortal state in the nation.

## 410



New CarePortal Church Response Teams were created in 2024.

04.

## 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**

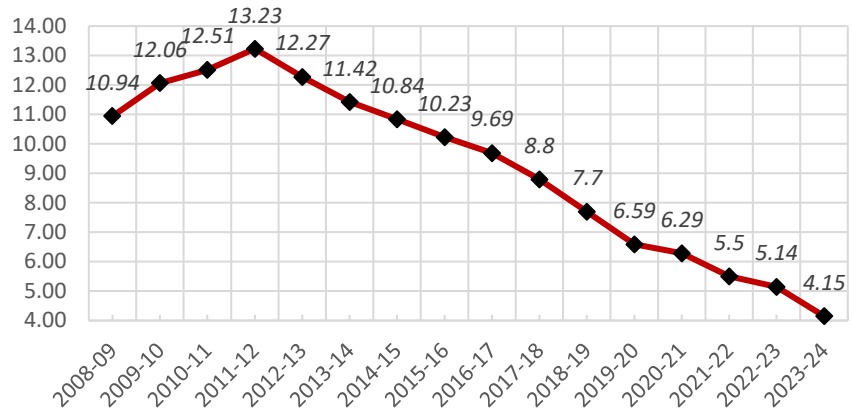
Child maltreatment is an all-inclusive term for child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Data is based on the official published per capita rate for Florida to provide for more in-depth reporting and analysis. Therefore, the numbers may differ slightly because when querying a live data system, used for 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**

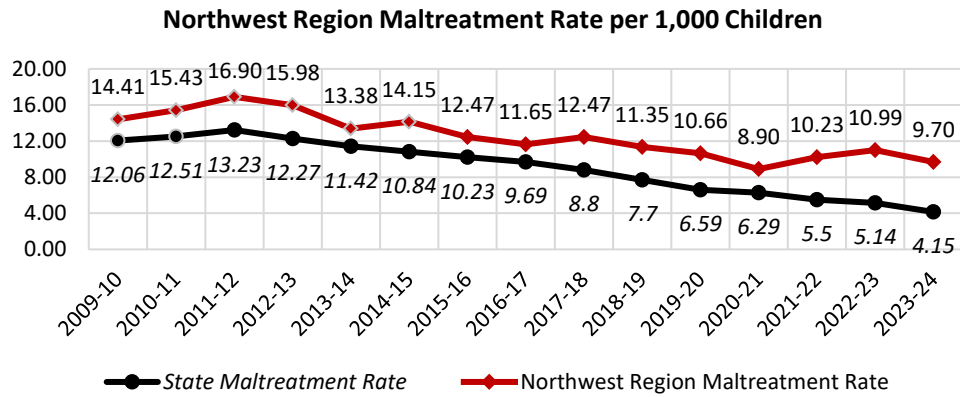
*The rate of children with verified maltreatment during FY 2023-24 was 4.15 per 1,000 children.* On the following pages, rates of verified maltreatment per 1,000 children are presented with infographics at both the regional and judicial circuit levels.

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

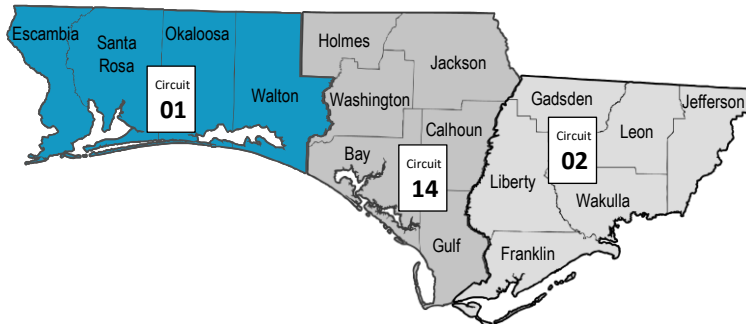


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**Infographic 1: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Northwest Region and Circuits**



