

# 2022

## Annual Report

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet





# The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

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February 1, 2023



To the people of Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis, and members of the Florida Legislature:

Florida's children and youth have long been a priority for our great state. It is an honor to serve as Chair of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (Cabinet) and to continue working with Cabinet members on our shared vision of improving the lives of Florida's children and youth.

As Chair of the Cabinet and on behalf of our membership, I formally submit the 2022 Annual Report. As outlined in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, the Cabinet is charged with ensuring the state's public policy for children and youth is best aligned to promote greater collaboration between state agencies with local stakeholders and families.

The enclosed report provides an update on the activities undertaken by the Cabinet throughout 2022. In 2022, the Cabinet set forth with the mission to address several key issues that impact the children and youth in our state, including:

- Mental health and child well-being,
- Physical health, and
- Youth advocacy.

The Cabinet focused on ways to further support and engage in initiatives that positively impact the lives and prosperity of Florida's children and youth, including:

- The Pinwheels for Prevention campaign, a national child abuse prevention campaign;
- Suicide prevention efforts, such as Hope Squad, a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program;
- The Fatherhood Initiative, a multi-agency collaborative effort to increase fatherhood engagement in Florida; and
- Childhood injury prevention initiatives, such as Sleep Baby Safely and Keep Kids from Drowning.

The Cabinet members and I remain committed to increasing collaboration among state agencies and community partners to provide all of Florida's children and youth with the support, services, and resources they need to flourish and lead prosperous, healthy lives.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD  
State Surgeon General  
Chair, Florida Children and Youth Cabinet





# Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Members

As set forth in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, the Cabinet consists of the following members as of December 2022.



**Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD**  
Surgeon General  
Florida Department of Health



**Dennis W. Moore**  
Executive Director  
Guardian ad Litem



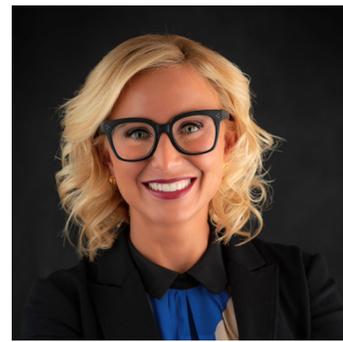
**Judge Jessica Costello**  
13th Judicial Circuit Court  
Governor Appointee



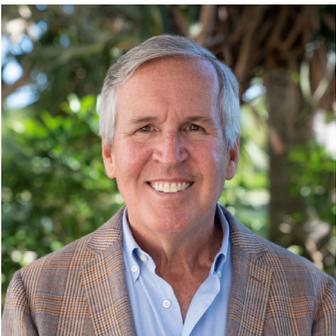
**Manny Diaz, Jr**  
Education Commissioner  
Florida Department of  
Education



**Jason Barrett**  
President and CEO  
Flagler Health



**Lauren Book**  
Senator  
Florida Senate



**Carlos de la Cruz, Jr.**  
Chairman  
Everglades Foundation



**René Garcia**  
Commissioner  
Miami-Dade County  
District 13



**Matthew Mears**  
Chancellor  
Florida Division of  
Early Learning

# Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Members

As set forth in section 402.56, Florida Statutes, the Cabinet consists of the following members as of December 2022.



**Corey Simon**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Volunteer Florida**



**Shevaun Harris**  
**Secretary**  
**Department of Children and Families**



**Sandra Himmel**  
**Superintendent**  
**Citrus County Schools**



**Forough Hosseini**  
**Vice President**  
**ICI Homes**



**Simone Marstiller**  
**Secretary**  
**Agency for Health Care Administration**



**Barbara Palmer**  
**Director**  
**Agency for Persons with Disabilities**



**Belinda Keiser**  
**Vice Chancellor**  
**Keiser University**



**Dr. Eric Hall**  
**Secretary**  
**Department of Juvenile Justice**



**Patricia Williams**  
**Representative**  
**Florida House of Representatives**

# FIRST MEETING

Mental Health and Child Well-Being

April 28, 2022



During the first meeting of the Cabinet, Department of Children and Families Secretary Shevaun Harris commended Cabinet members for their passion and commitment to inspiring impactful changes in the lives of Florida's children and youth.

## HOPE SQUAD



The Cabinet heard a presentation about Hope Squad from Peggy Brockman, the Executive Director of United for

a Good Cause, Inc. Hope Squad is a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program operating in 35 states that partners educators with mental health experts and changes how schools approach mental health and suicide prevention. Hope Squad members are students nominated by their peers to reach out to fellow students who may be struggling. They are trained to show empathy, listen without judgment, and reduce stigma surrounding mental health.

Okaloosa County School Board member Dr. Diane Kelly joined Director Brockman for the presentation. An advocate and volunteer for the program, Dr. Kelly expressed her excitement about the opportunity to be proactive and have a positive impact on the lives of families and youth in Northwest Florida.

Currently, the program is operational in 27 Florida schools. In 2022, Baker County schools had 31 Hope Squad referrals. Nine schools in Okaloosa County have also launched the program, and Hope Squad's goal is to have all counties in Northwest Florida fully operational by the end of 2023.



