

## **CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION and PERMANANENCY ADVISORY COUNCIL PRESENTATION NOTES**

**Speaking Points Prepared for Director Bill Janes,  
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and Assistant Secretary for Substance Abuse and Mental Health,  
Department of Children and Families**

- Protecting Florida's children is one of the highest priorities of Governor Charlie Crist, and it is also the highest priority in the Office of Drug Control
- The number one goal of the Florida Drug Control Strategy is to protect Florida's youth from substance abuse
- Protecting our children from the dangers of substance abuse starts with preventing our youth from trying alcohol and other drugs
- This prevention is effective when done at local level; prevention must start with the family in the home
- Although it is a starting point, keeping drugs out of children's hands is only a part of keeping our children safe
- Drug endangered children who live in the homes of adult drug users and producers are in danger of not only the secondary effects of drug use, but of the physical danger of clandestine laboratories
- The Office of Drug Control published the Florida Methamphetamine Control Strategy in 2007 which has a goal of increasing the capacity to respond to the needs of drug endangered children
- With increased pressures placed on today's youth as well as bullying that has extended beyond the walls of the classroom and right into the home in the form of cyber-bullying, children are attempting to take their own lives as early as 11
- The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention has been created within the Office of Drug Control to combat this trend
- This year's Florida Suicide Prevention Symposium will be held in conjunction with the Statewide Prevention Conference as the correlation of efforts is evident
- Late last year, I was asked to speak at a Gang Prevention Summit hosted by the Attorney General's Office as there is a strong link between gang and drug activity
- Gangs actively recruit youth both in and out of school
- The average new gang member is simply a child either looking to belong or to be protected
- As educators and parents it is our responsibility to ensure that our children feel a sense of belonging to their schools and communities, as well as ensure their safety in these settings

- By preventing youth from joining gangs we not only protect that child, but also disrupt the illicit drug trade as the sale of drugs is the primary source of income for street gangs
- Along with the physical protection of children, it is imperative that their mental health is properly monitored
- Many children with mental and emotional disorders are not properly diagnosed and treated
- These children will ultimately turn to alcohol and other drugs to self-medicate when not properly diagnosed and treated
- State partners must collaborate and utilize existing resources to better treat youth mental and emotional disturbances
- As state partners, we must also continue to support local coalitions, which have direct connections to the communities and schools they serve
- We must also encourage other local entities such as businesses and faith-based organizations to active role in protecting the children in their community
- When it comes to our children's safety, it is everyone's responsibility; there can be no finger-pointing or saying "That's not my job," because it is all of our jobs