

2013 Annual Report for Circuit 10

Reporting Period: January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013

(While recognizing information for the annual report will be submitted by October 15, 2013, Local Planning Teams are encouraged to include projected activities that will occur in November and December 2013)

Summary of Plan Activities

Please provide a summary of five-year plan activities for the five-year prevention and permanency plan. For each activity, please identify how they support/promote the Protective Factors.

Faith Based Initiative

Heartland for Children has spearheaded a local effort to engage faith community partners in helping with child abuse prevention as well as foster and adoptive family recruitment. Faith communities, primarily churches, of varying denominations have been engaged throughout Hardee, Highlands, and Polk counties in an effort to develop relationships within the faith community and engage them to partner with Heartland for Children in a local faith based initiative supporting children and families. A targeted effort has been initiated to increase awareness and understanding within the faith community of Heartland for Children's faith based initiative and the need for partnership from the faith community. The goal of this partnership has been to increase awareness that a local faith based initiative exists, to develop prevention champions within the faith based community, and to identify family and community supports that will build protective factors for families within the community. Currently active relationships exist with 50 faith based communities. Engagement and relationship building with the faith community is an ongoing process with the intent of obtaining Faith Community Contact profiles for all of our faith contacts in an effort to further build capacity for both universal and targeted supports within the community.

As a result of the faith based initiative, programs/systems have been developed within the faith based communities focusing on building protective factors for families. These programs/systems include faith based communities who have an active engagement with Heartland for Children in the areas of: prevention awareness and education, supporting foster/adoptive home recruitment, resource support, holiday gift giving, on-site training support and foster/adoptive family support. Two specific new programs that have been developed as a result of the faith based initiative include the 111 Project and donations "closets". The 111 project stands for 1 Church, 1 Family, 1 Purpose with a goal that if every church committed one family towards the purpose of providing a foster care home for a child the need for the children living in foster care would be met. Heartland has partnered with the 111 Project to assist in presenting this initiative throughout our three county areas. Additional systems would include developing relationships with the Florida Baptist Children's Homes to assist with providing donations of clothing, food, furniture/appliances and household items to families in need identified through our Prevention services; developing a relationship with the Echo Orphan Ministry that provide clothing, diapers, baby items, and other needed items to foster homes for the children residing in local foster care homes; and developing a connection with Bethany Christian Services to refer families identified in need to their Safe Families program.

This activity helps to support/promote all areas of the Protective Factors to include: parental emotional resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, nurturing and attachment, and social and emotional competence of children.

Child Abuse Prevention Month

April 2013, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, provided many opportunities to educate our community on protective factors.

The awareness started in March with a community fundraiser-Loop the Lake, coordinated in partnership with the Kappa Delta Sorority of Florida Southern College. A portion of the proceeds raised (80%)were donated to Heartland for Children to use toward Child Abuse Prevention initiatives. A special celebration was held in Highlands County prior to the County Commission meeting and proclamation reading. The program featured encouraging words from a local Judge, the local youth SWAT club, and the chair of the Children's Services Council. Community members and County officials attended in support of the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign. The Judges of the 10th Judicial Circuit, Court Staff, and members of the community hosted the Take your Child to Work Day/ Law Day where participants learned about civic responsibility, gained a basic understanding of the judicial system, and gained information on personal safety. Children in Foster Care were invited to participate, as well as children and teens from the community.

Heartland for Children partnered with the Lakeland Flying Tigers to bring awareness to Child Abuse Prevention. The event, "Pinwheels in the Park" was held on April 20th as our finale for the month. About 1,100 pinwheels were planted in the berm area as a great visual for the fans. 240 pinwheels were given out at the gate to attendees and a children's pinwheel parade was held before the start of the game. The Lincoln Academy School Chorus participated by singing the National Anthem, a foster child carried out the resin bag, 3 children said the customary "Play Ball", and a foster father and Bill D'Auto, the Regional Managing Director, both threw out the first pitches. Prevention messages were shared throughout the game by the game announcer. Tables were set up with information ranging from prevention to adoption and there were multiple giveaways of family-focused items. The JOY FM partnered with Heartland and provided a live radio broadcast during the event, sharing messages related to the Protective Factors.

Heartland for Children also used Pinwheels for Prevention hanging and stand-up banners that were placed in various locations; health departments, YMCA, courthouses, Commission buildings, a local hospital, and at local events. Lakeland Regional Medical Center and the Polk County School Board included information in their April newsletter which was shared with all of their employees. Bulletin Board Kits were used by schools and agencies interested in helping spread the message to those entering their buildings. The kits included: 10 die-cut pinwheels and sticks; "Pinwheels for Prevention" letters; handouts on "Why the Pinwheel", "30 Fun Things To Do With Your Child", Call to Action, and Promoting Protective Factors.

