



Office of Adoption and Child Protection

Executive Office of the Governor

Executive Summary

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

The central focus of the *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* is to build resilience in all of Florida's families and communities in order to equip them to better care for and nurture their children. In accordance with the State law (§39.001, Florida Statutes), this five-year prevention and permanency plan provides for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families. The vision, mission, overarching goal and desired results of the plan 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.

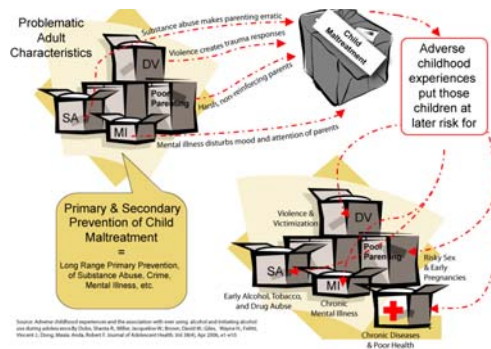
Desired Population-Level Results of Plan Implementation

- 1. Child Maltreatment Prevention** – By 30 June 2015, the verified findings of child abuse rate will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008-2009 statewide rate of 10.94 per 1,000 children.
- 2. Promotion of Adoption** – By 30 June 2015, the percent of children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free for adoption will increase from the State Fiscal Year 2008-2009 rate of 66.4 percent.
- 3. Promotion of Adoption** – By 30 June 2015, the percent of children legally free for adoption who have been waiting for adoption since the date of termination of parental rights (TPR) for more than 12 months will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008-2009 rate of 53.19 percent.
- 4. Support of Adoptive Families** – By 30 June 2015, the annual number of adopted children who are returned to foster care (regardless of when the adoption was finalized) will be reduced from the State Fiscal Year 2008-2009 number of 98.

Recent research has identified the physical and mental conditions increasingly being associated with adverse childhood experiences, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Neurologic imaging and traumatology studies have delineated the chronic physiologic and structural changes that occur after chronic stress and abuse (De Bellis, 2005; Elovathingal et al., 2006). Chronic stress and abuse are also associated with specific disease processes and poor mental health outcomes in adults. These adverse childhood experiences (ACES) have been associated with increased rates of teen pregnancy, promiscuity, depression, hallucinations, substance abuse, liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary artery disease, and identifiable permanent changes in brain structure and stress hormone function (Anda et al., 2002; Dube et al., 2003; Felitti et al., 1998; Middlebrooks et al., 2008). The National Research Council (1993) and others studied clinical conditions associated with abuse and neglect, including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and conduct disorders, all of which compound any direct physical injuries inflicted on individual children. Associated trauma and increased risk of low academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminology were also noted. Although treatment after the fact can improve mental and physical health and prolong life and productivity, the direct and indirect costs of child maltreatment for both children and adults in lost health, pain, and suffering themselves warrant our taking action to prevent child abuse and neglect.

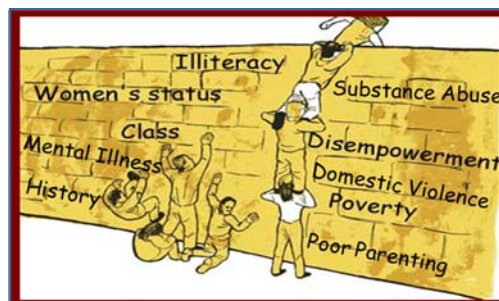
We as a nation, state, and communities are confronted with the problems of child abuse, abandonment and neglect. The Centers for Disease Control have declared child maltreatment to be the largest public health threat that we face today. Early adverse experiences put children at risk. Problematic adult characteristics may result in child maltreatment and these adverse experiences put those children at risk for poor child well-being which in turn predisposes them to engage in the very problematic adult characteristics that will put their own children at risk. The underlying causes are complex. They include such things as poor health, social isolation, poor academic performance, mental health issues, history of abuse or neglect, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness, poor parenting, and on and on. The federal government, state government, local governments and communities invest millions in response to these problems which, being complex and slow to eradicate will be with our communities, families and children for some time to come.

