



Baseline Performance Measures for Community-Based Care Lead Agencies

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Department of Children and Families
Office of Child & Family Well-Being
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Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

Ron DeSantis
Governor

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Executive Summary

Florida's community-based child welfare system was created to prevent child abuse, neglect, and abandonment through a partnership between the Department of Children and Families (Department), other state agencies, the courts, law enforcement agencies, service providers, and local communities. It is designed to provide equal protection to children through consistent intake decision making regarding the children served and local systems of care to meet varying community needs, matching the needs of children and families to community resources, and allowing flexible development of evidence-based and promising approaches to the protection of children.

The Department contracts with Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (Lead Agencies) to provide vital child protection and child welfare services to the children and families of Florida. There are 19 Lead Agencies that each cover specific geographic areas within the 20 Judicial Circuits in Florida. Several Lead Agencies cover more than one geographic area and areas may include one or more counties.

In the 2022 General Appropriations Act, the Florida Legislature made historic investments in Lead Agency core services funding to help ensure each Lead Agency has the tools they need to best serve the children and families in their respective service area. In addition to that historic funding, the Florida Legislature required the Department to establish baseline performance measures and provide a report to the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the chair of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee.

The baseline performance measures may be utilized to determine the effectiveness of each Lead Agency's approach to employing the historic funding from the Legislature in meeting the child welfare needs in their service area. The measures included in this report, and how they are measured, were determined in partnership with the Lead Agencies. It is important to note that three of the Lead Agencies did not receive additional funding this past Legislative Session, but nevertheless are collaborating with the Department on the development of these baseline measures and in implementing strategies that demonstrate improvement in the prioritized areas.

The baseline measures included in this report are broken into four main areas:

Workforce:

- Case Worker to Child Ratio
- Monthly Average of Case Carrying Managers Retained

Preventing Removals:

- Removal Rate Per 100 Alleged Victims
- Percentage of Children Receiving Family Support Services
- Percentage of Children Receiving In-Home Court Ordered Supervision
- Percentage of Children Receiving In-Home Non-Judicial Supervision

Placement:

- Percentage of Children Receiving Out-of-Home Care
- Percentage of Children Placed in Group Care

Permanency:

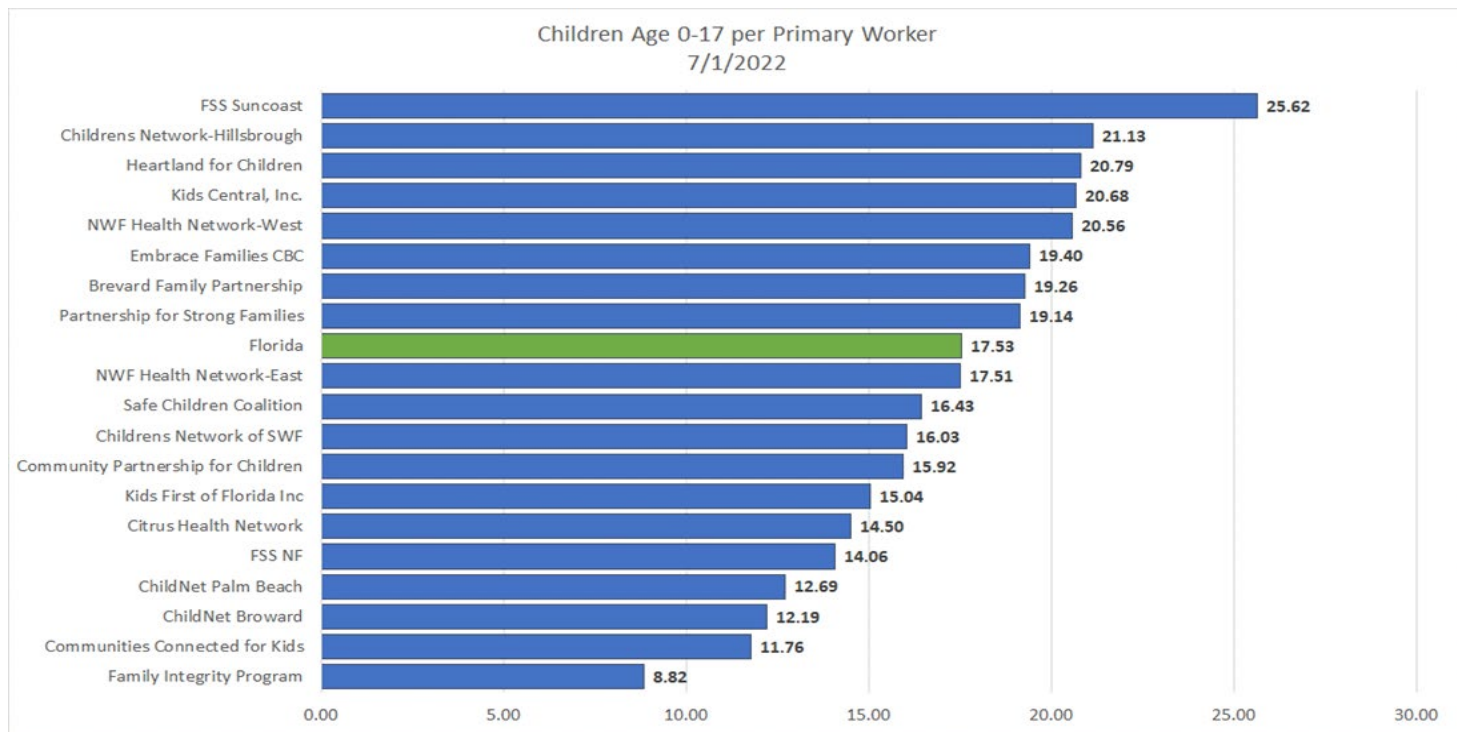
- Children Achieving Permanency within 12 Months
- Children Achieving Permanency within 12 to 23 Months
- Rate of Children Exiting Care

Statewide Average Overview

Baseline Performance Measure	Statewide Average Performance
Workforce	
Caseworker to Child Ratio	17.53
Monthly Avg of Case Carrying Managers Retained (removes promotions)	59.03%
Preventing Removals	
Removal Rate (per 100 alleged victims)	4.76
Percentage of Children Receiving Family Support Services (FSS)	4.52%
Percentage of Children Receiving In-Home Non Judicial Services	15.31%
Percentage of Children Receiving In-Home Judicial Services	14.25%
Placement	
Percentage of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care	65.92%
Percentage of Children Placed in Group Care	6.76%
Permanency	
Children Achieving Permanency within 12 Months	31.88%
Children Achieving Permanency within 12-23 Months	50.39%
Exit Rate (per 10 children in out-of-home care)	3.50

Baseline Performance Measure - Workforce

Case Worker to Child Ratio



Data Sources: FSFN Children Active Receiving Services by Agency

Maintaining a stable and well-supported workforce is critical in ensuring adequate caseload ratios and reducing turnover. At the beginning of 2022, most of the lead agencies were experiencing significant vacancies, particularly with case management personnel. However, it is widely reported by the Lead Agencies that they have raised the salaries of case managers to at least \$50,000 to stabilize the workforce (both in recruitment and retention efforts) utilizing the enhanced funding. It will take time to see the material impact of these actions, but we starting to see progress. The statewide average for children from birth to age 17 per primary case worker is 17.53. Ten of the Lead Agencies exceed the statewide average and eight are below the statewide average. The highest caseload ratio is Family Support Services of Suncoast, with a ratio of one caseworker to 25.62 children. The lowest caseload ratio is Family Integrity Program with a ratio of one caseworker to 8.82 children.