Director Brockman explained that fundraising is done locally through door knocking, various grants, and community support. Volunteer Florida Director Corey Simon commented that Volunteer Florida could potentially support Hope Squad. This program helps create a safer school environment, encourage mental wellness, prevent substance abuse disorders, and reduce the stigma around mental health.



## PINWHEELS FOR PREVENTION

In honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Cabinet also heard a presentation from Prevent

Child Abuse Florida Executive Director Chris Lolley on the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign. Pinwheels for Prevention is a national campaign designed to increase awareness for child abuse prevention efforts and to highlight Florida's statewide coordinated programs and activities that promote healthy childhood development and prevention of child abuse.

Prevent Child Abuse Florida worked with local businesses to launch Pinwheels for Prevention to emphasize the importance of learning about healthy child development, support positive parenting practices, and to act on behalf of children and families within Florida communities.



## AGENCY UPDATES

**Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA)**  
Secretary Simone Marstiller provided an update on the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program, which provides Medicaid services to eligible Floridians. Approximately 5.2 million Floridians are now covered by Medicaid, and 50 percent of those covered by Medicaid are children. Secretary Marstiller highlighted Senate Bill 1950, which increases access to comprehensive cancer treatment and adds tobacco and opioid abuse to the Behavioral Health Plan. Secretary Marstiller also recognized Senate Bill 1770, which authorizes the Florida Medicaid program to reimburse donor milk services for hospital infants who are medically or physically unable to receive maternal breast milk. Additionally, Secretary Marstiller discussed increased funding for specialty children's hospitals, a sickle cell disease Medicaid study, and the extension of post-partum services to eligible mothers.

**Florida Department of Education (DOE)**  
Chancellor of K-12 Public Education Jacob Oliva recognized Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature for prioritizing children's education and providing the largest per pupil spending total in the state's history. DOE received \$80 million, with funds allocated particularly to increased teacher pay. He also highlighted House Bill 1557, which ensures the protection of parents' rights regarding their children's upbringing and education in schools.

**Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)**  
Director Barbara Palmer emphasized how the agency received its largest budget, \$2 billion. APD plans to appropriate these funds to increase provider rates for direct care employees, provide services to take people off waiting lists, procure a contract for a statewide dental services program for the developmentally disabled, and continue the Employment Enhancement Project to provide supported employment services to individuals on the waiver waiting list. Director Palmer thanked Governor DeSantis and noted the additional funding will literally save lives.

**Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)**

Secretary Eric Hall expressed gratitude for the partnership with the Department of Children and Families in passing of the Fatherhood Initiative during the 2022 Legislative Session. This initiative includes educational and mentorship programs as well as one-on-one support to encourage responsible and involved fatherhood in Florida. Secretary Hall shared that DJJ has also identified \$3.7 million to help build pathways for workforce education for young people in the residential commitment programs.

**Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL)** Director Dennis Moore noted Florida's ability to achieve the lowest rate of children in foster care in terms of length of time, the lowest average stay of children waiting to be adopted, and the highest level of children being adopted out of foster care to relatives due to new access to federal funds.

**Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL)**

Chancellor Matthew Mears highlighted additional funding allocated during the Legislation Session to increase teacher pay and bolster retention. Chancellor Mears expressed his appreciation for the work done this Legislative Session to support staff. He was especially pleased about the rate increases for frontline workers and felt that it will help energize these individuals as well as improve retention.

**Florida Department of Health (DOH)** Division of Community Health Promotion Director Shay Chapman discussed the agency's collaboration with sister agencies and Florida's Healthy Start Coalitions to implement the Fatherhood Initiative. Ms. Chapman also shared information

on two DOH childhood injury prevention initiatives – Sleep Baby Safely and Keep Kids from Drowning – that were allocated funding to be implemented in pilot counties during the 2022 Legislative Session. One initiative focuses on providing safe sleep education to parents and caregivers, while the other provides drowning prevention education to parents and caretakers. These initiatives work to address infant mortality rates due to unsafe sleep environments and drowning in some of the highest impacted counties.

**Volunteer Florida (VF)** Director Corey Simon discussed the agency's Healthy Minds Teen Summit, a grassroots non-profit initiative dedicated to evidence-based integrative resources for the recovery and transformation of stress, anxiety, and depression. Director Simon also shared his gratitude toward all the partners and for being able to work across state agencies for the good of the people in Florida.

**Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

Secretary Shevaun Harris expressed her gratitude and excitement for the opportunities to partner with organizations and state agencies to support child well-being and mental health and substance abuse services. Secretary Harris stated that DCF saw record amounts of funding pouring into the child welfare system as well as for mental health and substance abuse services. Secretary Harris was excited about the future collaboration with partners from around the state to maximize the availability of funds to fulfill the Department's mission.

# SECOND MEETING

Physical Health

State Surgeon General and Chairman Dr. Joseph Ladapo introduced the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet's newest member, Manny Diaz Jr., the Education Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education. This meeting focused on keeping children healthy from head-to-toe and simplifying healthcare coverage for children.