*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
2022-23: 11.78
<b>2023-24: 10.41</b>

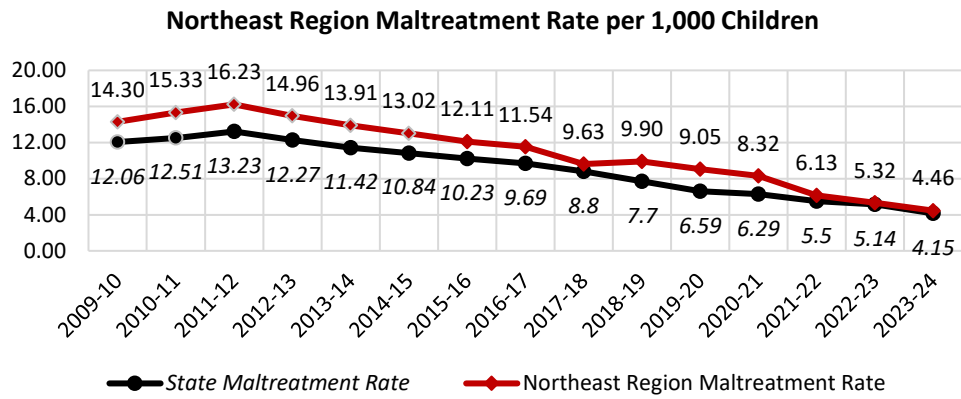
**Circuit 14**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

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
2022-23: 10.41
<b>2023-24: 10.69</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
2022-23: 9.69
<b>2023-24: 7.33</b>

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



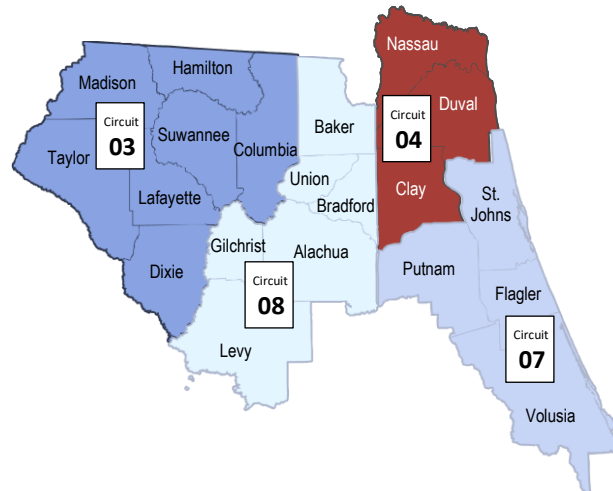
*Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.*

**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  
**2023-24: 5.08**

**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  
**2023-24: 4.36**



**Circuit 8  
Maltreatment Rate**

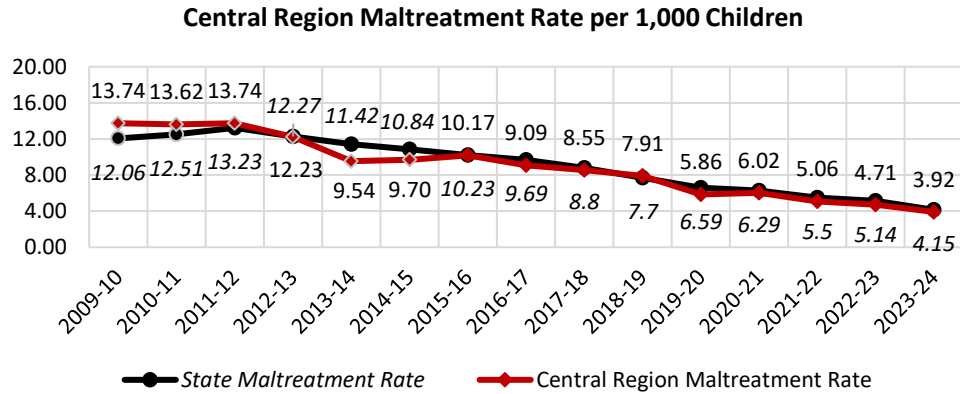
2009-10: 21.54  
 2010-11: 22.78  
 2011-12: 22.28  
 2012-13: 21.68  
 2013-14: 17.23  
 2014-15: 15.32  
 2015-16: 14.87  
 2016-17: 10.80  
 2017-18: 8.25  
 2018-19: 7.59  
 2019-20: 6.30  
 2020-21: 6.19  
 2021-22: 5.80  
 2022-23: 5.31  
**2023-24: 5.41**