The total number of pinwheels used in either gardens or displays throughout Circuit 10 totaled approximately 6,600. We had approximately 73 Pinwheel Gardens in Polk, Highlands, and Hardee Counties. Twenty-one schools, after school programs, and day-care centers participated by displaying a pinwheel garden/display or a bulletin board. Fifty-six documented business, faith based, and community partners that planted pinwheels or had pinwheels on display. Additionally, 1,200 pinwheels were planted in the berm area and outside in the grassy area at the Lakeland Flying Tigers Baseball games on April 20th, dedicated to Child Abuse Prevention

The above activities help to support/promote all areas of the Protective Factors to include: parental emotional resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, nurturing and attachment, and social and emotional competence of children.

Adoption Promotion

For this reporting period, 79 Children had finalized adoptions. One Adoption Recruitment Event was held, an Adoption Picnic, which resulted in approximately 7 adoptive families being matched with a child/sibling group. Three Adoption 101 Classes were held which included a Saturday Session and resulted in 39 families successfully completing Adoption 101 Classes. Presently, an Adoption 101 Class

is being held which consists of 17 families. The Adoption Specialist attended several Recruitment Events within the circuit and out of the circuit. These events included an All Pro Dad Event, Wait No More, and Project 111. An Adoption Photo Shoot also occurred during this reporting period. HFC's Adoption Gallery continues to display children available for adoption and it continues to be an effective tool for adoption recruitment. The Adoption Program Manager and Adoption Specialist attended and participated in the statewide adoption conference.

In November 2013, the following events are scheduled:

- National Adoption Day court event for November 20th. Families who adopted in the last year will be invited and adoptions will finalize on that day.
- An Adoption Matching Event will be held which will include children available for adoption and approved adoptive families.

Also, during this reporting period the following will be held:

- Meet & Greet for the Adoption Case Managers to “put a face with a name” and meet the approved adoptive families in a casual atmosphere. Each family will share information about themselves and the Adoption Case Manager will provide information about the children available for adoption.
- A photo shoot will be held in an effort to ensure that all children have up-to-date photos on children available for adoption to place on the adoption websites and galleries.

The above activities help to support/promote all areas of the Protective Factors to include: parental emotional resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, nurturing and attachment, and social and emotional competence of children.

Adoption Support

- A massive mail out will go to all adoptive families to obtain current contact information including their email address in an effort to inform them of post adoption supports, resources, and upcoming adoption related training/events, etc.
- In addition, HFC is providing post adoption supports to approximately 120 families per month such as referrals for In-Home Counseling/Services, Respite, Financial Assistance, Multi-Disciplinary Staffing, etc. Also, Monthly Adoption Support Groups are being held in Lakeland and Bartow.

The above activities help to support/promote all areas of the Protective Factors to include: parental emotional resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, nurturing and attachment, and social and emotional competence of children.

Progress

Please describe your circuit's progress towards achieving each objective outlined in the five-year plan for Prevention, Adoption Promotion, and Support of Adoptive Families. (Please see Planned Objectives and Strategies document) (If your objective focuses on the State Fiscal Year, please report accordingly. If not, report information based on the 2013 calendar year.)

Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment and Neglect

Strategy 1

By 30 June 2015, Circuit 10 will have implemented a faith-based prevention initiative that would provide for both universal and targeted efforts in which the faith community is engaged to increase awareness of a faith based initiative, develop prevention champions, and identify family and community supports that would build the protective factors for families within the identified communities.

Objective 1.1

Engage faith communities from each county in child abuse prevention efforts focusing on increasing awareness of a faith-based initiative building relationships to increase application of protective factors amongst families in our community by 30 June 2015.

Progress Achievement Response:

Local leaders have sought to identify specific areas where the occurrence of maltreatments was elevated to help strategically identify faith communities to participate in a prevention initiative in those identified areas. The goal has been to reach out to engage the faith based community from varying denominational backgrounds throughout Hardee, Highlands, and Polk Counties to increase awareness of a faith based initiative and engage in building safety and stability within the community for children and families. There are currently 50 faith based communities actively engaged with Heartland for Children, the Circuit's Community Based Care Lead Agency, on varying levels of support and involvement ranging from: prevention awareness and education, supporting foster adoptive home recruitment, resource support, holiday gift giving, on-site training support and foster/adoptive family support. Data has been maintained in an excel data file in an effort to track engagement level with the faith based initiative and the type or missions/services offered with a plan to develop a formal data base system. Communication to include face to face, phone, email, mail, web, and radio ads is ongoing with faith communities in an effort to maintain and strengthen faith based connections and support for children and families.

Strategy 2

By 30 June 2015, Circuit 10 will have implemented a local initiative that would provide targeted efforts by which community members are exposed to and educated on the importance of protective factors in building strong families and neighborhoods.

Objective 2.1

Develop circuit-level strategies to develop and implement a Protective Factor Education and Awareness Initiative by 30 June 2015.

Progress Achievement Response:

Heartland for Children, along with other community stakeholders planned and coordinated activities that took place beginning in March and throughout the month of April in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. As the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign was put into place in Circuit 10, protective factor education remained a primary focus. A "protective factor" handout was created and made available at local events during April as well as on the Heartland for Children website. This handout was also included in multiple "bulletin board kits" that were prepared for community partners who were decorating their bulletin boards for child abuse prevention month. All of the parenting materials received from the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida included information about protective factors and were distributed throughout the circuit. During one premier event in April, "Pinwheels in the Park" with the Lakeland Flying Tigers baseball team, information about protective factors was shared as an informational announcement during the game. Polk County's government TV also hosted a show with representatives

from Heartland for Children to speak in particular about protective factors. The local team is continuously looking for and identifying opportunities to educate our communities on the importance of protective factors as well as identifying ways to build protective factors within individual families as well as developing programs that work to enhance protective factors for families in general.