Diagram 1. Early Experiences Put Children at Risk



The means for building family resilience was developed through research and application efforts of the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The Center developed a research effort based upon the *Positive Deviance Premise* that in every community there are certain individuals whose uncommon practices and behaviors enable them to find better solutions to problems than their neighbors who have access to the same resources. As discussed in the peer reviewed *British Medical Journal* (Marsh et al., 2004), although most problems like these have complex, interlinked underlying causes, the presence of Positive Deviants demonstrates that it is possible to find successful solutions today before all the underlying causes are addressed.

Diagram 2. Positive Deviance



Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that there *Five Protective Factors* that make a difference for families. When families experience the stressors that are highly correlated with child maltreatment, some families maltreat their children and others do not. The Center found that in the homes that do not maltreat their children, although they are experiencing the same stressors, the difference in these homes is the presence of *Five Protective Factors*. These *Five Protective Factors* reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with what they need in order to parent effectively, even under stress. By building relationships with families, programs can recognize signs of stress and build families' protective factors with timely, effective help. Working to strengthen families and empower communities will also help to build a more stable workforce. Additionally, these efforts will help parents raise a new generation; ready, willing and able to be productive and dependable employees.

Strengthening Families – the intentional incorporation of the *Five Protective Factors* to prevent child maltreatment – has widespread support from social science researchers, state child welfare officials, early childhood practitioners, and policy experts. Currently, the Strengthening Families approach is being applied in at least 36 states. This strategy for dealing with child abuse and neglect shows great promise because:

- The *Five Protective Factors* have been demonstrated to work and are informed by extensive, rigorous research.
- Activities that build the *Five Protective Factors* can be built into programs and systems that already exist in every state, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.

The Five Protective Factors

The *Five Protective Factors* are:

- 1. Nurturing and Attachment** – A child's ability to interact positively with others, to self-regulate, and to effectively communicate his or her emotions has a great impact on the parent-child relationship. A child's social and emotional development is highly dependent on the quality of a young child's primary relationships. How caregivers respond to children's emotional expression profoundly influences how they learn to process, understand, and cope with such feelings as anger, happiness, and sadness. Promoting positive behavior and responses in children could strengthen parent-child relationships.
- 2. Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development** – Extensive research links healthy child development to effective parenting. Children thrive when parents provide not only affection, but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world, and motivates children to achieve.
- 3. Parental Resilience** – Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.
- 4. Social Connections** – Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support. Research has shown that parents, who are isolated, with few social connections, are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect.
- 5. Concrete Supports for Parents** – Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

Note: While this plan addresses ways to build the *Five Protective Factors* in Florida families through multiple avenues, it will be incumbent on the State's natural and specialized service systems to ensure that accessible quality concrete supports are available for Florida families in times of need.

Overview of the Florida Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect Plan: July 2010 – June 2015