**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  
**2023-24: 4.13**



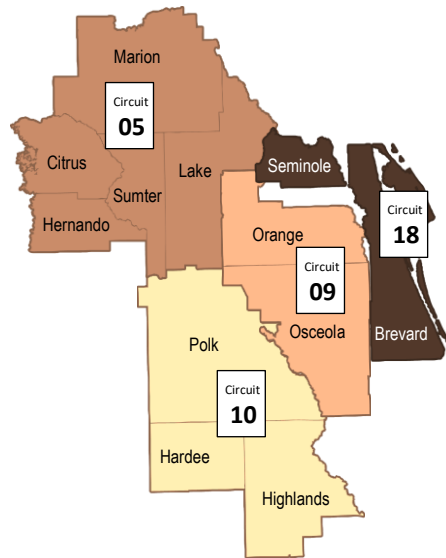
**Infographic 3: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Central Region and Circuits**



*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  
**2023-24: 4.35**



**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  
**2023-24: 3.92**

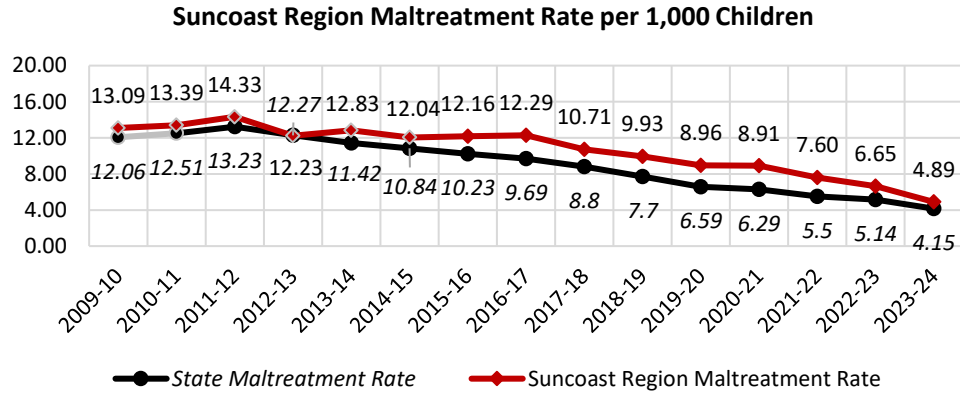
**Circuit 10**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

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  
**2023-24: 6.14**

**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  
**2023-24: 2.71**

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



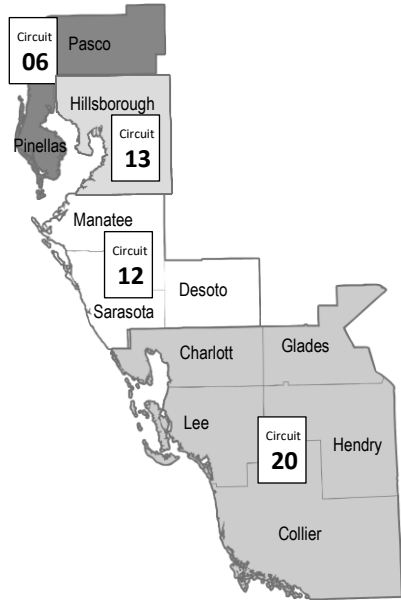
Note: The Regional Rate was calculated by dividing the total number of verified cases in the region by the combined child populations within each circuit of the region.