**Fl**♥**rida KidCare**

## FLORIDA HEALTHY KIDS

The Cabinet heard a presentation from Ryan West, the Chief Executive Officer of Florida Healthy Kids Corporation. Mr. West discussed their mission to ensure the availability of comprehensive child-centered health insurance coverage that provides quality health care services. He highlighted the Florida KidCare program, which provides a continuum of care for Florida's children ranging from doctor's visits, vision and hearing benefits, dental care, hospital stays, mental health services, immunizations, prescriptions, and emergencies. The Florida Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provides over 430,000 children in the state with health care coverage. While CHIP and Medicaid enrollment serve similar purposes, the two programs are not the same. There are just under 120,000 kids enrolled in Florida Healthy Kids now.

Florida Healthy Kids Corporation Chief Marketing Officer Ashley Carr also discussed how Florida Healthy Kids markets the program through partnerships with various organizations including hospitals and health centers, community-based organizations, food banks, and the education system. These partners ensure program options are communicated to uninsured children's caregivers. Florida Healthy Kids conducts targeted campaigns and facilitates community partnerships to work with and educate families.

June 14, 2022



**THE FACTS.** ↑  
**YOUR FUTURE.** ↑

## THE FACTS. YOUR FUTURE.

State Surgeon General and Chairman Dr. Joseph Ladapo provided an overview of First Lady Casey DeSantis' "The Facts. Your Future." awareness campaign. "The Facts. Your Future." focuses on substance use prevention and is associated with the First Lady's Hope for Healing Florida initiative. The program directly engages youth in Florida to improve their understanding of the devastating, life-altering effects of drug abuse, empowering teens to reach their full potential.

The campaign, through school assemblies and evidence-based strategies, provides detailed information about how substance abuse can affect their day-to-day lives and how long-term use can impact their futures. First Lady DeSantis continues to show her commitment to helping children lead meaningful, drug-free lives.

## **AGENCY UPDATES**

### **Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL)**

Chancellor Matthew Mears informed the Cabinet that all VPK teachers will have completed a newly required emergent literacy training by July 1, 2022, lining up with the Florida Department of Education's effort to best prepare incoming kindergarten students. The Legislature also allocated a historic level of funds toward early learning.

### **Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)**

Secretary Eric Hall reported House Bill 7065 established the month of June as Responsible Fatherhood Month. In recognition of the designation, DJJ held a meeting discussing the steps and activities to raise awareness about having an engaged, present father. DJJ is also planning "DJJ Dads," a project designed to mentor and support young fathers in the DJJ system.

### **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

Assistant Secretary for the Office of Child and Family Well-Being Jessica Tharpe spoke about the Family Navigator initiative and the Fatherhood Initiative. Since the last Cabinet meeting, DCF launched the Family Navigator initiative to enhance the safety and well-being of Florida's families, with the goal to provide the right services to families at the right time and to promote family safety and resiliency. Family Navigators are highly skilled child welfare professionals who provide families with early engagement and treatment, so they are

stabilized, safe, and on a pathway to resiliency at the first moment of impact.

**Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL)** Director Dennis Moore highlighted how the GAL program increased child representation to 92 percent. The program is also in the process of creating a more robust attorney training program and has expanded mentoring opportunities.

GAL is relaunching a project with the Florida Association for Women Lawyers to help find mentors to work with children in Florida's dependency system. Additionally, a children's youth group was established and is named the Guardian ad Litem Champions, who are helping build the attorney training program.

### **Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)**

Secretary Simone Marstiller shared that AHCA was hard at work renewing and re-procuring contracts to continue delivering services through Florida's Medicaid system to Floridians. The focus included child and adolescent mental health services by ensuring that the health plans provide access to holistic mental health services. AHCA hoped to encourage creative proposals to expand benefits that provide families with opportunities for employment, education, and other services to help families obtain self-sufficiency. These contracts will run through 2030.

### **Florida Department of Education (DOE)**

Chancellor for Educator Quality Dr. Paul Burns thanked the Governor and Legislature for the increase in this year's mental health funds allocation. New legislation requires school districts to identify a mental health coordinator who must collaborate with school safety specialists. Students in grades 6-12 also have a five-hour mental health education requirement.

**Volunteer Florida (VF)** Director Corey Simon reported that Volunteer Florida was able to increase funding. He discussed the Volunteer Generation Fund, an opportunity for non-

profit organizations to receive assistance with volunteer management. Last year, VF began a six-week grant writing series. This series will be offered to approximately 400 non-profits across the state to ensure Florida's non-profit organizations are taking full advantage of available federal grants.

**Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)**  
Deputy Director of Budget and Planning Rose

Salinas commented that APD continues to work with community partners that support individuals with disabilities. The agency continues to support programs within other state agencies and refer individuals to these programs, so they can take full advantage of all the services for which they are eligible. APD will be announcing provider rate increases for the next fiscal year.



# THIRD MEETING

Mental Health and Child Well-Being

September 8, 2022



As September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, this Cabinet meeting focused on bringing awareness to suicide prevention and promoting the safety and well-being of Florida's children.



## HERE TOMORROW

State Surgeon General and Chairman Dr. Joseph Ladapo led Cabinet members in a discussion of suicide prevention. Cabinet members heard a moving presentation from Joe Kenney, Founder, and Hannah Hackworth, Executive Director and Co-Founder, of Here Tomorrow. Here Tomorrow is a mental health collaborative that strives to transform lives by building a community where mental healthcare is available and accessible. Mr. Kenney explained that the creation of this organization was personal after his son suffered from depression and took his life at the age of 30 years old.