Monthly Average Case Carrying Managers Retained

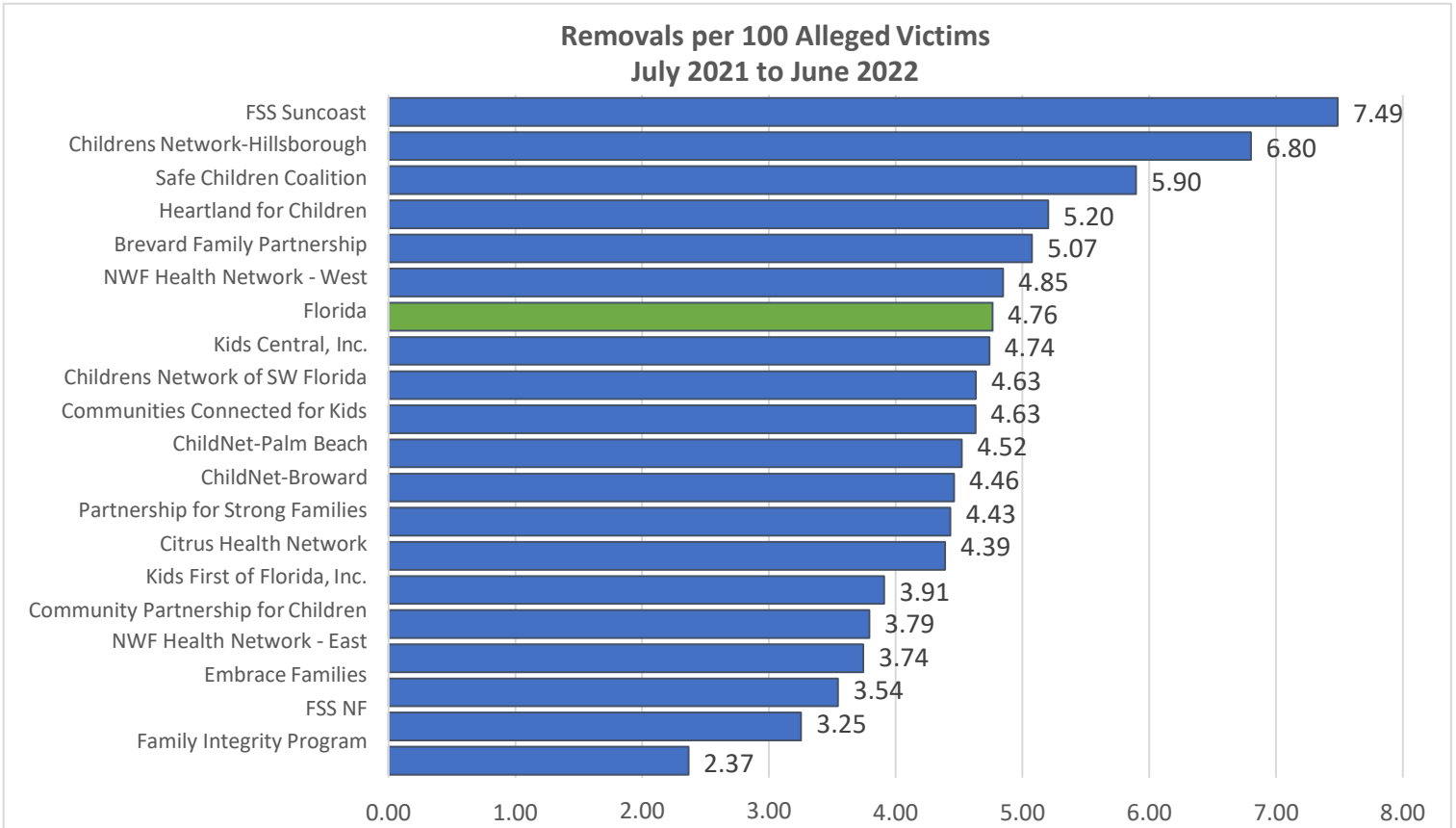
All Worker Types (Primary-Secondary-Out of County)				
CBC	Still in FSFN 6-27-22	Not in FSFN 6-27-22	Total 6-28-21	Retained per FSFN
Brevard Family Partnership	80	43	123	65.04%
ChildNet-Broward	205	96	301	68.11%
ChildNet-Palm Beach	125	86	211	59.24%
Childrens Network of SWF	136	81	217	62.67%
Childrens Network-Hillsborough	118	96	214	55.14%
Citrus Health Network	183	89	272	67.28%
Communities Connected for Kids	76	36	112	67.86%
Community Partnership for Children	130	57	187	69.52%
Embrace Families	190	132	322	59.01%
Family Integrity Program	15	9	24	62.50%
FSS NF	98	94	192	51.04%
FSS Suncoast	102	150	252	40.48%
Heartland for Children	86	69	155	55.48%
Kids Central, Inc.	136	110	246	55.28%
Kids First of Florida, Inc.	27	19	46	58.70%
NWF Health Network - East	107	84	191	56.02%
NWF Health Network - West	105	85	190	55.26%
Partnership for Strong Families	92	47	139	66.19%
Safe Children Coalition	78	67	145	53.79%
Florida	2,089	1,450	3,539	59.03%
Data Source: RAVI CARS as of 6-28-21 and 6-27-22 by Agency				

This table reflects staffing information entered in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) from June 2021 – June 2022. This data depicts a baseline period before the Lead Agencies received additional funding. The Department will continue to refine the methodology for capturing this information, in concert with the Lead Agencies, in any subsequent reports.

The statewide monthly average of case carrying managers retained is 59.03%. Eight of the Lead Agencies are operating above the statewide average, and 11 Lead Agencies are operating below the statewide average. The Lead Agency with the highest retention in this area is Community Partnership for Children and the Lead Agency with the lowest retention in this area is Family Support Services of Suncoast.

Baseline Performance Measure – Preventing Removals

Removal Rate (per 100 alleged victims)



Data Sources: OCFW Dashboard-Removals per 100 Alleged Victims

Removing alleged victims is a function performed by Child Protective Investigators (CPIs) employed by the Department or by Sheriffs' Office staff in those seven counties where the Sheriff's office is contracted to handle CPI duties. However, an important factor in being able to safely maintain children in their family home is the availability of preventive and supportive services. The Lead Agencies are required to invest the enhanced funding in promoting and supporting evidenced-based services that facilitate family preservation, whenever it is safe to do so. Lead Agencies implementing a number of key strategies to assist with reducing removal rates, including bolstering the use of non-judicial in-home supervision, performing enhanced aftercare outreach at key intervals after case closure, implementing specific programs focused on prevention (e.g., Intensive Family Support Teams (IFST)), offering a wide array of supportive services for the family (also known as family support services), as well as deepening partnerships with other community organizations like Heathy Start, etc.

The statewide average for victim removals per 100 alleged victims is 4.76. Six Lead Agencies are experiencing removals above the statewide average, and thirteen Lead Agencies are experiencing removals below the statewide average. The highest number of removals per 100 alleged victims is Family Support Services of Suncoast and the lowest number of removals per 100 alleged victims is Family Integrity Program.

Percentage of Children Receiving Family Support Services, In-Home Judicial Services, In-Home Judicial Services

CBC Lead Agency	% Rec FSS	% Rec In-Home Non-Judicial	% Rec In-Home Court Ordered	% Rec Out-of-Home Care	Total
Brevard Family Partnership	15.99%	12.56%	12.69%	58.76%	100.00%
ChildNet-Broward	0.00%	14.32%	18.29%	67.39%	100.00%
ChildNet-Palm Beach	0.49%	15.20%	22.56%	61.75%	100.00%
Childrens Network-Hillsborough	1.14%	5.23%	15.51%	78.13%	100.00%
Childrens Network of SWF	0.06%	21.13%	15.62%	63.19%	100.00%
Citrus Health Network	6.38%	10.07%	11.43%	72.12%	100.00%
Communities Connected for Kids	9.12%	16.41%	15.31%	59.16%	100.00%
Community Partnership for Children	7.63%	16.89%	8.77%	66.71%	100.00%
Embrace Families	3.97%	13.64%	16.70%	65.70%	100.00%
Family Integrity Program	8.08%	18.51%	11.04%	62.37%	100.00%
FSS NF	11.68%	30.19%	7.24%	50.89%	100.00%
FSS Suncoast	0.53%	8.92%	16.30%	74.25%	100.00%
Heartland for Children	2.32%	12.35%	18.27%	67.06%	100.00%
Kids Central, Inc.	7.78%	12.48%	14.65%	65.09%	100.00%
Kids First of Florida, Inc.	0.38%	21.06%	12.24%	66.32%	100.00%
NWF Health Network - East	7.14%	25.74%	11.99%	55.13%	100.00%
NWF Health Network - West	6.28%	22.09%	10.64%	60.99%	100.00%
Partnership for Strong Families	0.87%	26.61%	8.20%	64.31%	100.00%
Safe Children Coalition	5.86%	9.39%	15.33%	69.42%	100.00%
Florida	4.52%	15.31%	14.25%	65.92%	100.00%

Data Source: Children Active Receiving Services Listing by Agency

The statewide average for percentage of children receiving Family Support Services (FSS) is 4.52 percent. Ten Lead Agencies have an average above the statewide average and nine Lead Agencies have an average below the statewide average. The goal is to increase the percentage of children receiving FSS.