**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  
**2023-24: 4.82**

**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  
**2023-24: 4.47**



**Circuit 12**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

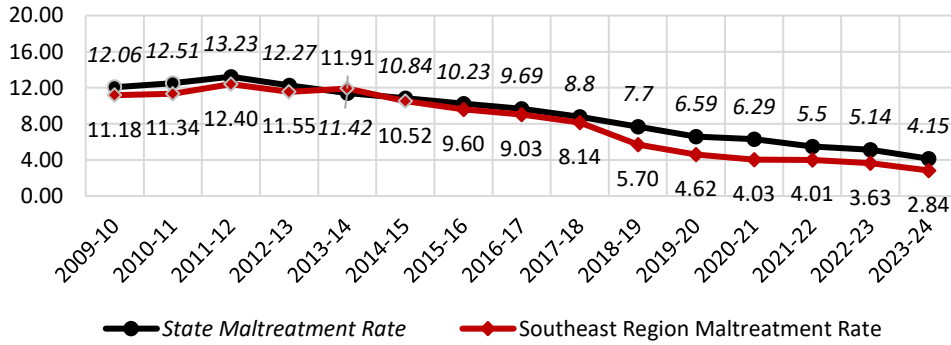
2009-10: 15.03  
 2010-11: 16.92  
 2011-12: 16.32  
 2012-13: 14.10  
 2013-14: 13.70  
 2014-15: 15.11  
 2015-16: 15.78  
 2016-17: 14.14  
 2017-18: 10.51  
 2018-19: 11.14  
 2019-20: 10.12  
 2020-21: 9.77  
 2021-22: 9.28  
 2022-23: 7.59  
**2023-24: 4.83**

**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  
**2023-24: 5.57**

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

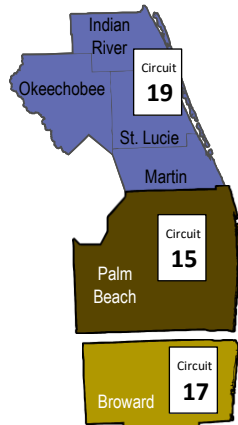
**Southeast Region Maltreatment Rate per 1,000 Children**



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
- 2023-24: 5.23**



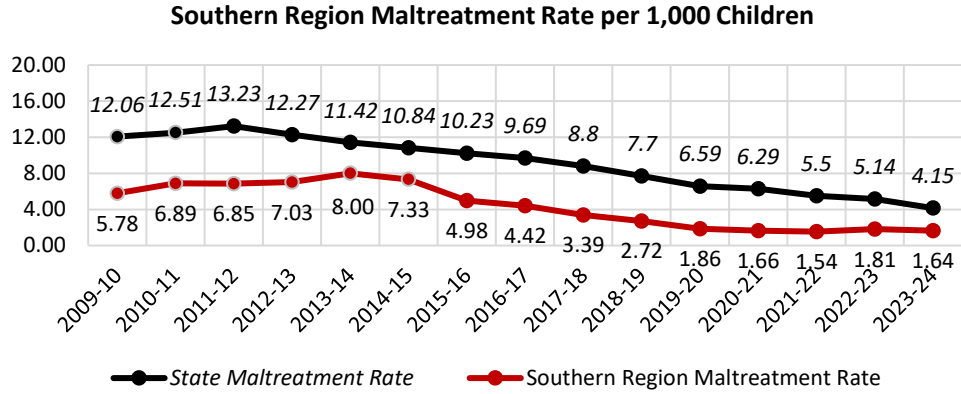
**Circuit 15**  
**Maltreatment Rate**

- 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
- 2023-24: 2.71**

**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
- 2023-24: 2.14**

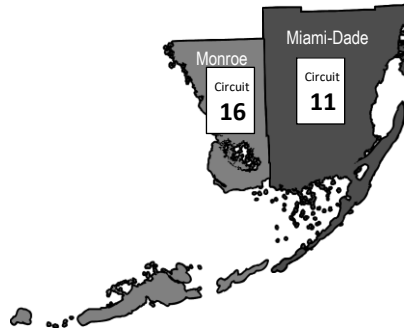
**Infographic 6: Rate of Verified Maltreatment in Southern Region and Circuits**



*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
- 2023-24: 5.37**



**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
- 2023-24: 1.55**

### 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 being 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 13,270 of 18,773 verifications, over 70.69% 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 2023 – 2024 (13.10% vs. 15.87%).

