

Community-Based System of Care



History

Since July 2014, Florida's child welfare system has been strained by a 35 percent increase in the number of abused, abandoned, neglected and at-risk children and youth entering state care when compared to the previous six years.

As a direct result, children removed from their homes and in need of out-of-home care (foster care) has increased dramatically.

Florida's unique community-based system of care has allowed the state and communities to invest in various programs and services to protect children and support families.

In the last decade we have seen a consistent number of children and youth exiting our child welfare system, with Florida continuing to perform above the national average for children and youth being placed in safe, loving and permanent homes. But entries have out-paced exits, resulting in an overall increase.

Florida has eliminated the state-run system's backlog of 30,000 child abuse investigations.

Since the state transitioned to the Community-Based Care model, adoptions have increased from 1,600 children a year to an average of more than 3,200 children finding permanent, loving homes every year.

Florida has also decreased the number of children in group care settings by 36.2 percent since Community-Based Care.



Vision:

Our vision is for Florida's child welfare system to prevent abuse and fulfill the needs of abused, abandoned, neglected and at-risk children with the relevant resources and transparent accountability.

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In Florida a majority of children and youth in care receive a permanent placement within 21 months of entering care, with most receiving permanency through reunification in less than a year. Despite vast improvements to the system of care in Florida, as well as an increase of children coming into care as a result of enhanced child protective investigations -- recurring core CBC funding has only increased 6 percent.

Meanwhile, Florida's overall state budget during the same period increased 17 percent. Prior to 2014, annual core funding for child welfare had remained flat for 8 years. The reality is, increases to CBC core funding have not kept pace with inflation rates and fixed costs.

In fact, according to a recent study by Florida Taxwatch, "funding for community-based care providers has decreased 13 percent since 2008, accounting for inflation."

Current Need

The system has been under a critical financial strain the last 3 years. Risk pool and back of the bill funding totaling \$55 million has been required to keep the system afloat.

Currently, over half of the community-based lead agencies in Florida are projecting deficits. This does not include deficits being absorbed by provider agencies who are contracted to provide many of the critical foster and adoption services that must be provided to the children and families we are charged with protecting.

All of this means that the gaps in services and the ability to ensure the safety of the growing number of children in care will continue to be compromised if lawmakers do not provide adequate funding for Florida's system of care.



THE FCC'S CURRENT YEAR NEEDS TOTAL \$49 MILLION AS FOLLOWS:

- \$9 million- Increase need for case managers and support
- \$3 million- Foster home recruitment and licensing
- \$19.4 million- Cost of care for increase in children in licensed settings
- \$9.6 million- Evidence-based services for dual-system children and youth
- \$8 million- Safety Management Services (make non-recurring dollars recurring)

Summary

Florida's community-based child welfare system is in critical need of resources, the state's agencies are being forced to serve a consistently increasing number of children and youth with less per child funding.

Florida's commitment to protecting children has resulted in a growing number of out-of-home care placements to ensure their safety in recent years. However funding for the system of care has not kept pace with the increases.

“The issues facing Florida’s community-based child welfare system will only grow worse with time if not addressed. Without adequate investments to improve service and workforce issues now, demand on the child welfare system will continue to climb, and children in the system will pay the price for years to come.”

-- Dominic Calabro, Florida Taxwatch