Here Tomorrow opened its doors on March 1, 2021, and serves over 800 individuals who are seeking help from the program. These individuals are provided support from certified

crisis peer specialists who are in recovery themselves and can speak from a place of understanding. The program also connects individuals with a therapist based on their individual needs.

Director Hackworth described Here Tomorrow's engagement of both those at-risk and the families who have run up against a brick wall in helping their loved ones. Here Tomorrow believes that to move the needle on suicide prevention, family involvement is key.

When it comes to suicide prevention, timing is everything. People need help when they have the courage to reach out for it.

**Florida Department of Health** Program Director of Child Abuse Death Review Unit Joshua Thomas highlighted how Florida is taking a proactive approach to childhood injury prevention. The Child Abuse Death Review System analyzes data on child fatalities to identify contributing factors and create prevention strategies. The system is comprised of a State Child Abuse Death Review Committee and 22 local committees and produces an annual statistical report detailing child fatality prevention recommendations.

Sleep Baby Safely is a safe sleep education pilot program. Unsafe sleep is the leading cause of preventable death for babies under the age of 1 in Florida. Through Sleep Baby Safely, materials that support safe sleep



are provided to parents and caregivers, including items such as a sleep sack, plug cover, and baby board book. Additionally, training is provided to labor and delivery staff at birthing hospitals and facilities on safe sleep practices, so the staff can provide face-to-face safe sleep education to new parents and caretakers prior to discharge. The pilot program is established in Duval County and is being implemented in Broward, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and Polk counties, which had the highest number of sleep-related infant deaths during the analysis period.

The Keep Kids Safe from Drowning pilot program's objective is reducing and eliminating preventable child drownings. According to the Child Abuse Death Review committees, drowning is the second leading cause of child fatality in Florida. The pilot program is established in Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach, Polk, and Volusia counties, which had the highest number of child drownings during the analysis period. Through this program, DOH partners with the community to provide drowning prevention education and materials to parents and caregivers.

## **AGENCY UPDATES**

### **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

Secretary Shevaun Harris celebrated the success of the Florida Children and Families Summit held in Orlando. The summit is the largest child well-being event held annually in Florida. This event brings together thousands of child welfare professionals, foster families, advocates, and community organizations who share the same vision for a stronger, more resilient Florida. This year's theme was the "Power of Partnership," and the Department emphasized the necessity of its partnerships with other state agencies.

### **Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)**

Secretary Eric Hall announced DJJ's partnership with Tallahassee Community College to put Florida's youth on a pathway to postsecondary education and training. Secretary Hall also applauded Department of Children and Families

Secretary Shevaun Harris for a successful Children and Family Summit. At the summit, DJJ held a The Facts. Your Future. assembly.

**Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL)** At the Children and Family Summit, GAL Program Director Dennis Moore announced the roll-out of the GAL Champions youth group. GAL gave a presentation on independent living services and services for youth in foster care. GAL is also implementing the "Fall in Love with Guardian ad Litem" program, where attorney mentors are connected with youth aging out of care.

### **Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)**

Director Barbara Palmer shared that APD is creating a crisis intervention initiative to reduce the need for Baker Acts.

### **Florida Department of Education (DOE)**

Chancellor Jacob Oliva shared that as the new school year is beginning, for the first time each school district has a dedicated mental health coordinator to support the well-being and resiliency of students.

### **Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL)**

Chancellor Matthew Mears reported that program year 2022 to 2023 School Readiness enrollments have surpassed pre-pandemic levels, with this year's enrollments totaling 158,727 compared to 151,542 for the academic year 2019 to 2020. He also noted implementation of Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking using Star Early Literacy is currently in Progress Monitoring one, and that VPK teachers and parents will be able to use the information from the results to better target educational strategies for students. The Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring Program is the statewide, standardized program known as Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy implemented in all VPK programs as required by section 1002.68, F.S.

### **Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)**

Secretary Simone Marstiller shared that AHCA is working diligently to put together the next generation of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program.

# FOURTH MEETING

Youth Advocacy

December 8, 2022



## ANGEL TREE BOOK DRIVE

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Assistant Secretary for Prevention Alice Sims provided an overview of the DJJ's third annual Angel Tree Book Drive. The theme of this year's drive was "Donate a book, change a life." Reading is one of the best gifts that can be given to a child, especially for children within the juvenile justice system. Assistant Secretary Sims discussed how children with a passion for reading perform better in school, have improved concentration, and develop a stronger vocabulary. DJJ is committed to championing education as an intervention for public safety.

At the final Cabinet meeting of the year, the Cabinet focused on youth advocacy as well as this year's holiday partnerships to support children in need.



## THE CHARITY PRO'S TOY DRIVE

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Communications Director Mallory McManus shared a brief presentation about the partnership with the Charity Pro's, a non-profit organization based in Fort Myers. The toy drive will benefit children in Lee, Collier, and Charlotte counties who were directly affected by Hurricane Ian. Inspired by First Lady Casey DeSantis' toy drive initiative, Charity Pros founder Megan Maloney launched the Charity Pro's for Kiddos toy drive campaign. The toy drive initiative will culminate with a Shopping Day with Santa for all registered children that will take place before Christmas.