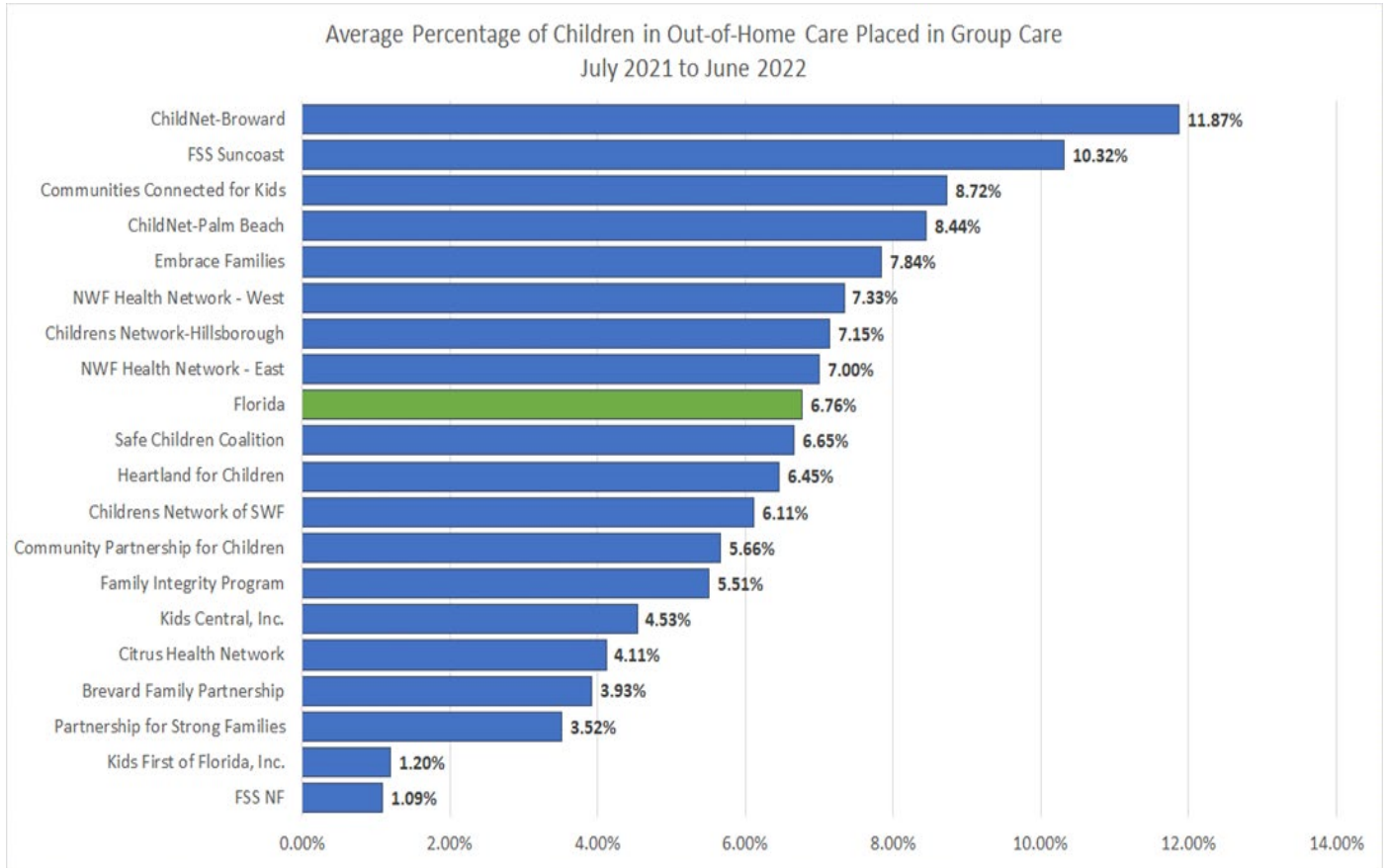
The statewide average for percentage of children receiving In-Home Non-Judicial services is 15.31 percent. Nine Lead Agencies have an average above the statewide average and ten Lead Agencies have an average below the statewide average. The goal is to increase the percentage of children able to receive services in their home.

The statewide average for percentage of children receiving In-Home Court Ordered services is 14.25 percent. Ten Lead Agencies have an average above the statewide average and nine Lead Agencies have an average below the statewide average. The goal is to increase the percentage of children able to receive services in their home.

The statewide average for percentage of children receiving Out-of-Home services is 65.92 percent. Eight Lead Agencies have an average above the statewide average and eleven Lead Agencies have an average below the statewide average. The goal is to reduce the percentage of children in out-of-home care.

Baseline Performance Measure – Placement

Percentage of Children Placed in Out of Home Care in Group Care

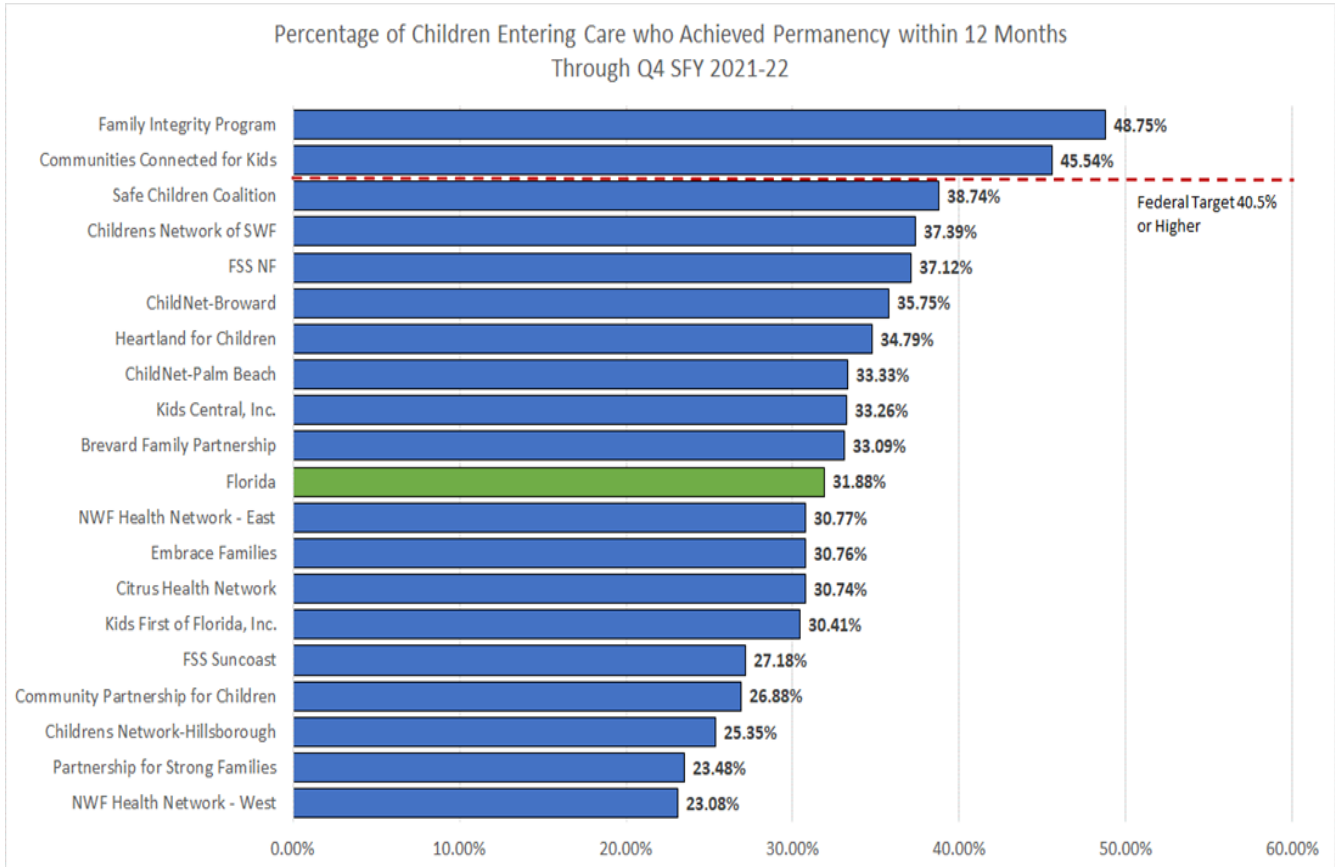


Data Sources: OCFW Dashboard-Children in Out-of-Home Care (as of end of month)

The statewide average percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in group care is 6.76 percent. Eight Lead Agencies have a percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in group care that is higher than the statewide average and eleven Lead Agencies have a percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in group care that is lower than the statewide average. ChildNet-Broward has the highest percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in group care and Family Support Services of North Florida has the lowest percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in group care. The goal is to reduce the percentage of children in group care.

Baseline Performance Measure - Permanency

Children Achieving Permanency within 12 Months

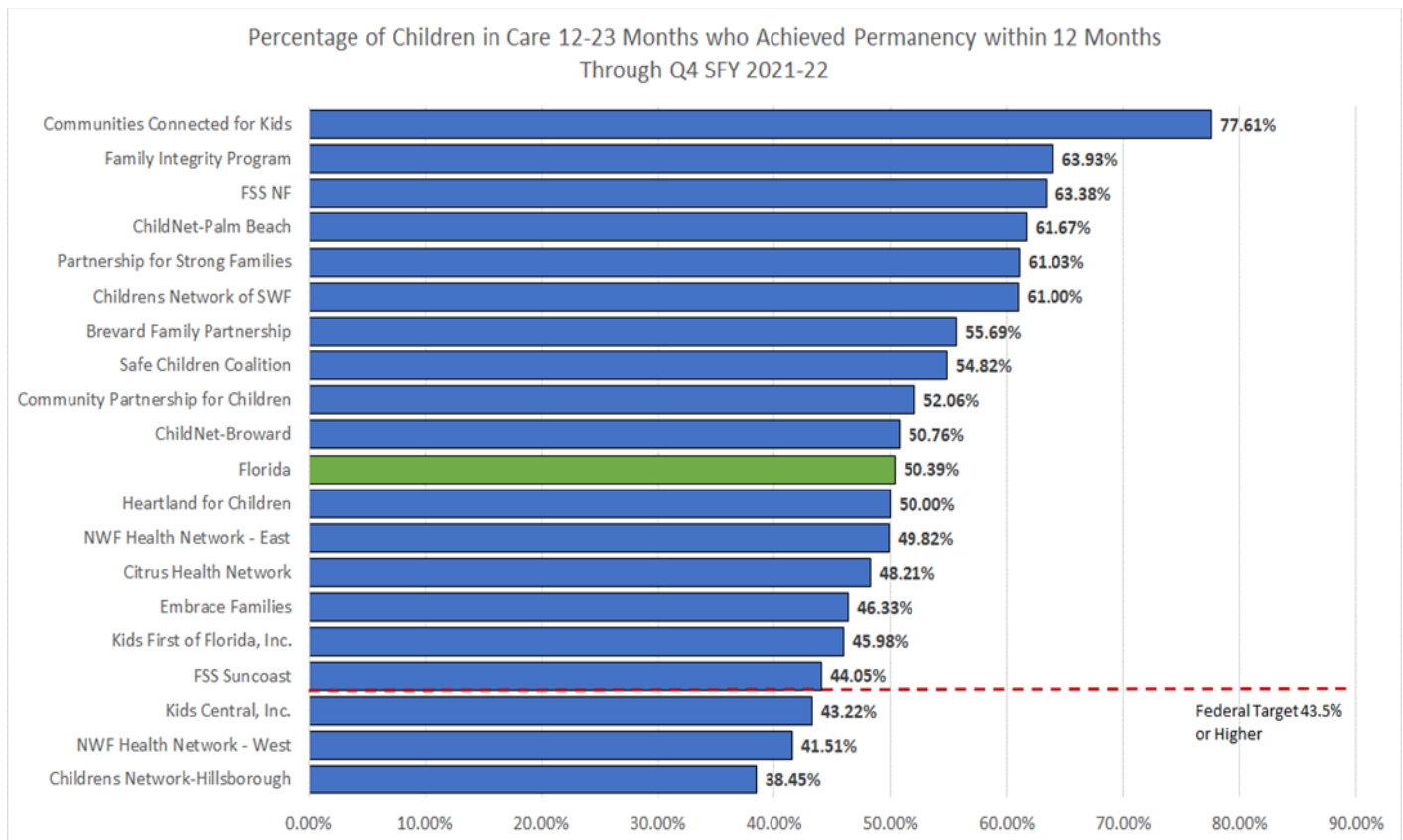


Data Sources: OCFW Dashboard-Percentage of Children Entering Care who Achieved Permanency within 12 Months

