

Florida's State Plan for the **Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect:**

July 2005 through June 2010

Executive Summary



Together, we have the power to prevent child abuse.

Developed by The Florida Interprogram Task Force

June 2005

The purpose of **Florida's State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005 through June 2010** is to reduce child maltreatment and its reoccurrence in Florida. Abuse, abandonment, and neglect are much more likely to occur under certain known child, family, and community conditions. To prevent abuse, abandonment, and neglect from occurring in the first place, the state must focus on enhancing protective factors, conditions ordinarily associated with low levels of maltreatment. Simultaneously, Florida must make an effort to reduce risk factors, conditions which, when present, are associated with increased likelihood of abuse.

A careful examination of these risk and protective factors shows that they run the gamut from prenatal care to education levels and from wages to substance abuse. They include economic factors, educational factors, health and safety factors, and socio-emotional factors. Therefore, to successfully **prevent** child abuse, abandonment, and neglect, Florida must address child, family, and community factors associated with maltreatment. No department or agency working alone can succeed. This plan requires that multiple state and local agencies and private providers work closely together. It's the only way to prevent abuse.

To reduce child maltreatment rates and to prevent re-occurrence, this plan recommends three priorities:

- Promoting safe, stable, and nurturing families and communities.
- Ensuring that state and local service providers have the capacity to meet family and community needs, are responsive to those needs, and successfully meet the needs.
- Measuring the implementation and impact of statewide and local prevention efforts.

This plan represents the initial steps that articulate the goals and objectives that set the stage for what Florida must do to prevent child maltreatment. The next steps will articulate the strategies to be implemented, including identification of responsible parties and funding recommendations, to accomplish the goals and objectives culminating in full implementation of the plan.

Overview of the Plan

Based on legislative guidance and evidence-based practice, the multi-disciplinary, statewide Florida Interprogram Task Force committed to the development of an active and multi-disciplinary planning document with a focus on primary prevention. The mission of this plan is 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. **Florida's Children: Needs Assessment 2003/2004** served as a basis for identifying individual, family, community, and societal risk and protective factors associated with child maltreatment and guided deliberations on prevention goals and objectives. The integration of state and local planning ensures that the plan is responsive to local needs. It meets the requirements of legislation and, if implemented, will prevent child maltreatment in Florida by addressing the underlying factors associated with abuse, abandonment, and neglect.

Our dream: In the next five years we will reduce child maltreatment by 50 percent.




The Planning Context

Child abuse, abandonment, and neglect often have immediate and long-lasting effects on health, brain development, cognition, and psychological and emotional development for individuals. The immediate and long-term costs to Florida communities and the state are tremendous. The outlay of resources for early education and care and public schools; child welfare and other social service agencies; health care systems; and law enforcement, judicial, and correctional systems required as a result of child maltreatment weigh heavily on community and state resources. The loss of future productivity and success from maltreated individuals creates additional fiscal and social costs.

Florida's expenditure of federal, state, and local dollars to address the challenges of child maltreatment has recently produced small improvements in the level of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. There were 32.3 victims of maltreatment per 1,000 children in fiscal year 2003-04, a drop from 2000-01 and 2001-02 levels of 34.1 and 33.6 per 1,000 children, respectively. Likewise, Florida has experienced modest improvements in re-abuse rates. Of children abused in 2003, 8.8 percent were re-abused within six months; while the comparable value for 2002 was 9.6 percent. Although Florida is slowly improving child and family well-being, there remain far too many children and families at risk of and suffering from child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Florida's child maltreatment and re-abuse rates exceed national averages and the standard set by the federal government.

The Florida Legislature, in recognition of the importance of reducing maltreatment by addressing conditions that are likely to promote the prevention of abuse, mandated that the Department of Children and Families develop a statewide plan for child abuse prevention. Florida Statutes (F.S.) require that *"The health and safety of the children served shall be of paramount importance"* (section 39.001, F.S.) and that the state must *"... ensure the safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency of the people served."* (section 20.19, F.S.).

Following guidelines set forth in Florida statute, the Department of Children and Families established the Florida Interprogram Task Force to work at the state level and with local communities to develop a statewide plan for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. ***Florida's Plan for Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005 through June 2010*** is the outcome of this work.



**More than
100,000 kids are
maltreated in
Florida every year.**

**Over 4,000 of them
are re-abused within
six months.**

**Together, we have
the power to
prevent child abuse.**



Desired Outcomes

Two ambitious outcomes are sought for Florida in this plan:

1. By June 30, 2010, the child maltreatment rate will be reduced from the fiscal year 2003-2004 statewide rate of 32.3 to 15.0 per 1,000 children.
2. By June 30, 2010 the re-abuse rate within six months of initial abuse will be reduced from the 2003 statewide rate of 8.8% to 4.0%.