## GUARDIAN AD LITEM CHAMPIONS PROGRAM

The Cabinet also heard a presentation from the statewide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Director Dennis Moore on the newly established GAL Champions program. The Champions program consists of former foster youth Champions who now use their lived experiences to provide a voice for children and help shape the GAL's practices, priorities, and effectiveness. Champions Derrick Percy and Rayla James shared their journeys through the foster care system and how they will use their experiences to provide insight on behalf of children currently in the system. Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) Director Barbara Palmer proposed that the program include an advocate with a disability who has lived experienced in foster care. Florida Department of Education (DOE) Senior Chancellor Jacob Oliva also proposed having the advocates work with school counselors to develop best practices to help children who are transitioning schools.



## AGENCY UPDATES

**Agency for Healthcare Administration (ACHA)** Chief of Staff Jason Weida provided an update on Florida's Medicaid program. There are over 5 million Medicaid recipients in the state, most of whom are children. ACHA is working on re-procuring associated contracts to benefit the lives of children in Florida for years to come.

**Florida Department of Education (DOE)** Senior Chancellor Jacob Oliva highlighted DOE's implementation of requiring public schools to provide instruction about mental health. The instruction emphasizes building resiliency in students and defining core components of mental health. In October, DOE updated corresponding mental health definitions in a formal rule and plans to incorporate these definitions as it builds out its mental health curriculum.

**Department of Children and Families (DCF)** Deputy Secretary Taylor Hatch provided an update on DCF's disaster response efforts to Hurricane Ian. DCF partnered with the Florida Department of Health to provide services to meet individual's basic needs for moms and families and also had the opportunity to respond through a resiliency lens and offer mental health services. For disaster response, DCF was able to tap into a model similar to that utilized by the Hope Florida - A Pathway to Prosperity program to ensure individuals and families impacted by the storm received the help they desperately need.

**Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)** Director Barbara Palmer shared that approximately 4,000 individuals with disabilities have been taken off the waitlist to receive services and are now able to receive these critical services. Additionally, Director Palmer highlighted the appropriation of \$8.9 million to provide dental services for those with



disabilities. She further noted APD's efforts to provide services for those with a dual diagnosis of a developmental disability and mental illness. She applauded Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature for their work in accomplishing these goals.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL)** Program Director Dennis Moore discussed the expansion of GAL's volunteer programs, particularly those with a mentorship component. Their "All in for Kids" program received a productivity award.

**Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)** Secretary Eric Hall discussed DJJ's commitment to intervention and community-based prevention to reduce recidivism and contact with the juvenile justice system. He noted four cornerstones will be implemented to facilitate education attainment and workforce preparation to achieve these goals. The cornerstones are as follows:

1. Develop a talented leadership team and workforce through partnerships with the education system,
2. Create systems to ensure data-informed decision-making,
3. Implement evidence-based programs, and
4. Provide post-secondary opportunities and academic achievement.

**Florida Children and Youth Cabinet**  
**Florida Statute 402.56**

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This act may be cited as the “Children and Youth Cabinet Act.”

(2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

- (a) The Legislature finds that all state agencies and programs that touch the lives of children and youth must work in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion, with an emphasis on providing a continuum of services that benefit children from prenatal care through programs supporting successful transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The Legislature further finds that creating a Children and Youth Cabinet is the best method by which the state might achieve the visions and plans necessary to ensure that this state is the first place families think of when asked, “Where do you want to raise a child?”
- (b) The Legislature, in collaboration with the Governor, intends to develop and implement a shared vision among the branches of government in order to improve child and family outcomes in this state. By working collaboratively, the Legislature intends to invest in the education and skills of our children and youth, develop a cohesive vision and plan that ensures a long-term commitment to children and youth issues, align public resources serving children and youth to support their healthy growth and development, and promote increased efficiency and improved service delivery by all governmental agencies that provide services for children, youth, and their families.

(3) ORGANIZATION.—There is created the Children and Youth Cabinet, which is a coordinating council as defined in s. 20.03.

- (a) The cabinet shall ensure that the public policy of this state relating to children and youth is developed to promote interdepartmental collaboration and program implementation in order that services designed for children and youth are planned, managed, and delivered in a holistic and integrated manner to improve the children’s self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health, and quality of life.
- (b) The cabinet is created in the Executive Office of the Governor, which shall provide administrative support and service to the cabinet.
- (c) The cabinet shall meet at least four times each year, but no more than six times each year, in different regions of the state in order to solicit input from the public and any other individual offering testimony relevant to the issues considered. Each meeting must include a public comment session.

(4) MEMBERS.—The cabinet shall consist of 16 members including the Governor and the following persons:

1. The Secretary of Children and Families;
  2. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice;
  3. The director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
  4. A representative from the Division of Early Learning;
  5. The State Surgeon General;
  6. The Secretary of Health Care Administration;
  7. The Commissioner of Education;
  8. The director of the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office;
  9. A representative of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection;
  10. A superintendent of schools, appointed by the Governor; and
  11. Five members who represent children and youth advocacy organizations and who are not service providers, appointed by the Governor.
- (a) The President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, and the Chief Financial Officer, or their appointed designees, shall serve as ex officio members of the cabinet.
- (b) The Governor or the Governor's designee shall serve as the chair of the cabinet.
- (c) Nongovernmental members of the cabinet shall serve without compensation, but are entitled to receive per diem and travel expenses in accordance with s. 112.061 while in performance of their duties.