Chart 2: Unduplicated Counts of Children with Most Serious Finding of Verified Abuse by Age Range, FY 2023-2024 Statewide

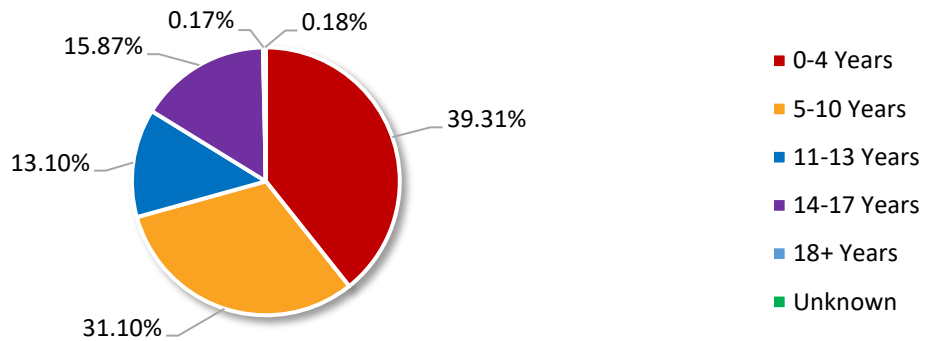
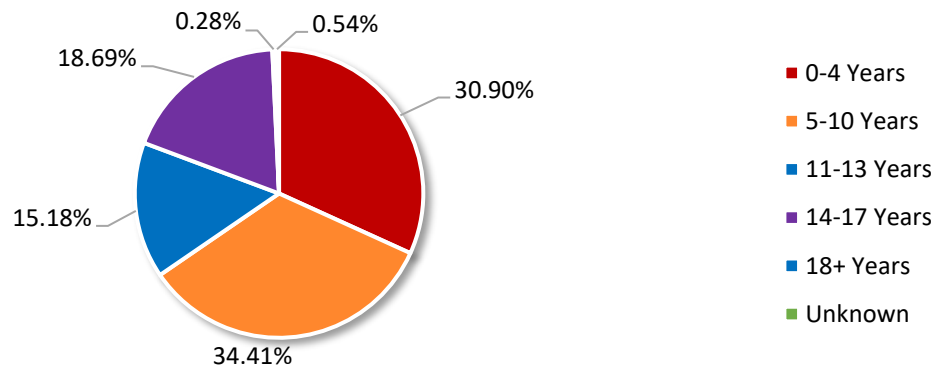


Chart 3: Age Ranges for Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated), FY 2023-2024 Statewide



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 (49.44%).
- For ethnicity, the largest portion was “Other” (non-Hispanic) (83.33%).
- For sex, the largest percentage of children was female (49.13%)

*Table 2: Race, Ethnicity, and sex of Children who were Alleged Victims of Maltreatment (Unduplicated),  
FY 2023—2024, Statewide*