The Department has emphasized improving permanency rates this fiscal year. As the workforce is stabilized and the new case managers gain competency in their roles, permanency measures should begin to show improvements. The Lead Agencies are deploying a number of strategies to impact this area, including increased staffing with Children’s Legal Services attorneys, enhancing concurrent planning efforts at more frequent intervals when it becomes clearers that reunification may not be achievable. It is important to note that this measure (achieving permanency within 12 months) along the next two measures are not achievable without cooperation and collaboration among all system partners – this includes the judiciary, Guardian Ad-Litem’s Office, Children’s Legal Services, and the Lead Agencies.

The statewide average for children entering care who achieve permanency within 12 months is 31.88 percent and the Federal Target is 40.5 percent or higher. Ten Lead Agencies have children achieving permanency at a higher rate than the statewide average and nine are averaging lower than the statewide average. Two Lead Agencies are operating above the Federal Target and seventeen are operating below the Federal Target. Family Integrity Program has the highest percentage of children entering care who achieve permanency within 12 months and Family First Network has the lowest. The goal is to increase the percentage of children who achieve permanency within 12 months.

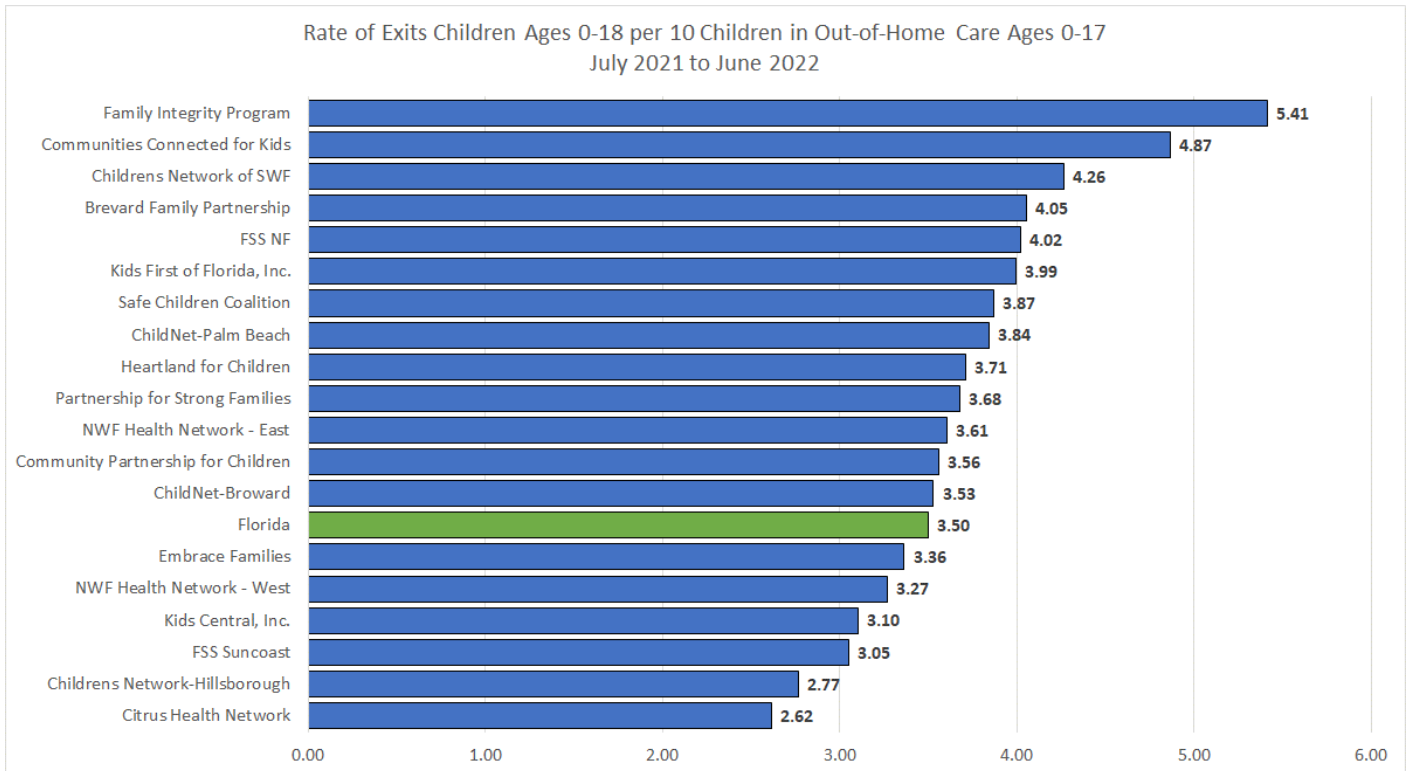
Children Achieving Permanency within 12 to 23 Months



Data Sources: OCFW Dashboard-Percentage of Children in Care 12-23 Months who Achieved Permanency within 12 Months

The statewide percentage for children who have been in care for 12-23 months as of July 1, 2021, achieving permanency within the next 12 months is 50.39 percent and the Federal target is 43.5 percent or higher. Ten Lead Agencies have children achieving permanency at a higher rate than the statewide average and nine are averaging lower than the statewide average. Sixteen Lead Agencies are operating above the Federal Target and only three are operating below the Federal Target. Communities Connected for Kids has the highest percentage of children in care for 12-23 months achieving permanency within 12 months and Children's Network of Hillsborough has the lowest. The goal is to help children who have been in out-of-home care between 12 and 23 months achieve permanency within the next 12 months.

Rate of Exit Children Age 0-18



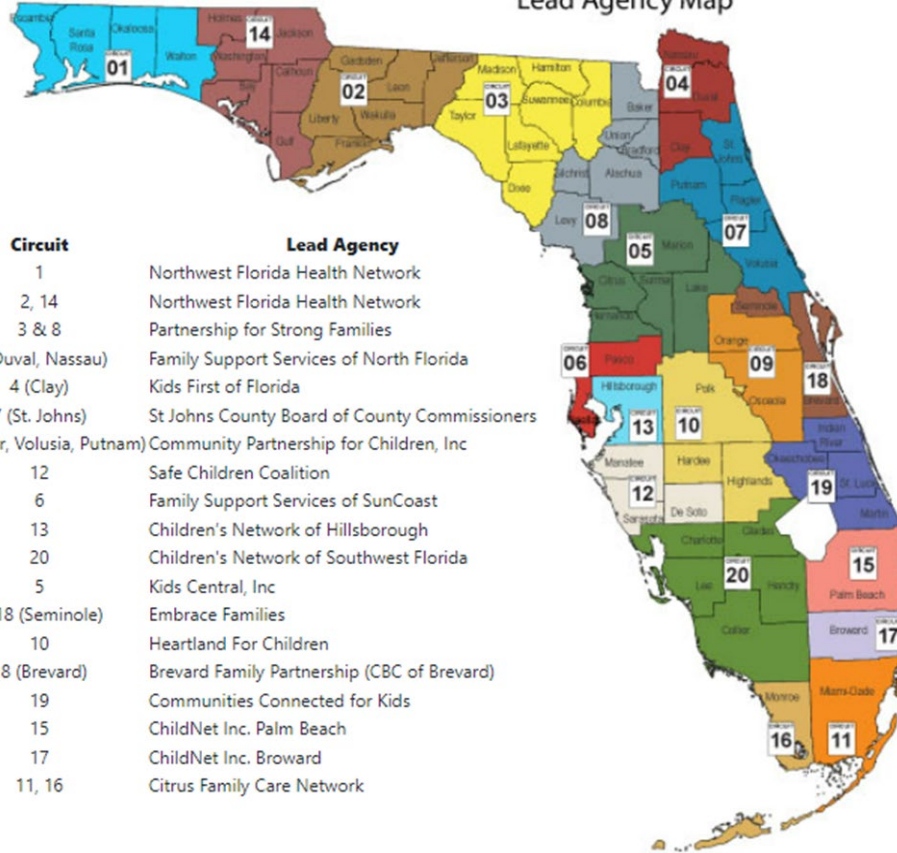
Data Sources: OCFW Dashboard-Children Exiting Out-of-Home Care and Children and Young Adults Receiving Services by CBC Lead Agency and Type of Service #1006

The statewide average rate of children exiting care is 3.50. Thirteen Lead Agencies have an exit rate above the statewide average and six have an exit rate below the statewide average. Family Integrity Program has the highest exit rate at 5.41, and Citrus Health Network has the lowest exit rate at 2.62.