(5) DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Children and Youth Cabinet shall:

- (a) Develop and implement a shared and cohesive vision using integrated services to improve child, youth, and family outcomes in this state.
- (b) Develop a strategic plan to achieve the goals of the shared and cohesive vision. The plan shall be centered upon a long-term commitment to children and youth issues and align all public resources to serve children and youth and their families in a manner that supports the healthy growth and development of children. The plan shall prepare the children and youth to be responsible citizens and productive members of the workforce. The plan shall include a continuum of services that will benefit children from prenatal care through services for youth in transition to adulthood.
- (c) Develop and implement measurable outcomes for each state department, agency, and program that are consistent with the strategic plan. The cabinet shall establish a baseline measurement for each outcome and regularly report on the progress made toward achieving the desired outcome.
- (d) Design and implement actions that will promote collaboration, creativity, increased efficiency, information sharing, and improved service delivery between and within state governmental organizations that provide services for children and youth and their families. In particular, the efforts shall include the long-range planning process mandated by s. 216.013.

- (e) Foster public awareness of children and youth issues and develop new partners in the effort to serve children and youth.
  - (f) Create a children and youth impact statement for evaluating proposed legislation, requested appropriations, and programs. The impact statement shall be shared with the Legislature in their deliberative process.
  - (g) Identify existing and potential funding streams and resources for children’s services, including, but not limited to, public funding, foundation and organization grants, and other forms of private funding opportunities, including public-private partnerships.
  - (h) Develop a children-and-youth-based budget structure and nomenclature that includes all relevant departments, funding streams, and programs. The budget shall facilitate improved coordination and efficiency, explore options for and allow maximization of federal financial participation, and implement the state’s vision and strategic plan.
  - (i) Engage in other activities that will implement improved collaboration of agencies in order to create, manage, and promote coordinated policies, programs, and service delivery systems that support children and youth.
- (6) **ADVISORY BOARD.**—The Governor may appoint an advisory board to assist the cabinet in its tasks. The board shall include persons who can provide to the cabinet the best available technical and professional research and assistance. If an advisory board is created, it shall include representatives of children and youth advocacy organizations and youth, wherever practicable, who have been recipients of services and programs operated or funded by state agencies.
- (7) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—The Children and Youth Cabinet shall, by February 1 of each year, provide an annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the public concerning its activities and progress towards making this state the first place families think of when asked, “Where do they want to raise their children?” The annual report may include recommendations for needed legislation or rulemaking authority.

**History.**—s. 1, ch. 2007-151; s. 53, ch. 2008-6; s. 284, ch. 2011-142; s. 61, ch. 2012-96; s. 16, ch. 2012-178; s. 152, ch. 2014-19; s. 1, ch. 2016-19; s. 70, ch. 2019-3; s. 11, ch. 2019-142.

**Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection**  
**Florida Statute 39.001, Sections 8 – 12**

- (8) LEGISLATIVE INTENT FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE, ABANDONMENT, AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN. —The incidence of known child abuse, abandonment, and neglect has increased rapidly over the past 5 years. The impact that abuse, abandonment, or neglect has on the victimized child, siblings, family structure, and inevitably on all citizens of the state has caused the Legislature to determine that the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect shall be a priority of this state. To further this end, it is the intent of the Legislature that an Office of Adoption and Child Protection be established.
- (9) OFFICE OF ADOPTION AND CHILD PROTECTION. —
- (a) For purposes of establishing a comprehensive statewide approach for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect, the Office of Adoption and Child Protection is created within the Executive Office of the Governor. The Governor shall appoint a Chief Child Advocate for the office.
  - (b) The Chief Child Advocate shall:
    - 1. Assist in developing rules pertaining to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and implementation of child abuse prevention efforts.
    - 2. Act as the Governor's liaison with state agencies, other state governments, and the public and private sectors on matters that relate to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.
    - 3. Work to secure funding and other support for the state's promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention efforts, including, but not limited to, establishing cooperative relationships among state and private agencies.
    - 4. Develop a strategic program and funding initiative that links the separate jurisdictional activities of state agencies with respect to promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention. The office may designate lead and contributing agencies to develop such initiatives.
    - 5. Advise the Governor and the Legislature on statistics related to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention trends in this state; the status of current adoption programs and services, current child abuse prevention programs and services, the funding of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention programs and services; and the status of the office with regard to the development and implementation of the state strategy for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.
    - 6. Develop public awareness campaigns to be implemented throughout the state for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention.