Circuit	Race				Ethnicity		Sex			Total
	White	Black	Multiracial	Other	Hispanic	Other	Female	Male	Unknown	
1	5,086	2,109	511	1,512	488	8,730	4,579	4,405	234	9,218
2	1,569	2,067	123	662	157	4,264	2,056	2,207	157	4,420
3	1,633	475	114	323	156	2,389	1,226	1,258	63	2,547
4	5,856	6,357	610	2,375	992	14,206	7,567	7,242	391	15,200
5	8,075	2,135	509	2,151	1,532	11,338	6,279	6,259	327	12,865
6	6,614	2,644	610	2,067	1,181	10,754	5,883	5,808	245	11,936
7	5,725	2,087	381	1,607	908	8,892	4,819	4,773	212	9,804
8	2,399	1,560	249	650	301	4,557	2,416	2,332	108	4,856
9	6,480	5,231	433	3,385	4,303	11,226	7,544	7,489	485	15,518
10	5,959	2,752	416	1,362	2,459	8,030	5,185	5,126	188	10,499
11	4,698	3,721	128	2,608	4,187	6,968	5,457	5,224	478	11,159
12	3,549	1,144	256	1,143	1,068	5,024	3,012	2,943	138	6,093
13	5,807	4,590	517	1,678	2,820	9,772	6,100	6,230	257	12,587
14	2,871	838	249	768	183	4,543	2,408	2,200	118	4,726
15	4,079	3,999	227	1,873	2,071	8,107	5,050	4,931	202	10,183
16	288	55	23	51	112	305	181	224	12	417
17	3,308	5,846	288	2,493	2,087	9,848	5,816	5,736	375	11,927
18	5,821	2,716	702	1,150	1,597	8,792	5,120	5,107	163	10,390
19	3,028	1,496	243	1,043	932	4,878	2,893	2,813	106	5,812
20	6,758	1,890	382	2,054	2,678	8,406	5,447	5,426	211	11,084
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>89,603</b>	<b>53,712</b>	<b>6,971</b>	<b>30,955</b>	<b>30,212</b>	<b>151,029</b>	<b>89,038</b>	<b>87,733</b>	<b>4,470</b>	<b>181,241</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>49.44%</b>	<b>29.64%</b>	<b>3.85%</b>	<b>17.08%</b>	<b>16.67%</b>	<b>83.33%</b>	<b>49.13%</b>	<b>48.41%</b>	<b>2.47%</b>	<b>100.00%</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 31,210 verified allegations of child maltreatment (duplicated child count).
- The highest numbers of allegations were for household violence that threatens children, 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 (9.23%, 8.95%, and 4.23%, respectively).

*Table 3: Allegations and Verifications of Abuse (Duplicated Child Counts), FY 2023-2024, Statewide*

Type of Abuse Allegation	Allegations	Verified	Percent of Allegations Verified
Abandonment	2,709	659	24.33%
Asphyxiation	1,866	56	3.00%
Bizarre Punishment	1,584	88	5.56%
Bone Fracture	802	147	18.33%
Burns	819	33	4.03%
Death	408	51	12.50%
Environmental Hazards	35,076	2,536	7.23%
Failure to Protect	2,576	1,041	40.41%
Failure to Thrive/ Malnutrition/ Dehydration	357	146	40.90%
Household Violence Threatens Child	66,411	6,133	9.23%
Human Trafficking	0	0	0.00%
Human Trafficking - CSEC	1,659	423	25.50%
Human Trafficking - Labor	136	26	19.12%
Inactive Value: Family Violence Threatens Child	0	0	0.00%
Inadequate Supervision	60,327	5,398	8.95%
Internal Injuries	108	39	36.11%
Intimate Partner Violence Threatens Child	3,234	445	13.76%
Medical Neglect	6,356	936	14.73%
Mental Injury	7,383	164	2.22%
Physical Injury	44,888	1,901	4.23%
Sexual Abuse - Sexual Battery	3,191	754	23.63%
Sexual Abuse - Sexual Exploitation by Parent/Legal Guardian	1,277	181	14.17%
Sexual Abuse - Sexual Molestation	7,399	1,019	13.77%
Substance Exposed Newborn	5,216	909	17.43%
Substance Misuse	4,537	247	5.44%
Substance Misuse - Alcohol	20,761	2,151	10.36%
Substance Misuse - Illicit Drugs	29,630	4,185	14.12%
Substance Misuse - Prescription Drugs	2,291	337	14.71%
Threatened Harm	2,025	1,205	59.51%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>313,026</b>	<b>31,210</b>	<b>9.97%</b>