Community Based Care Lead Agency Highlights

Community-Based Care

Lead Agency Map



The remainder of this report highlights innovative strategies being deployed by Lead Agencies in order to achieve progress on these performance measures. Each Lead Agency has developed strategies that it has determined will best meet the needs of their community. This report is not intended to include an exhaustive list of strategies by each agency, but rather to offer a sampling of the great work occurring around the State.

Communities Connected for Kids

Workforce:

Communities Connected for Kids (CCK) has historically prioritized resources to the front line to ensure caseloads remain manageable. CCK has always funded at a caseload ratio of 13 children:1 case manager and looked to save on administrative and fixed expenses to stay within budget. As of June 2022, CCK had the second lowest caseload ratio in the state. The monthly average of case carrying managers retained is 45 percent.

Preventing Removals:

CCK has developed a robust prevention and intervention system, inclusive of effective safety support team processes, and an array of Family Support and Safety Management Services, many of which are jointly funded with the Managing Entity and community funders. This has resulted in CCK's solid performance as the second highest utilizer of Family Support Services, fourth in utilization of in-home non-judicial services, and having the lowest percent use of Out-of-Home Care in the state for this baseline performance period.

While data reflects Circuit 19 below the state removal rate for FY 2021-2022, the circuit has experienced a removal rate higher than the state average for eight out of nine months, ending in November 2022. Not only has the impact on placements in licensed care been significant, but there has also been a corresponding significant increase in related Out-of-Home Care costs, as well.

Placement:

Placement array has historically been an area of challenge for Circuit 19. In ten years as the Lead Agency, CCK has worked diligently to develop and expand its placement array to support foster home placements, especially for teens and sibling groups.

As of June 2022, Circuit 19 reached the lowest number of children placed in group home settings in 20 years. While the data reflects CCK has the third highest percentage of group home use in Florida, its lower-than-average use of Out-of-Home Care, as well as the reduction in the total number of children under supervision, are factors in that calculation. There are multiple strategies contributing to this success. CCK has successfully teamed with child protective investigators to prioritize relative caregiver placements. The addition of family finder positions is expected to enhance performance even further. CCK contracted with several well-respected foster care recruitment agencies with diverse recruitment plans, encompassing each county and segment of the community, and in 2021, developed enhanced placement rates to better support children for whom foster home stability is more challenging.

Permanency:

For more than two years, CCK has been a consistent top performer in the outcomes of permanency within 12 months and 12-24 months. CCK has designed a comprehensive process that aligns its programming toward this outcome, which is reinforced by CCK senior management, and powered by effective partnerships with Children's Legal Services and the Guardian ad Litem program. Activities focus on case-specific identification and eradication of barriers to permanency. Maintaining low caseloads has been a key strategy to support this outcome.

As a result of process and permanency strategies, there has been a 34 percent reduction of children under supervision over the past three years.

Brevard Family Partnership

Workforce:

The latest Trend Report received from Central Region showed Brevard Family Partnerships (BFP) at 16.9 cases to 1 worker, which is more in line with the statewide average of 16 cases to 1 worker that is reported in the data set provided by Central Region. The more manageable the caseload, the better the quality of case work and services that can be provided to mitigate the maltreatment to children and families who are being served. It also mitigates the safety risk factors for children in care.

Preventing Removals:

Brevard Family Partnership does very well with prevention services to assist the Department with Direct Removals. For those children who enter care, BFP has a very low conversion rate.

Total Removals over 24 Months through November 2022:

Total Removals – 928

FSS Conversions – 30 (3.1% of Total

Removals) IH Conversions – 123 (13.4% of

Total Removals) Direct File – 775 (83.5% of

Total Removals)

Placement:

Brevard Family Partnership does very well with regards to placement. According to data, BFP is below the statewide average for placement in Out-of-Home Care (OHC). BFP has experienced between 750 and 850 (estimated) in OHC over a 24 Month period with a very low percentage per overall total in RGC. BFP does extremely well with initial placements being in relative or non-relative care, which exceeds the statewide average 10 out of 15 months in the latest trend report.

Permanency:

With the latest changes to the performance measures, BFP is performing well on permanency for children in care 12-23 months. With a goal of >44 percent, BFP has been consistently in the mid to upper 50 percent, exceeding the statewide average.

ChildNet – Broward and Palm Beach

Preventing Removals:

Broward offers local families a robust and effective array of family support services. However, as part of an agreement of more than 20 years standing between ChildNet and the Children’s Services Council of Broward (CSC) they are funded nearly exclusively by the CSC. This is not reflected in the data here because the CSC does not allow their subcontracted service providers to enter these voluntary clients’ data into the state’s child welfare information system, Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN).

Placement:

A yearlong ChildNet workgroup review and analysis of residential group care utilization during the 2021-2022 fiscal year suggested that the relatively high use of such care was directly linked to relatively low utilization of relative/non-relative care. In response, ChildNet is expanding its kinship navigation and family finding services, both subcontracted and in-house. Along with other community partners, ChildNet has also contracted with the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government to review kinship care data, policies, and practices. Together, they provide technical assistance intended to facilitate and increase local placement of children with kin.

Embrace Families

Workforce:

As with employers nationwide, Embrace Families and its Case Management partners felt the impact of an unprecedented level of workforce resignations in 2021. In addition, there was significant increase in youth with complex needs, requiring one-to-one supervision and overtime that has stressed an already fragile workforce. While the problem was not isolated, it was particularly acute with the largest Case Management partner, Children's Home Society (CHS), serving both Orange and Seminole counties, where Embrace Families witnessed an inability to recruit and hire. Eventually, CHS decided to terminate its contract with Embrace Families, and a new Case Management partner, Camelot Community Care, was quickly procured. Embrace Families responded to its partners' requests to provide retention incentives and increase Case Manager salaries to help stabilize the workforce. In addition, Embrace Families provided an extraordinary level of support to Case Management, including assigning its own qualified and/or certified staff to cases, conducting home studies, securing additional day service providers, and recruiting qualified volunteers to provide weekend coverage.

Preventing Removals:

Embrace Families has been able to work with local Child Protective Investigators (CPI) through the Department of Children and Families (Department) and the Seminole County Sheriff's Office to assist with preventing removals through its diversion program which actively works with investigators to find alternatives to removal or assist families. Diversion program services include but are not limited to community resources and "warm hand-off" referrals, (2) working directly with lock out situations to provide alternative solutions for parents struggling with options, and (3) providing resources that can remedy minor living environment issues. Remedies often include support for repairs to the living environment or connection to services such as pest control. Embrace Families has contracted with Safe at Home through Gulf Coast to provide in-home non-judicial services to families in Orange and Osceola counties and will be expanding into Seminole County. With one provider providing these services, it provides a direct line of communication with investigators. The program also visits families more often than judicial cases and provides wrap around services to families.

Placement:

Embrace Families works collaboratively with investigators from the Department and the Seminole County Sheriff's Office to prevent removals of children into Out-of-Home Care, which has kept the percentage below the statewide average. Unfortunately, due to the acuity of children who enter Out-of-Home Care, appropriate foster home placement is not available. Children who have come into care require the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) or the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) interventions. Children have also come into care with more complex mental health needs, which traditional foster homes are not able to meet.

Permanency:

A staffing will be routinely scheduled with Children's Legal Services (CLS) to explore adding concurrent goals for parents who have not engaged in services or where the Diligent Search (DS) process has been completed and the parents have not been located. Additionally, Permanency Cohort staffings will start 120 days prior to the permanency date. This will allow for extra planning to tie up things needed to achieve permanency prior to 12 months. Shelter audits have started back to look at cases from inception to move toward permanency. For children 12-23 months, there appears to be a backlog of adoption home studies needing to be completed, which can move many cases toward permanency after the 12-month mark. A renewed focus will be made on cases in this cohort, as well to move the measure as more focus has been given to 12 months and under. For exit rates, each CMA has been given a target and asked to identify kids at the beginning of the month who can exit that month and provide the information to Embrace Families Operations staff. The team will then concentrate on those kids for the month to ensure targeted assistance to work on achieving permanency.

Family Integrity Program

Workforce:

Historically, the Family Integration Program, the Lead Agency, has done well with retention, and is currently at 99.1 percent for monthly average of retention of case carrying case managers. Additionally, Family Integrity Program has no concerns regarding case manager to child ratio, at this point. Case load ratios are the lowest in the state, and in the event that the case manager to child ratio becomes a concern, the Lead Agency has added additional positions to proactively respond to any case load increases.

Preventing Removals:

Family Integrity Program continues to provide Non-Judicial case management in-house for unsafe children and children who are safe but high risk. Aftercare, in the form of outreach, is conducted on all closed cases; outreach at 30-day, 60-day, 90-day, and 120-day increments, post closure, and is completed to ensure the families have the resources they need to be successful without the Lead Agency's involvement. The Family Integration Program continues to partner with the Department on the Integrated Practice Team (IPT), which has been successful and has only resulted in one removal in the past three fiscal years. Due to the size of the Lead Agency, ratios can appear larger or smaller than some of the larger Lead Agencies due to the overall population served. The Lead Agency is at a historic low with families being referred for services; therefore, the percentages appear to be lower, given the calculated ratios. Family Integrity Program continues to successfully contract with Devereux's Family Builders to provide services to families that are low to moderate risk.