Strategy	Objective	Lead(s)	Workgroups
<p>Prevention Strategy 1: Infuse the Five Protective Factors into Florida Systems that Serve Parents and Children. By 30 June 2015, Florida-based programs, supports and services will have intentionally incorporated the <i>Five Protective Factors</i> as a foundation for their work.</p>	CAN 1.1 Early Education and Care	Agency for Workforce Innovation	
	CAN 1.2 Home Visiting Programs	Healthy Families Florida	Home Visiting Protective Factors Workgroup
	CAN 1.3 Head Start Programs	FL Head Start Collaboration Office and Florida Head Start Association	Head Start Protective Factors Workgroup
	CAN 1.4 Medicaid Child Health Check-Up Program	Agency for Health Care Administration	Child Health Check-Up Protective Factors Workgroup
	CAN 1.5 Technical Assistance to Circuits	Department of Children and Families	Local Plan Family Strengthening Initiative Team
	CAN 1.6 Faith-Based and Community-Based Efforts	Executive Office of the Governor	Faith-Based and Community-Based Workgroup
<p>Prevention Strategy 2: Strengthen Florida Systems to Better Serve the Needs of Florida Families. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have supported and built the capacity of Florida-based parenting and support programs and services to incorporate the <i>Five Protective Factors</i> as a foundation for their work and provide sustainable, accessible quality services for Florida families.</p>	CAN 2.1 Whole Child	Lawton Chiles Foundation	Whole Child Leadership Team
	CAN 2.2 Healthy Families Florida	Department of Children and Families and Healthy Families Florida	Healthy Families Florida Advisory Committee
	CAN 2.3 Healthy Start	Department of Health and Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions	Healthy Start Protective Factors Workgroup Healthy Start Parent Education Workgroup FIMR Workgroup
	CAN 2.4 Education Services for Parents/ Caregivers of Newborns	Department of Health and Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions	Education Services for Parents/ Caregivers of Newborns Leadership Team
<p>Prevention Strategy 3: Provide Information on Ways to Ensure that Children are Safe and Nurtured and Live in Stable Environments that Promote Well-being. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented statewide, public awareness and education campaigns that provided information to the general population on child development, positive parenting practices, community action that promotes and supports each of the <i>Five Protective Factors</i>, and ways to prevent child deaths.</p>	CAN 3.1 Public Awareness and Education	Prevent Child Abuse Florida	
	CAN 3.2 Evidence-Based Parenting Programs	Department of Children and Families	Evidence-Based Parenting Programs Workgroup
	CAN 3.3 Child Death Review	Child Abuse Death Review Team and Department of Children and Families	Child Abuse Death Review Team
<p>Prevention Strategy 4: Inform and Instruct Education Communities – The Florida Cooperative Education Child Abuse Prevention Plan. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have collaboratively worked through Florida’s educational communities to prevent and respond appropriately to child abuse, abandonment and neglect.</p>	CAN 4.1 Professional Development for School Personnel	Department of Education and Cooperative Education Planning Team	Cooperative Education Planning Team
	CAN 4.2 Resources for Parents of School Children		
	CAN 4.3 Resource Awareness		
	CAN 4.4 Multidisciplinary Curricula	Cooperative Education Planning Team and Monique Burr Foundation	
<p>Prevention Strategy 5: Inform and Instruct Law Enforcement Communities – The Florida Cooperative Law Enforcement Child Abuse Prevention Plan. By 30 June 2015, the <i>Cross Agency Memorandum of Understanding on Training</i> with the embedded core learning objectives will be viable and working to promote cross agency prevention training in the law enforcement community.</p>	CAN 5.1 Law Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding Review Design	Executive Office of the Governor and Cooperative Law Enforcement Planning Team	Cooperative Law Enforcement Planning Team
	CAN 5.2 Law Enforcement Annual Reviews and Updates	Cooperative Law Enforcement Planning Team	
	CAN 5.3 Law Enforcement Future Plans		
<p>Prevention Strategy 6: Monitor and Evaluate Plan Implementation. By 30 June 2015, leadership of plan implementation will have monitored and annually assessed the progress and effectiveness the plan-based initiatives.</p>	CAN 6.1 Instrumentation and Procedures Design	Executive Office of the Governor	Evaluation Design Team and Prevention Learning Community
	CAN 6.2 Progress Monitoring		
	CAN 6.3 Annual Review and Assessment		

Overview of the *Florida Promotion of Adoption Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*

Strategy	Objective	Lead(s)	Workgroups
Promotion of Adoption Strategy 1: Infuse the <i>Five Protective Factors</i> into Florida Systems that Recruit Adoptive Parents. By 30 June 2015, Florida-based adoptive parent recruitment systems will have intentionally incorporated the <i>Five Protective Factors</i> as a part of the foundation for their work.	PA 1.1 Local Recruitment Efforts	Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies	Protective Factors and Permanency Workgroup
	PA 1.2 Parent Preparation and Training	Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies	
Promotion of Adoption Strategy 2: Strengthen Florida Systems to Better Recruit Families to Meet the Needs of Children and Youth Awaiting Adoption. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented systems and efforts to better target recruitment of families to meet the needs of children and youth awaiting public adoption.	PA 2.1 Faith-Based and Community-Based Efforts	Executive Office of the Governor	Faith-Based and Community-Based Workgroup
	PA 2.2 Targeted and Child Specific Recruitment	Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies	Customer Service Protocol Workgroup
	PA 2.3 Information and Support for Prospective Adoptive Parents		
Promotion of Adoption Strategy 3: Monitor and Evaluate Plan Implementation. By 30 June 2015, leadership of plan implementation will have monitored and annually assessed the progress and effectiveness the plan-based initiatives.	PA 3.1 Instrumentation and Procedures Design	Executive Office of the Governor	Evaluation Design Team and Adoption Learning Community
	PA 3.2 Progress Monitoring		
	PA 3.3 Annual Review and Assessment		

