

2012 Annual Report - Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council was created in 2006 in Florida Statutes 14.31. State leadership felt increased involvement of faith-based and community organizations were not a substitute for necessary public funding of services to individuals, families and communities in need. They believed that public expenditures without the involvement of these groups limit the effectiveness of government investments. The cost effectiveness of public expenditures can be improved when government is focused on results and public-private partnerships are used to leverage the talent, commitment and resources of faith-based and community organizations. The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council shall consist of 25 members and is established and assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor. Members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House.

During the 2010 legislative session, the Sunset requirement for the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council was repealed through legislation sponsored by Senator Mike Bennett and Representative Clay Ford. In October 2011, the Executive Office of the Governor made a decision to move the administrative functions and support for the Council to the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection.

Below is a table of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council membership as well as their areas of representation as of December 2012.

Table 2. Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council Membership
<p>Governor’s Appointees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Lukasik, 4KIDS of South Florida, Chairman, Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council • Sheila Hopkins, Florida Catholic Conference, Vice Chair, Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council • Pastor Kirt Anderson, Naples Community Church • Charles Bender, Place of Hope • Julie Boyd, Florida Baptist Children’s Home • Reverend Stephen Hogan, Chets Creek Church • Dr. Leonel Mesa, Reflections Wellness Center • Matthew McCluskey, GoTo Nations • Imam Muhammad Musri, Islamic Society of Central Florida • Cherron Newby • Rabbi Schneur Oirechman, Chabad of the Panhandle • Pam Olsen, International House of Prayer • Pastor Carl Reeves, Greater Mount Lily Baptist Church • Vacant • Vacant • Vacant
<p>Senate President Appointees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbi Sholom Ciment, Chabad-Lubavitch of Greater Boynton • Elizabeth Barbella, House of Hope • Vacant • Vacant
<p>Speaker of the House Appointees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaplain James Perry Davis, Christ to Inmates • Jay Polachek • Samuel Sipes, President, Lutheran Services Florida, Inc. • Pastor Reno Zunz, Idlewild Baptist Church

Although Federal officials are creating a more supportive environment for public/private partnerships, challenges remain on both sides. Many faith-based and community organizations lack access to information about availability of public funding. Since local agencies are responsible for most of the outlay of resources, there is a need to facilitate better communication to organizations at a local level. Many faith-based and community organizations lack the administrative capacity to effectively partner with public agencies. Many state agencies are not aware of the resources that faith-based and community groups can utilize to improve the effectiveness of local service delivery. Complex accounting, financial and program reporting overwhelm the administrative capacity of these smaller organizations. Uncertainty of the “uncharted territory” has led some faith-based organizations to fear collaboration with public agencies. State leadership continues to be necessary to facilitate better collaborations between government and these organizations.

2012 Meetings of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

Four meetings were held during 2012 as described below.

March 29 – Enterprise. The Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council heard updates on the 2012 Legislative Session, as well as Governor Rick Scott and First Lady Ann Scott’s initiatives. The Advisory Council discussed their 2012 Annual Report, which was included in the Governor’s Office of Adoption and Child Protection’s 2011 Annual Report to streamline efficiencies. Presentations were provided on the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council’s website as well as the Church United Project. The Department of Corrections also presented their initiatives and how the faith community supports the work of the department.

June 14 – Jacksonville. An update was provided by the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council’s Education Committee as well as the Department of Juvenile Justice on their annual faith symposium. The Department of Elder Affairs presented on their agency’s role and how faith communities can volunteer and support the elderly. The Youth Commission presented the history and overview of the Commission and what their initiatives are. Presentations were also heard regarding Safe Families, Florida’s Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan, Operation Strong Families, and *Explore Adoption*.

August 28 – Video Teleconference. The Advisory Council heard a presentation about the Department of Children and Families foster care initiative, Fostering Florida’s Future. An update was provided to the Advisory Council on the National Faith Symposium. Additionally, Operation Strong Families and *Explore Adoption* updates were presented to the Advisory Council.

October 23 – Orlando. Several presentations were made to the Advisory Council, including: upcoming legislative amendments, Operation Strong Families, Florida’s Five-Year Prevention and Permanency Plan, and National Adoption Month. The Advisory Council also discussed a proposed action framework and voted to hold a Strategic Planning Session in mid-January 2013 to assess and align the goals of the Advisory Council and its members with council duties as outlined in Florida Statutes.

Current Work of the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council

In September 2012, the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection began reaching out to each Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council member to schedule phone conference calls to see beyond written words and capture the true perspective of each individual.

Each conversation was focused to obtain their insight and feedback regarding the following topics:

- Accomplishments of the Advisory Council during the past year.
- The barriers/challenges faced by the Advisory Council.
- The focus of the Advisory Council moving forward.
- Willingness to lead a workgroup to accomplish one or more of the Advisory Council's priorities/initiatives.

The responses from the Advisory Council members that were able to speak to the Director were as varied as the members. A common theme throughout the conversations was that the Advisory Council seemed to lack focus and direction. All Advisory Council members stated they would be willing to lead a workgroup or would help in any way they can once there is a clear direction/purpose for the work the Advisory Council will perform.

In order to initiate action amongst the Advisory Council, a modified project management framework was proposed that can provide structure and organization to the Advisory Council. This framework establishes a point person, a project manager, who will be responsible for an initiative/priority (i.e.: project). The project manager will take ownership for the project and work with the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, and other Council members to establish goals, objectives, outcomes, and monitor project performance.

The project manager will also work with state and local agencies to engage faith organizations throughout the state to build relationships, share ideas and best practices, and develop a statewide network of support.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, along with the Advisory Council Leadership, will serve as the project sponsor. The project sponsor is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication with the project managers, providing strategies, and identifying resources to ensure the project is completed and successful.

At the October 2012 Advisory Council meeting, the Council voted to:

- Keep Tom Lukasik as Chairman and Sheila Hopkins as Vice Chairman for 2013;
- Have a Strategic Planning Session in mid-January 2013 to create direction and focus for the Advisory Council;
- Begin documenting ideas and strategies to be sent to the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection in regards to the direction of the Advisory Council;
- Discuss the idea of conducting regional forums at the Council strategic planning session;
- Identify other faith and community leaders to possibly join the Advisory Council; and
- Include the annual report for the Advisory Council in the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection's annual report due by December 31, 2012.

The Council will continue to partner with the State of Florida by enlisting the assistance of faith-based and community-based organizations to volunteer with various state agencies and their service providers in an effort to help improve outcomes for Florida's children and families.