Reasons for Removal

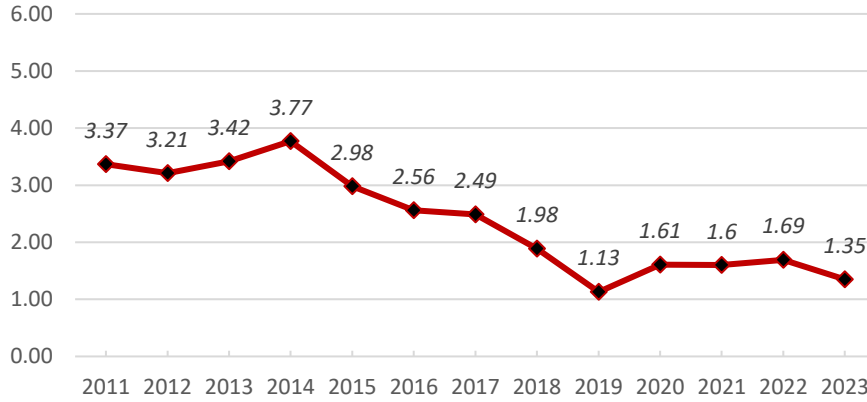
The Department of Children and Families' *Florida Safe Families Network* (FSFN) data system recorded the primary reasons for the removal of the children entering foster care. If a child was removed more than once during the year, all sets of reasons are included in this analysis. Of the children entering foster care in the 12 months from July 2023 – June 2024, 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 (24.05%) was due to Parental Drug Abuse.
- The second most cited service reason for removal (15.94%) was due to Inadequate Supervision.
- The least cited reasons for a child removal were Labor Trafficking (0.03%), Emotional Abuse and Neglect (0.03%), and Adoption Dissolution (0.03%).

*Table 4: Reasons for Removal Reported (Duplicated Child Counts), FY 2023-2024, Statewide*

Removal Reason	Number of Children	Percent
Parent Drug Abuse	4,170	24.05%
Inadequate Supervision	2,764	15.94%
Domestic Violence	2,172	12.52%
Inadequate Housing	1,528	8.81%
Physical Abuse	1,278	7.37%
Parent Incarceration	892	5.14%
Abandonment	783	4.52%
Parent Alcohol Abuse	681	3.93%
Caretaker's Inability to Cope	630	3.63%
Medical Neglect	593	3.42%
Physical Neglect	548	3.16%
Sexual Abuse	377	2.17%
Child's Behavior Problem	290	1.67%
Parent Death	230	1.33%
Relinquishment	142	0.82%
Child Drug Abuse	131	0.76%
Child's Disability	51	0.29%
Sexual Abuse Exploitation	45	0.26%
Alcohol Abuse - Child	11	0.06%
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Child	9	0.05%
Adoption Dissolution	6	0.03%
Emotional Abuse and Neglect	6	0.03%
Labor Trafficking	5	0.03%

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



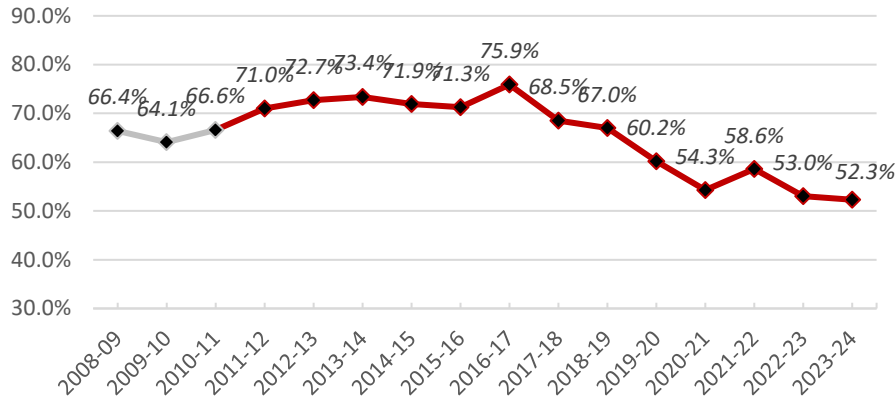
*\* The number of verified child maltreatment cases is not complete given the number of cases still open and not yet transferred to local CADR Committees for review. Past year figures may have changed as cases were closed following the submission of past CADR reports. The CADR data for 2024 has yet to be released, therefore this report represents data through 2023.*