Placement:

The average of children in Out-of-Home Care is slightly above the statewide average, although as mentioned above, the Lead Agency is small and the number of children that the agency is currently serving is at an historic low. The percentage of children in Out-of-Home Care is higher, but the calculated ratios are dependent upon the overall number of children served, which is lower; the overall percentage is reflected in the small denominator. The addition of a Family Finding Specialist will support efforts to place children in kinship settings.

The Lead Agency is in the process of contracting with the National Youth Advocate Program (NYAP) for enhanced recruitment and family foster home licensing with a therapeutic overlay to reduce the number of children with complex needs in group care. The children that are currently in group care have been unsuccessful in family foster homes or have a therapeutic recommendation to be in a group setting. The percentage of children reflected above is a total of seven children, but given the smaller size of the agency, this equates to 5 percent. The agency currently has three children in group care.

Additionally, the Lead Agency is currently reviewing options for adding additional prevention programs in its area.

Permanency:

Despite the percentage of children receiving in-home judicial services being lower than the statewide average, the Lead Agency's permanency performance is well above the state's averages. Children are placed safely back with their families or other permanency options are arranged within a timely manner.

The Lead Agency continues to staff cases for permanency at 4, 7, and 11 months. Permanency assessments at the 15 month or longer mark is also completed to determine barriers. Conditions for return are constantly assessed and have become a routine practice at the agency. Additionally, because the agency's low turnover rate with case managers allows for continuity among cases, cases are able to achieve permanency as timely and safely as possible. Lower caseloads among case managers also ensures that case managers have the time to ensure the families are receiving all services needed and allows for the case managers to have an utmost understanding of the case dynamics.

Heartland for Children

Workforce:

The workforce crisis of 2022 had a negative impact in Polk, Highlands, and Hardee Counties. In April 2022, approximately 33 percent of the case management positions were vacant, and an additional 14 percent of the positions were filled with individuals attending preservice training leaving only 53 percent of the positions to manage the full workload. The case management organizations were plagued with extremely high turnover, limited applications, and unbearably high caseloads. Workforce stabilization was the top priority for the new core funding. The new core funding allowed Heartland for Children to deploy much needed salary increases throughout the workforce, bringing frontline case manager positions on par with teachers. The percentage of vacant case manager positions has been steadily trending down since deploying these salary increases. As of January 1, 2023, nearly 90 percent of the case manager positions were filled and taking cases. Filling positions and getting new case managers through the preservice training are the first steps in stabilizing the workforce and reducing the caseworker to child ratio.

Placement:

Placement costs, capacity, stabilization, and Out-of-Home Care supports were the second priority area for the new core funding. New funding is being utilized to cover sharply rising costs Out of-Home Care driven by workforce shortages of youth care workers/house parents and upward salary pressure for direct care staff. Additionally, many family caregivers require enhanced services and supports to meet the complex needs of the children in their homes. The Heartland for Children system of care continues to have a lower percentage of children in group care (approximately 6 percent) and a very high percentage of children placed with relatives (approximately 60 percent). Additionally, the system of care tends to excel with placement stability.

Permanency:

As the workforce is stabilized and the new case managers gain competency in their roles, permanency measures should begin to show improvements. Additionally, a small amount of new core funding was deployed for an innovative service designed to enhance timely permanency.

Kids First of Florida, Inc.

Workforce:

Currently, Kids First of Florida's (KFF) workforce is stabilizing, and the performance average is lower than the state average. KFF continues to recruit and retain qualified child welfare professionals. Increased salaries for case workers have also positively impacted recruitment and retention. Currently, the KFF Family Assessment Support Team (FAST) caseworker to child ratio is about 8:6.

Less than 12 months ago, caseloads were closer to 25-30 children per worker. Over the last 6 months, KFF has spent considerable time rebuilding the team after losing close to 70 percent of its staff. KFF currently only has two openings to fill and it continues to work with staff on skill building while its case intakes from CPI have been quite slow. KFF's team is equipped for FAST and Family Support referrals from CPI. Due to the intensive in-home requirements for the non-judicial/FAST and Family Support cases, KFF's goal is to keep ratios to around 10-12 whenever possible, which it can support. Camelot staffing is also stabilizing enabling the judicial side to retain employees, as well.

Preventing Removals:

The KFF data point of 3.91 falls within the lower third of the state. That data is an improvement from some time ago; however, the issue KFF is experiencing here in Clay is that the case types received are disproportionate. Of the cases served by KFF in FY 2021-2022, 88.58 percent of the cases received were Out-of-Home removals. KFF is diligent in seeking services to stabilize and support families in the community to ensure safety and build healthier and stronger family relationships.

Placement:

KFF currently has six children in group home settings and are working on getting two of them placed in a traditional foster care setting. KFF's overall Out-of-Home percentage is higher than the state average and KFF will be working with Camelot on this issue. Placement continues to do outreach in the community to promote Foster Care parenting. KFF also does diligent searches to find suitable family members to care for children when their parents cannot care of them themselves.

Permanency:

Efforts continue in assisting children in achieving permanency. These efforts include more frequent staffing and monitoring of cases as they are nearing 12 months. KFF does see a barrier to permanency with the difficulty of changing the permanency goal prior to 12 months if reunification is not possible or likely. Previously, barriers that impacted permanency for both 12 months and 12 – 23 months include turnover of case management staff. Frequent changes in case workers can also negatively impact permanency; however, as retention has increased, the rate of achieving permanency and exiting care has also increased.

Children's Network of Hillsborough, LLC

Workforce:

Children's Network of Hillsborough (CNHC) is partnering with the 6 Case Management Organizations (CMO) to identify opportunities to build a qualified and sustained workforce across the System of Care. To achieve the goal of a strong and knowledgeable workforce, CNHC has increased base salaries for staff and implemented salary tiers based on experience. Additionally, the service array has been structured to include Adoption Overlay case managers who are responsible for secondary adoption work to decrease the time to finalizations and support primary case management. Independent Living Services have been expanded through Camelot to include all children at age 16 and increase transition planning and services for eligible youth. Utilization Management is now internal to the Lead Agency to streamline the funding approval process and increase efficiencies for service referrals to families. CNHC has implemented Intensive Family Support Teams that partner with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to increase the percentage of families that are able to be served in home and are embedded with Peer Recovery Specialists to work with families who need additional supports related to substance abuse. CNHC developed and implemented an Integrated Health Team to provide clinical expertise to ensure children are receiving the correct level of services and support case management through engaging and reviewing Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessments to ensure quality reports and recommended services are engaged.

Preventing Removals:

Children's Network of Hillsborough (CNHC) has co-located Intensive Family Services Team staff with the Sheriff's Office to assist in identifying cases that can be diverted from going further into the dependency system. Prevention and Diversion services are initiated immediately at the identification of Present Danger with minimal delays in service delivery. Eight (8) Intensive Family Support Teams (IFST) have been created and paired with Child Protective Investigative Units to provide services to unsafe children through the use of in-home non-judicial case management. CNHC has also partnered with Hillsborough County through the Hillsborough County Collaborative, which funds additional prevention services through Kinship Services, Healthy Start, Family Functioning Therapy, and Behavioral Education Therapy.

Placement:

Children's Network of Hillsborough (CNHC) utilizes a variety of programs to ensure children are placed in the least restrictive placements consistent with their needs. Children's Home Network (CHN) provides placement services for the System of Care for both traditional and enhanced placement. CNHC has a robust Family Finding Team that initiates efforts to locate and place with both relatives and non-relatives at the time of shelter. The team is notified of children being placed into licensed care and immediately initiates effort to identify potential relatives and non-relatives who may be able to take placement of the children. CNHC has also expanded capacity for the placement of children by licensing two (2) Residential Group Care homes located on the Joshua House campus.

Permanency:

Children's Network of Hillsborough County employs a Permanency Team as part of its Quality Management activities. The team is focused on facilitating staffings for the children to ensure timely permanency, as well as have an increased focus on children who have been in care over twelve (12) months. Permanency staff are responsible for working in partnership with the CMOs to identify barriers and to assist in problem solving to achieve permanency for children.

Staff retention has a significant impact on permanency. As outlined above, CNHC is working with its CMO's to provide specialized case management through Adoptions Overlay and Expanded Independent Living, as well as completing administrative tasks to allow for case managers to focus on children and families in the field to increase the quality of care.

Children's Network of Southwest Florida

Workforce:

Children's Network of Southwest Florida (CNSWFL) has increased salary for all Child Welfare Case Managers (CWCM), supervisors, and support staff to promote staff retention and to attract new staff to the system of care. Administrative salaries were also increased to ensure system wide stability.

The effects of Hurricane IAN caused a reduction in the workforce, this has impacted CNSWFL's ability to reduce case load size. As of 1/01/2023, the average Caseworker to Child Ratio is 18.75. However, CNSWFL is aggressively onboarding new team members.

Preventing Removals:

Since July 1, 2022, CNSWFL has invested in two additional Intensive Family Services Team Units, adding 10 CWCMs 2 Supervisors and support staff to the Team.

The purpose of the IFST program is to ensure the protection of unsafe children who are at risk of abuse or neglect through early engagement of the family and to prevent removal. The IFST team provides services for six to twelve months based on the service needs of the family. The IFST teams provide in-home services to create a comprehensive level of care to assist families in stabilization while maintaining the children's safety.