(c) The office is authorized and directed to:

1. Oversee the preparation and implementation of the state plan established under subsection (10) and revise and update the state plan as necessary.
2. Provide for or make available continuing professional education and training in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
3. Work to secure funding in the form of appropriations, gifts, and grants from the state, the Federal Government, and other public and private sources in order to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and child abuse prevention efforts.
4. Make recommendations pertaining to agreements or contracts for the establishment and development of:
  - a. Programs and services for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect.
  - b. Training programs for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
  - c. Multidisciplinary and discipline-specific training programs for professionals with responsibilities affecting children, young adults, and families.
  - d. Efforts to promote adoption.
  - e. Post-adoptive services to support adoptive families.
5. Monitor, evaluate, and review the development and quality of local and statewide services and programs for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect and shall publish and distribute an annual report of its findings on or before January 1 of each year to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the head of each state agency affected by the report, and the appropriate substantive committees of the Legislature. The report shall include:
  - a. A summary of the activities of the office.
  - b. A summary of the adoption data collected and reported to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the federal Administration for Children and Families.
  - c. A summary of the child abuse prevention data collected and reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the federal Administration for Children and Families.
  - d. A summary detailing the timeliness of the adoption process for children adopted from within the child welfare system.
  - e. Recommendations, by state agency, for the further development and improvement of services and programs for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse and neglect.
  - f. Budget requests, adoption promotion and support needs, and child abuse prevention program needs by state agency.
6. Work with the direct-support organization established under s. 39.0011 to receive financial assistance.

(10) PLAN FOR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH. —

- (a) The office shall develop a state plan for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of abuse, abandonment, and neglect of children and shall submit the state plan to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Governor no later than December 31, 2008. The Department of Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Law Enforcement, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities shall participate and fully cooperate in the development of the state plan at both the state and local levels. Furthermore, appropriate local agencies and organizations shall be provided an opportunity to participate in the development of the state plan at the local level. Appropriate local groups and organizations shall include, but not be limited to, community mental health centers; guardian ad litem programs for children under the circuit court; the school boards of the local school districts; the Florida local advocacy councils; community-based care lead agencies; private or public organizations or programs with recognized expertise in working with child abuse prevention programs for children and families; private or public organizations or programs with recognized expertise in working with children who are sexually abused, physically abused, emotionally abused, abandoned, or neglected and with expertise in working with the families of such children; private or public programs or organizations with expertise in maternal and infant health care; multidisciplinary child protection teams; child day care centers; law enforcement agencies; and the circuit courts, when guardian ad litem programs are not available in the local area. The state plan to be provided to the Legislature and the Governor shall include, as a minimum, the information required of the various groups in paragraph (b).
- (b) The development of the state plan shall be accomplished in the following manner:
  1. The office shall establish a Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council composed of an adoptive parent who has adopted a child from within the child welfare system and representatives from each state agency and appropriate local agencies and organizations specified in paragraph (a). The advisory council shall serve as the research arm of the office and shall be responsible for:
    - a. Assisting in developing a plan of action for better coordination and integration of the goals, activities, and funding pertaining to the promotion and support of adoption and the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect conducted by the office in order to maximize staff and resources at the state level. The plan of action shall be included in the state plan.
    - b. Assisting in providing a basic format to be utilized by the districts in the preparation of local plans of action in order to provide for uniformity in the district plans and to provide for greater ease in compiling information for the state plan.
    - c. Providing the districts with technical assistance in the development of local plans of action, if requested.
    - d. Assisting in examining the local plans to determine if all the requirements of the local plans have been met and, if they have not, informing the districts of the deficiencies and requesting the additional information needed.

- e. Assisting in preparing the state plan for submission to the Legislature and the Governor. Such preparation shall include the incorporation into the state plan of information obtained from the local plans, the cooperative plans with the members of the advisory council, and the plan of action for coordination and integration of state departmental activities. The state plan shall include a section reflecting general conditions and needs, an analysis of variations based on population or geographic areas, identified problems, and recommendations for change. In essence, the state plan shall provide an analysis and summary of each element of the local plans to provide a statewide perspective. The state plan shall also include each separate local plan of action.
  - f. Conducting a feasibility study on the establishment of a Children's Cabinet.
  - g. Working with the specified state agency in fulfilling the requirements of subparagraphs 2., 3., 4., and 5.
2. The office, the department, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health shall work together in developing ways to inform and instruct parents of school children and appropriate district school personnel in all school districts in the detection of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and in caring for a child's needs after a report is made. The plan for accomplishing this end shall be included in the state plan.
  3. The office, the department, the Department of Law Enforcement, and the Department of Health shall work together in developing ways to inform and instruct appropriate local law enforcement personnel in the detection of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
  4. Within existing appropriations, the office shall work with other appropriate public and private agencies to emphasize efforts to educate the general public about the problem of and ways to detect child abuse, abandonment, and neglect and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. The plan for accomplishing this end shall be included in the state plan.
  5. The office, the department, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health shall work together on the enhancement or adaptation of curriculum materials to assist instructional personnel in providing instruction through a multidisciplinary approach on the identification, intervention, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The curriculum materials shall be geared toward a sequential program of instruction at the four progressional levels, K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Strategies for encouraging all school districts to utilize the curriculum are to be included in the state plan for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect.
  6. Each district of the department shall develop a plan for its specific geographical area. The plan developed at the district level shall be submitted to the advisory council for utilization in preparing the state plan. The district local plan of action shall be prepared with the involvement and assistance of the local agencies and organizations listed in this paragraph, as well as representatives from those departmental district offices participating in the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and treatment and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. In order to accomplish