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## SUMMARY OF ADOPTION AND ADOPTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

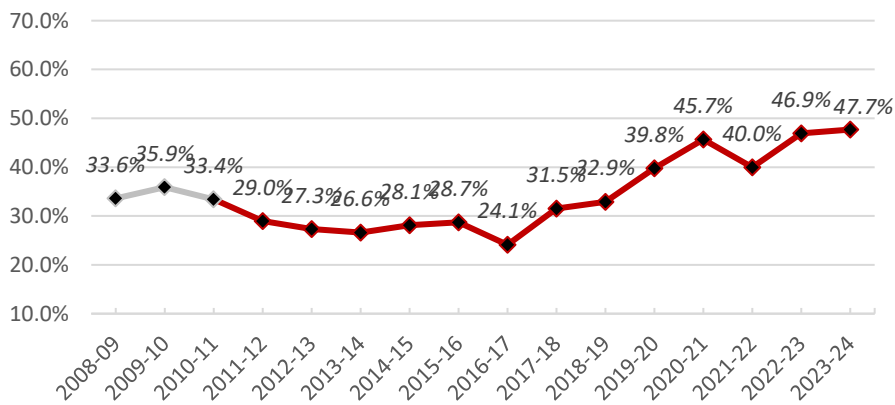
During FY 2023 – 2024, Florida finalized 3,847 adoptions throughout the state. *The percentage of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption during FY 2023 – 2024 was 52.3%.* The chart below reflects the state’s performance since FY 2008 – 2009 as provided by the Department 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 2023 – 2024 was 47.7%.* Chart 6 reflects the state’s performance since FY 2008 – 2009 as provided by the Department of Children and Families.

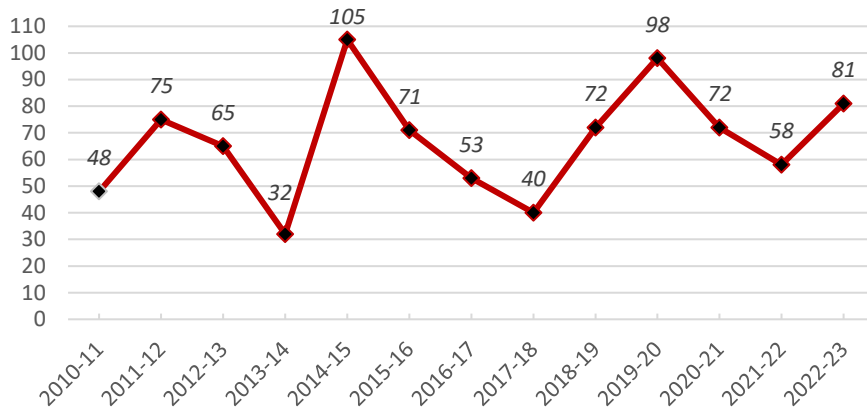
*Chart 6: Percentage of Children Adopted More Than 12 months from becoming Legally Free for Adoption*



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 2022-2023 was 81.** 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 agency's recommendations are listed in alphabetical order by agency name. This order does not reflect 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 toward 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 communities, 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 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 re-entry 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 deliver 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 several K-12 scholarships for students for which children in foster care or out-of-home care are eligible. 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 is 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.fldoe.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