Overview of the *Florida Support of Adoptive Families Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*

Strategy	Objective	Lead(s)	Workgroups
Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 1: Strengthen Florida Service Systems to Better Support Adoptive Families to Meet the Needs of Their Adopted Children and Youth. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented post adoption services that provide for mental health, emotional, physical and other needs of adoptive families.	SA 1.1 Information and Support for Adoptive Families	Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies	Customer Service Protocol Workgroup
	SA 1.2 Adoption Competent Professionals		Adoption Competency Advisory Committee
	SA 1.3 Post Adoption Services Counselors		
Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 2: Provide Information and Supports to Adoptive Families. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have implemented post adoption services that provide for mental health, emotional, physical and other needs of adoptive families.	SA 2.1 Adoption Support Groups	Department of Children and Families and Community Based Care Lead Agencies	Adoption Support Advisory Committee
	SA 2.2 Education Opportunities for Adoptive Parents		
	SA 2.3 Faith-Based and Community-Based Efforts	Executive Office of the Governor	Faith-Based and Community-Based Workgroup
Support of Adoptive Families Strategy 3: Monitor and Evaluate Plan Implementation. By 30 June 2015, the State of Florida will have provided information and supports to Florida adoptive families on ways to build competence in meeting the needs of their adopted children and youth.	SA 3.1 Instrumentation and Procedures Design	Executive Office of the Governor	Evaluation Design Team and Adoption Learning Community
	SA 3.2 Progress Monitoring		
	SA 3.3 Annual Review and Assessment		



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In accordance with state law (§39.001, Florida Statutes), the five-year *Florida Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* comprises five statewide plans as well as copies of 20 local plans:

Prevention

- *Florida Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*
- *Florida Education Cooperative Child Abuse Prevention Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*
- *Florida Law Enforcement Cooperative Child Abuse Prevention Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*

Permanency

- *Florida Promotion of Adoption Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*
- *Florida Support of Adoptive Families Plan: July 2010 – June 2015*

Collectively they provide strategies and plans of action for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promotion of adoption; and for the support of adoptive families. This plan reflects Florida's commitment to engage state agencies and local communities in a collaborative effort to prevent child abuse, abandonment and neglect; promote adoption; and support our adoptive families. "Connecting our communities and empowering families will strengthen Florida with the goal of preventing our children from ever entering into foster care as a result of child abuse, abandonment and neglect," said Barbara Foster, Florida's Deputy Chief Child Advocate. "Additionally, with a sense of urgency, Florida's foster children must be safely placed with permanent families, either through reunification with their biological families or by placing them into loving and nurturing adoptive families."

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection convened the 33-member Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council along with 17 statewide workgroups, including two cooperative planning teams for education and law enforcement, representing 107 organizations and 166 planning partners to advise and lead the development of these plans for prevention and permanency. The Advisory Council and workgroups with input from 20 local planning teams, involving over 600 individuals from across Florida, diligently constructed proposals for the selection of realistic low- or no- cost prevention and permanency strategies for our state. To ensure proper implementation, a monitoring component involves all levels of the state.

This plan is based on the *positive deviance premise* that in every community there are certain individuals whose uncommon practices and behaviors enable them to find better solutions to problems than their neighbors who have access to the same resources (www.positivedeviance.org). Using this premise, *five protective factors* serve as a foundation for the plans' strategies and objectives. These protective factors (i.e., nurturing and attachment, knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development, parental resilience, social connections, and concrete supports in times of need) have been shown to make a difference for families and are correlates of lower child maltreatment and family resilience (www.strengtheningfamilies.net).

This planning effort sought to create a statewide model for preventing abuse, abandonment and neglect; promoting adoption; and supporting adoptive families that can be embraced across branches of government, state agencies, and professional disciplines, thus providing state agency staff, state and local service providers, advocates, and the citizens of Florida with clearly articulated action steps for the realization of optimal child growth, development and well-being. A model of this nature required a multi-pronged approach ranging from individual interventions to professional development protocols, from agency standards of practice to population-based intervention mechanisms.

Electronic versions of the plan are available on the Governor's Web site: www.flgov.com/adoption_abuse_prevention

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