Since July 1, 2022, CNSWFL has added 2 Peer Recovery Specialists (PRS). With a total of 5 Peer Recovery Specialists and a Masters Certified Addictions Professional (MCAP), support is provided to families in all five counties in Circuit 20 who have substance abuse issues.

CNSWFL has developed a Family Mentor Program where volunteer mentors are trained and matched with parents who are ready to be reunified with their children. The mentor empowers parents to define and meet goals for themselves, to achieve self-reliance, and offer advice that parents may be uncomfortable seeking from elsewhere. Building these kinds of relationships and supports are particularly important for struggling families to prevent re-entry into the system.

Placement:

CNSWFL has two Kinship units. The main goals of the units are to quickly and efficiently identify existing and possible Relative/Non-Relative placements for children in care and guide relatives through the Level I licensing process. Relatives/non-relatives and foster parents are offered a variety of supports to help keep placements stable. In addition, CNSWFL Family Finder staff go to shelter placements to work with the children to possibly identify supportive adults in their lives that may be appropriate for placement.

Behavior modification education is provided to foster parents and caregivers to help them manage and care for children with a variety behavior difficulty. Education is provided in the home for specific children, as well as in a group setting, to strengthen the abilities of foster parents and provide the tools that may be helpful for current and future placements.

CNSWFL has developed the **Star Program**: This mentoring program works with youth ages 10 through 17 who are experiencing; a recent surrender and are exhibiting behavioral issues; current placement instability and/or on wraparound; upcoming reunification; upcoming or recent relative placement. The goals of the mentoring program are that the youth will have an increase in self-esteem and improvement in school related issues.

CNSWFL has implemented the **CORE Teen** curriculum for prospective and current caregivers who are serving older children who have moderate to severe emotional and behavioral challenges. CNSWFL has provided training to licensing staff and other key personnel.

Permanency:

To support permanency, CNSWFL has invested in the system of care by increasing the adoption overlay unit by two CWCM's for a total of nine (includes Post Adoption and Recruitment). This unit is responsible for streamlining processes, monitoring child-specific progress, and implementing strategic initiatives to expedite permanency through adoption. An Adoption Overlay Case Manager's focus is on getting the case to adoption finalization as soon as possible; within 90 days if the child is residing with the identified family and there are no extenuating circumstances. Further, CNSWFL has added one Adoption Specialist position that provides management oversight of cases to assure ongoing recruitment of potential adoptive families for children awaiting adoption, and timely handling of cases wherein the child has a prospective adoptive family. The Adoption Specialist gives priority to facilitating staffings aimed at eliminating barriers that hinder timeliness to permanency. The addition of this position will also improve the adoption home study and child adoptive placement approval processes resulting in shortened time to adoption finalization.

CNSWFL conducts Casey Rapid Permanency Reviews that target a specific population of children. The focus for FY 2022-2023 is cases that are upcoming for permanency within 12 months. This will have a direct positive impact on Permanency within 12 months and exits from the system of care. For FY 2022-2023 thus far, reviews have included 54 children and 28 cases. The Rapid Permanency Specialist will actively monitor these cases weekly and assist to remove any barrier to obtaining permanency until permanency is achieved. Assistance can include direct completion of work product and functioning as a liaison between system partners to remove miscommunication, resolve disagreement, etc.

CNSWFL conducts a Permanency Staffing initially within 45-60 days of case transfer to case management and then every four months thereafter. The Permanency Specialists focus on action-oriented recommendations that drive the case toward permanency. The Specialist can directly complete a task needed to move the case toward permanency, including referrals, obtaining documents, etc. The Specialist further focuses on cases that have a current status of unsupervised or overnight visits, between parent and child, to prioritize action and awareness of Case Management Organization (CMO) leadership. The Permanency Specialists have begun tracking barriers to permanency as of August 2022 to identify trend and that will allow CNSWFL and CMO leadership to evaluate resource allocation.

Kids Central, Inc.

Workforce:

Kids Central led a statewide case manager recruitment, selection, and retention project with the assistance of the FSU College of Business. The culmination of the project led to a series of recommendations that were implemented during FY 2022. An example of the implemented recommendations includes development of a targeted marketing plan, enhanced social media outreach, increased base salary based on market research, salary tiers for experience and performance, additional case management support positions, position allocation to meet or exceed caseload standards, and a Workplace 2.0 model to promote mobility and flexibility. Kids Central's network has hired more case managers in the last quarter of 2022 than in the previous nine months.

Preventing Removals:

The foundation for Kids Central's prevention services program began in 2013 with the implementation of the state's first full continuum of evidence-based, family-centered interventions. Since then, Kid Central's service array has been continuously evaluated to ensure it is able to effectively mitigate child maltreatments which lead to involvement with the child welfare system. The current service array includes the evidence-based interventions included in the state's Title IV-E Prevention (FFPSA) Plan.

Kids Central also offers two interventions identified as evidence-based by the California Clearinghouse: Nurturing Parenting and Family Connections. Both interventions are presently being evaluated in multiple states, including Florida, and are strong candidates for submission to the Title IV-E Clearinghouse in the near future. Formal and informal relative caregivers are provided with a variety of supports through the One Childhood, Once Chance Kinship Navigation program. This program is being evaluated by Florida State University in partnership with DCF and will be submitted to the IV-E Clearinghouse for consideration as an evidence-based intervention.

To promote the use of these interventions, Kid Central's annual strategic plan prioritizes increasing the number of DCF referrals to Family Preservation Services received annually. Kids Central is actively engaging DCF leadership and protective investigators across Circuit 5 to achieve this goal. To date, there has been a 21 percent increase in referrals over the previous fiscal year.

Placement:

Placement in a least-restrictive, most-appropriate setting is emphasized through several strategic initiatives. Family Finding specialists support efforts to identify and engage family members so children are connected with, and more likely to be placed with relatives. Kids Central has actively used Family Finding since 2009 and expanded the program this year by funding a dedicated Family Finding Specialist position within each Case Management Agency (3 FTE). Foster home recruitment continues to be a priority, and Kid Central's use of a Targeted Marketing Plan will soon return it to pre-COVID recruitment levels of 100+ homes per year. To support foster placements and reduce disruptions, a Rapid Response Stabilization program will be implemented this fiscal year. Kids Central is currently procuring a provider capable of engaging families and offering evidence-based services designed to stabilize the child in the home, prevent disruption, and aid in reunification.

Permanency:

Increasing the number of active case management staff remains a priority in the Circuit. As positions are filled and caseloads reduced, efforts and strategies to achieve permanency are being emphasized. Furthermore, Kids Central is actively working with the Judiciary, CLS, and the Guardian ad Litem program to identify and eliminate barriers, expedite court proceedings, alleviate backlogs, and facilitate permanency efforts.

Safe Children Coalition

Workforce:

Workforce continues to be a challenge for the Safe Children Coalition (SCC). With the influx of people moving into the Suncoast region, housing prices have increased to the point where it has become a barrier for critical field staff. Furthermore, the aftermath from Hurricane Ian in the southern part of the circuit created additional housing challenges. So that case management would not be overburdened with high caseloads, a leadership decision was made to allocate some certified staff from other departments to assist with taking cases and promoting permanency and reducing turnover. For Fiscal Year 2022-2023, SCC is funding a total of 84 case management positions between all Circuit 12 Case Management Organizations (CMOs).

Current strategies and investments into the system of care to address workforce issues:

- Base salaries were increased for case management staff.
- Partnership with University of South Florida to hire interns that transition to full-time employees' post-graduation with child welfare certification.
- In the past year, additional case management support and transporter positions have been added to provide additional support to children, families, and the case manager.
- The CMO contract for Lutheran Services was increased to fund additional case management positions.

Preventing Removals:

Although Circuit 12 has seen a decrease in the removal rate from past fiscal years, Circuit 12 remains consistently higher than the statewide average. Circuit 12 has a wide service array of early intervention services that occur during child abuse investigations. An additional 2,418 children were served through safety management services, intervention and youth services, and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) services. Leadership conducts periodic reviews of all entries into the system of care.

Current strategies and investments into the system of care to address prevention and diversion:

- Expanding in-home prevention services to all families identified by Circuit 12 CPIs, as opposed to limited geographic areas, and increasing availability of prevention/diversion services to receive referrals on a 24/7 basis.
- Implemented Motivational Interviewing, an evidence-based practice, into all in-home safety management and family support services to maximize Title IV-E Eligibility.
- Match families served through in-home prevention services (open investigation) with Care Portal to provide families with ongoing support, minimizing the need for future interventions. This fiscal year, Care Portal has assisted over 1,000 local families in need.
- Continue Substance Exposed Newborn services through the CAPTA contract, as substance abuse is the leading cause for removal in the circuit.
- Established additional reunification team to provide stability to reduce recidivism of recently reunified families, to reduce re-entry into the system.
- Initiated a Unite Us expansion project at the local level designed to link referrals to special services.
- Entered a contract with BAYS, a Florida Non-profit, to provide intensive prevention and diversion services for troubled teens.
- Entered a contract with Chosen Care, Inc. to provide post-adoption support, reducing the potential for youth to re-enter the system due to failed adoptions.

Placement:

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, the number of youth in a residential setting has increased by six. Not only has the number increased, but also the average cost per youth. This trend can be attributed to several factors, primarily cost of living increases and provider rate increases.