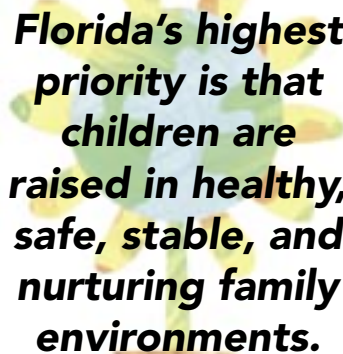
Goals

In order to achieve the desired outcomes, the achievement of four goals is sought for Florida in this plan:

1. All families and communities ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being.
2. State, local, and community resources comprise a collaborative, responsive, family-centered service delivery system that promotes the well-being and safety of children, families, and communities.
3. The prevention continuum has the capacity to ensure the needs of children and families will be addressed competently, collaboratively, and effectively.
4. The prevention continuum's accountability system ensures the evidence-based effectiveness of planning and resource utilization.

Vision

Florida's highest priority is that children are raised in healthy, safe, stable, and nurturing family environments.



Objectives

Building upon the status of the risk and protective factors documented in Florida that are associated with the abuse, abandonment and neglect of children, the Florida Interprogram

Task Force developed objectives and indicators and identified responsible entities for each of the four plan goals.

Prioritization, implementation costs, and lead responsibilities remain to be assigned to these objectives during the development of the implementation plan.



Goal 1: All families and communities ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being.

Achieving this goal requires building on the strengths of families and their communities to reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment. Taking a multifaceted approach to prevention is the best way to reach prevention goals. Therefore, the thirty (30) objectives that address this goal will:

- Address child and family health;
- Provide for adequate housing and economic security; and
- Ensure children's needs for nurturance are addressed to promote intellectual, social, and emotional development.

Goal 2: State, local, and community resources comprise a collaborative, responsive, family-centered service delivery system that promotes the well-being and safety of children, families and communities.

Agencies and organizations working to promote child safety and well-being can achieve better outcomes if they collaborate instead of working in isolated silos. The collaboration must be responsive to the needs of local families and children. Therefore, the sixteen (16) objectives to address this goal will:

- Encourage collaboration among service providers;
- Develop an accessible, comprehensive, and well-maintained database containing local programs and services for families and children;
- Ensure that children and families have access to needed services related to family support, mental health, substance abuse, parenting and marriage/relationship skills education, and delinquency; and
- Hold communities accountable for the outcomes of their programs.

Goal 3: The prevention continuum has the capacity to ensure the needs of children and families will be addressed competently, collaboratively and effectively.

In order to be effective, programs addressing the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect must be staffed by well trained personnel qualified to deliver services or manage programs. Therefore, the eight (8) objectives developed to achieve this goal will:

- Develop and enforce credentialing and performance criteria for service providers;
- Develop the capacity of local communities to identify and address service gaps and to measure program effectiveness; and
- Ensure that all agencies serving families and communities address family preservation and the best interests of the child.

Goal 4: The prevention continuum's accountability system ensures the evidence-based effectiveness of planning and resource utilization.

Planning and implementing strategies designed to prevent child abuse is not enough. Florida must be able to evaluate the plan's impact on children and families. The use of effective strategies must be encouraged throughout the state while ineffective strategies should be replaced by those known to work. Therefore, the seven (7) objectives designed to address this goal will:

- Evaluate the implementation and outcomes of both statewide and local plans annually; and
- Measure the outcomes of all programs and services.

Our goals ensure the capacity of families, communities, and the service system to promote child safety and well-being.

State-Level Planning

Working with the Community Enhancement and Educational Development (CEED) Program of the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center of the University of South Florida, the Florida Department of Children and Families convened the 20-member Florida Interprogram Task Force to develop a plan to reduce child maltreatment. Task Force members represented:

- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Agency for Workforce Innovation
- Community Alliances
- Community-Based Care
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Department of Education
- Florida Department of Health
- Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- Miccosukee Tribe
- Prevent Child Abuse Florida
- Parents



Representatives from the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Health served as Task Force co-conveners. The Task Force met as a group five times between July 2004 - June 2005, with smaller subcommittee meetings held as needed.

Local Planning

Local planning was essential to the development of **Florida's State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005 through June 2010**. Section 39.001, F. S., describes state requirements for developing a local plan for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Community efforts were guided through a collaborative analysis of strengths and challenges and an integrated approach to services and policies aimed at the prevention of child maltreatment. Efforts were coordinated with Community Alliances, as referenced in section 20.19(6)(b), F. S.

Local planning efforts were guided by resources and training developed by CEED staff with guidance from the Florida Interprogram Task Force. In February, community priorities developed by local planning teams were forwarded to the Task Force. Information and data gathered through this process functioned as the basis for the development of the statewide plan by the Florida Interprogram Task Force.

Next Steps

The Florida Interprogram Task Force recognizes that **Florida's State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005 through June 2010** will be of little use to the state unless it is implemented. The Task Force recommends capitalizing on the momentum resulting from the completion of the plan to move forward with the development of an implementation plan. The implementation plan will address timeframes, statewide and local strategies for each goal, cost and funding recommendations, implementation teams and their responsibilities, communication strategies, and evaluation processes. In this manner, Florida can ensure the reduction of child maltreatment and the improved well-being of its children, families, and communities.