this, the office shall establish a task force on the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The office shall appoint the members of the task force in accordance with the membership requirements of this section. The office shall ensure that individuals from both urban and rural areas and an adoptive parent who has adopted a child from within the child welfare system are represented on the task force. The task force shall develop a written statement clearly identifying its operating procedures, purpose, overall responsibilities, and method of meeting responsibilities. The district plan of action to be prepared by the task force shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- a. Documentation of the magnitude of the problems of child abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, and child abandonment and neglect in its geographical area.
- b. A description of programs currently serving abused, abandoned, and neglected children and their families and a description of programs for the prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect, including information on the impact, cost-effectiveness, and sources of funding of such programs.
- c. Information concerning the number of children within the child welfare system available for adoption who need child-specific adoption promotion efforts.
- d. A description of programs currently promoting and supporting adoptive families, including information on the impact, cost-effectiveness, and sources of funding of such programs.
- e. A description of a comprehensive approach for providing postadoption services. The continuum of services shall include, but not be limited to, sufficient and accessible parent and teen support groups; case management, information, and referral services; and educational advocacy.
- f. A continuum of programs and services necessary for a comprehensive approach to the promotion of adoption and the prevention of all types of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect as well as a brief description of such programs and services.
- g. A description, documentation, and priority ranking of local needs related to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect based upon the continuum of programs and services.
- h. A plan for steps to be taken in meeting identified needs, including the coordination and integration of services to avoid unnecessary duplication and cost, and for alternative funding strategies for meeting needs through the reallocation of existing resources, utilization of volunteers, contracting with local universities for services, and local government or private agency funding.
- i. A description of barriers to the accomplishment of a comprehensive approach to the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect.
- j. Recommendations for changes that can be accomplished only at the state program level or by legislative action.

(11) FUNDING AND SUBSEQUENT PLANS. —

- (a) All budget requests submitted by the office, the department, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrections, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, or any other agency to the Legislature for funding of efforts for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect shall be based on the state plan developed pursuant to this section.
- (b) The office and the other agencies and organizations listed in paragraph (10)(a) shall readdress the state plan and make necessary revisions every 5 years, at a minimum. Such revisions shall be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate no later than June 30 of each year divisible by 5. At least biennially, the office shall review the state plan and make any necessary revisions based on changing needs and program evaluation results. An annual progress report shall be submitted to update the state plan in the years between the 5-year intervals. In order to avoid duplication of effort, these required plans may be made a part of or merged with other plans required by either the state or Federal Government, so long as the portions of the other state or Federal Government plan that constitute the state plan for the promotion of adoption, support of adoptive families, and prevention of child abuse, abandonment, and neglect are clearly identified as such and are provided to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate as required under this section.

(12) LIBERAL CONSTRUCTION. —It is the intent of the Legislature that this chapter be liberally interpreted and construed in conformity with its declared purposes.

**History.**—s. 1, ch. 26880, 1951; s. 1, ch. 73-231; s. 1, ch. 78-414; s. 1, ch. 82-62; s. 62, ch. 85-81; s. 1, ch. 85-206; s. 10, ch. 85-248; s. 19, ch. 86-220; s. 1, ch. 90-53; ss. 1, 2, ch. 90-208; s. 2, ch. 90-306; s. 2, ch. 91-33; s. 68, ch. 91-45; s. 13, ch. 91-57; s. 5, ch. 93-156; s. 23, ch. 93-200; s. 19, ch. 93-230; s. 14, ch. 94-134; s. 14, ch. 94-135; ss. 9, 10, ch. 94-209; s. 1332, ch. 95-147; s. 7, ch. 95-152; s. 8, ch. 95-158; ss. 15, 30, ch. 95-228; s. 116, ch. 95-418; s. 1, ch. 96-268; ss. 128, 156, ch. 97-101; s. 69, ch. 97-103; s. 3, ch. 97-237; s. 119, ch. 97-238; s. 8, ch. 98-137; s. 18, ch. 98-403; s. 1, ch. 99-193; s. 13, ch. 2000-139; s. 5, ch. 2000-151; s. 5, ch. 2000-263; s. 34, ch. 2004-267; s. 2, ch. 2006-97; s. 1, ch. 2006-194; s. 2, ch. 2006-227; s. 1, ch. 2007-124; s. 3, ch. 2008-6; s. 1, ch. 2010-114; s. 42, ch. 2011-142; s. 2, ch. 2012-105; s. 19, ch. 2012-116; s. 4, ch. 2013-15; s. 9, ch. 2014-19; s. 2, ch. 2014-224; s. 1, ch. 2016-127; s. 82, ch. 2016-241; s. 28, ch. 2018-111; s. 10, ch. 2019-3; s. 1, ch. 2019-128.

**Note.**—As amended by s. 82, ch. 2016-241. The amendment by s. 1, ch. 2016-127, uses the reference “s. 394.47892” instead of the reference “chapter 394.”

**Note.**—Former s. 39.20; subsections (3), (5), and (6) former s. 39.002, s. 409.70, subsections (7)-(9) former s. 415.501.

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