Current strategies and investments into the system of care to address placement issues:

- Executive leadership is thoroughly reviewing each child placed in residential group care, looking at their individual circumstances, holding discussions with case management and providers, and working on solutions that are in the best interest of the child's well-being with the goal of moving youth into a more family-like setting.
- The Licensing and Placement Team has adjusted their procedures to prioritize youth in group care for matches to any new home studies submitted by prospective foster parents.
- Increased efforts are placed into the recruitment of quality foster homes and expanding available supports to increase stability and encourage longevity and willingness to accept new or more challenging placements.
- Hired relative caregiver supports to work upfront with Child Protective Investigators (CPIs) to provide support to caregiver at the time of removal to assist with the stability of initial relative/non-relative placements.
- Increased Family Finders positions to locate potential relatives and non-relatives and conduct home studies.
- Entered contract with Family Initiative to increase in-home behavior management services and provide enhanced services to foster homes.

Permanency:

In Fiscal Year 2021-2022, Circuit 12 decreased the total Out-of-Home Care population by 137. The permanency goal for those exiting to reunification is 12 months; Circuit 12 averaged 11.76 months. The overall length of stay for those exiting the system was 20.3 months (includes children exiting or permanent guardianship and adoption).

Current strategies and investments into the system of care to address permanency:

- In July, SCC initiated a series of Lean Six Sigma Green Belt projects to find root causes and solutions to challenging performance metrics. Two of the projects are working towards permanency—increasing reunifications within 12 months and increasing percent of adoptions within 12 months of the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). Proposed solutions will be presented to key stakeholders in March 2023.
- Initiated a partnership with the local NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to incorporate Parents for Parents mentors to engage parents.

Partnership for Safe Families (PSF)

Workforce:

PSF has reduced its caseworker-to-child ratio through better stabilization of the case manager workforce and a reduction in case manager vacancies. Additionally, PSF has several initiatives focused on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, including its participation in Alliance for Workforce Enhancement initiative with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare.

Preventing Removals:

A hallmark of PSF's system of care is its belief that child abuse is preventable. PSF has found that by providing resources and support to families in need on the front end, many can avoid reaching the crises that lead to formal child welfare involvement. Not only is this best for the child, but it is also a more cost-effective use of resources.

With more than 13 years of experience operating a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC), PSF has become a national leader in the provision of primary prevention services. Using a collaborative approach guided by the Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, PSF's FRCs provide easily accessible and safe places for families and community members to seek support prior to the need for formal child welfare involvement. It is PSF's goal to prevent child maltreatment, disrupt patterns of generational abuse, reduce the impact of trauma on families, and ultimately strengthen families so they may keep their children safe and thriving at home.

Placement:

One of the highlights of PSF's system of care is a high utilization of placements with relatives and non-relatives instead of Level II-V foster care or group care. PSF has led the state for several years when it comes to placement with relatives and non-relatives, routinely having more than 65 percent of children in Out-of-Home Care placed in these less restrictive placement types. This helps to ease the burden on the placement array, which helps to keep children out of higher-end placements such as group care. PSF also performs better than the statewide average at serving families in In-Home Care, which further alleviates pressure on the placement array.

Permanency:

PSF has struggled over the last two years with meeting established targets for children achieving permanency within 12 months of removal. This lower performance has been analyzed and traced back to a decreasing percentage of children being reunified with their parent(s), an increase in the percentage of children with an adoption goal, and an overall increase in the length of stay in Out-of-Home Care for both of these populations.

PSF is currently in the final stages of conducting performance improvement projects to explore the root causes of these issues, develop countermeasures to address the root causes, and pilot implementation of these countermeasures. As part of this process, PSF has reorganized the staff structure to move vacant positions to areas that will support increasing reunification and decreasing the length of time to adoption. PSF is also in the process of implementing process changes and technology changes, which should help to increase the percentage of children exiting to reunification and decrease the length of time that children are in care before achieving permanency.

However, despite struggles with permanency within 12 months, PSF has maintained above-average performance in permanency within 23 months of removal.

Community Partnership for Children

Workforce:

Community Partnership for Children (CPC) has focused on stabilizing its workforce by increasing the base pay for Case Managers in order to remain competitive within the human services and local employment markets. Recruitment and retention will continue to be priorities for CPC to maintain its current staff and successfully fill the remaining 20 vacancies of the 86 allocated case management positions for its system of care.

Preventing Removals:

Data indicates that the number of average removals per month over the last fiscal year has decreased in Circuit 7/CPC and CPC is currently under the statewide average for removals per 100 victims reported. In an effort to maintain this positive trend, CPC will continue to invest and focus resources on diverting children from entering out-of-Home Care by preserving families through intensive in-home interventions. For example, CPC has increased formal safety services available to Child Protective Investigators to help prevent removals and has contracted for two evidence-based prevention practices, Motivational Interviewing with BAYS-STRIVE Enhanced Family Stabilization Services and Bethany Christian Services for the Homebuilders Program, in order to prevent entry into Out-of-Home Care. Additionally, CPC has increased resources this fiscal year for both its contracted Non-Judicial Case Management and Family Support Services to meet the needs of the children and families referred by the Department of Children and Families for these critical in-home prevention/intervention services.

Placement:

Data indicates that CPC is currently under the statewide average for both Out-of-Home Care percentage proportion for children served and group care utilization. To continue this downward trend, CPC has enhanced its family-based placement array by subcontracting with One Hope United- Hope House for intensive family foster home services for males and National Youth Advocate Program (NYAP) for enhanced family foster care for its children. Additionally, CPC is hiring two new foster care recruiter positions to increase the number of traditional and specialized foster parents in its system of care allowing more children to be placed in family settings.

To assist with placement stabilization and prevent group care/higher levels of care for children, CPC has increased capacity for immediate crisis response and therapeutic intervention with its Devereux Florida Placement Stability Program, which is available for all caregivers to help with de-escalation and behavior management to improve overall family functioning for children and their caregivers.

Permanency:

Since July 1, 2022, CPC has had 284 children exit its system of care through achieving permanency. While CPC is meeting the performance target for children exiting between 12-23 months, CPC is focused on increasing performance for children achieving permanency within 12 months. As an agency, CPC has implemented a Permanency Action Team process that focuses on early and continuous assessment of the conditions for return to help ensure that children are reunified prior to the twelfth month in Out-of-Home Care. Subcontracted enhancements made this fiscal year to support this initiative include BAYS-STRIVE Enhanced Family Stabilization Services, Bethany Christian Services-Homebuilders Program, and additional formal safety services through Devereux Florida for post placement cases to assist with timely, safe reunifications, and support ongoing family stability through case closure.

NWF Health Network - East

Workforce:

NWF Health Network - East implemented a multi-prong approach to retain a qualified workforce. Specifically, funding case management positions at 15:1, increasing minimum salary to \$50,000 annually for frontline staff, and increased supervisors and paraprofessionals proportionally, recruiting veterans and former law enforcement, as well as spouses through the Continue the Mission initiative.

Preventing Removals:

NWF Health Network - East implemented evidence-based programs, including Wraparound Services, Applied Behavioral Analysis, Family Functional Therapy, Parent Child Interaction Therapy, and Parents as Teachers, and expanded Healthy Families resources. Further, NWF Health Network – East is operationally engaged with DCF child protective investigators on a case-by-case basis for problem solving at the individual family level.

Placement:

NWF Health Network - East employs a lived experience model to develop and support foster families and kinship care. This approach has afforded stable placements for all children without the necessity of utilizing non-licensed beds, as well as providing an evergreen resource for new beds and prospective adoptive families.

Permanency:

Case management stability, reduced caseloads, increased evidence-based interventions, and judiciary collaboration is closing the gap rapidly.

NWF Health Network - West

Workforce:

NWF Health Network assumed caseloads effective 11/1/2022. NWF Health Network is implementing a multi-prong approach to retain qualified workforce. Specifically, funding case management positions at 15:1, increasing minimum salary to \$50,000 annually for frontline staff, and increased supervisors and paraprofessionals proportionally, and recruiting veterans and former law enforcement, as well as spouses through the Continue the Mission initiative. Cases are being distributed across a greater number of FTEs, which has already flattened caseloads.

Preventing Removals:

NWF Health Network assumed caseloads effective 11/1/2022. An analysis of the System of Care (SOC) revealed limited to no evidence-based programming. NWF Health Network is actively procuring safety management services, family support services, and other evidence-based prevention programs. Further, NWF Health Network is engaged with the Walton County Sheriff's Office and DCF to ensure that problem solving is occurring at the family level.

Placement:

NWF Health Network assumed caseloads effective 11/1/2022 and is curating an employee lived experience model to develop and support foster families and kinship care. This approach is expected to afford stable placements for all children without the necessity of utilizing non-licensed beds, as well as providing an evergreen resource for new beds and prospective adoptive families.

Permanency:

NWF Health Network assumed caseloads effective 11/1/2022. Permanency is the biggest opportunity for improvement in the System of Care. Case management stability, reduced caseloads, increased evidence-based interventions, and judiciary collaboration are expected to close the gap rapidly. Specifically, NWF Health Network is actively working on a backlog of children that are awaiting adoption placement and/or finalization for 60 or more days. Reducing this backlog alone will dramatically improve the overall permanency rates for the circuit. Unnecessary processes and organizational barriers have been removed from the adoptions staff, and external workforce has been secured to reduce or eliminate this backlog by the end of FY 2022-2023.