Promotion of Adoption

Strategy 1

By June 30, 2015, Circuit 10 will use Faith Based Community Partners to help promote Adoption Awareness Opportunities

Objective 1.1

By fiscal year 2014-2015, 25 percent of all public adoption inquiries will be from the Faith Based Adoption Initiative.

Progress Achievement Response:

The local faith based initiative is up and running and faith partners are being identified regularly. Through the Project 111 events and other connections to the faith community, potential adoptive families continue to be identified. As this effort continues, it is expected that the number of adoption inquiries from the faith community will continue to increase.

Strategy 2

By June 30, 2015, Circuit 10 will use the local Heart Gallery as a component for targeted recruitment strategies.

Objective 2.1

30 percent of all inquiries about public adoption in fiscal year 2014-2015 are a result of the Adoption Gallery.

Progress Achievement Response:

The online Heart Gallery continues to bring in many inquiries. It is up and running with an expected enhancement at the end of the 2013 calendar year, as Heartland for Children launches a new website and new gallery tools. Currently there is a link for the Heartland Heart Gallery on the Heart Gallery page www.adoptflorida.org.

Adoption Support

Strategy 1

By 30 June 2015, Circuit 10 will increase the number of adoptive parents who have received training and education so that they will have a better understanding of the impact of trauma, and emotional regulation. Circuit 10 will increase the number of adoption competent mental health providers and the opportunities for families to receive services through adoption competent providers.

Objective 1.1

Increase the promotion of training and educational opportunities

Objective 1.2

Increase the number and type of trainings available to adoptive families

Progress Achievement Response:

The adoptive parent pre-service training was revised from MAPP to Adoption 101 to incorporate new information pertaining to Emotional Regulatory Healing. Several families with approved adoptive home studies or families already matched or possibly those who have already adopted were able to attend and participate in Emotional Regulatory Healing trainings including a 3 day intensive training. Adoptive families continue to receive information regarding the support groups and adoption competent mental health providers. The Forever Healing training was also implemented, and can be described as a trauma sensitive training for relatives who adopt and caregivers of children involved in child welfare, to build resilience and promote healing for themselves and their children. Adoption 101 classes were held for 56 potential adoptive families. Approximately 120 children per month are provided with post adoption supports.

Please identify the percentage of achievement of the five-year prevention plan you think your circuit has achieved, and describe why.

In regards to the faith based initiative it is our belief that Heartland for Children has achieved 70% of our plan goals, particularly related in the areas of: strategically identifying faith communities to participate in the initiative, having fifty faith based communities currently actively engaged with Heartland, communication with active faith based communities, collaboration and relationship with local faith based communities, new systems/program being identified through the faith based initiative, and increased awareness and communication through faith based messaging included on agency website (December)

In regards to the Protective Factor Education and Awareness initiative it is our belief that Heartland for Children has achieved 50% of our plan goals as they relate to developing presentations, hosting trainings within the community, and utilizing media opportunities to provide awareness and education to the community on the importance of the Protective Factors. This strategy was introduced mid-5 year plan, so the success is right on target.

Please identify the percentage of achievement of the five-year permanency plan you think your circuit has achieved, and describe why.

70% Compliance with the five-year permanency plan due to several adoption promotion efforts. Pop up adoption displays and/or adoption photos have been out in the community at special events and in local businesses including a Mall. The Heart Gallery brings in many inquiries and seems to be an effective tool for adoption recruitment. The Heart Gallery is in the process of being updated and more user friendly. The adoptive parent pre-service training was revised from MAPP to Adoption 101 to incorporate new information pertaining to Emotional Regulatory Healing. Additionally, several families with approved adoptive home studies, families already matched or those who have adopted attended and participated in Juli Alvarado's Emotional Regulatory Healing (ERH) trainings including the 3 day intense ERH Training offered to some of the adoptive families. Adoptive families continue to receive information regarding the support groups and adoption competent mental health providers. The Forever Healing Training was implemented. This is a trauma sensitive training for relatives who adopt and for caregivers of children involved in child welfare and is designed to build resilience and promote healing for themselves and their children.

Children available for adoption continue to be presented at Adoption 101 meetings on a regular basis. Additionally, special meetings called "Pre-Adoption Meetings" have been created and the purpose of this meeting is to clarify and answer questions related to the adoption process as well as to showcase children available for adoption. A Pre-Adoption Meeting was held on 1/8/13. The Adoption Newsletter continues to be distributed monthly since 8/2011. This newsletter was created to send to approved adoptive families and will include information pertaining to adoption as well as showcasing an available child/sibling group that is available for adoption. The Adoption Newsletter created for Adoption Case Managers which includes information relating to adoption and will showcase a waiting approved Adoptive Family also continues on a monthly basis and has been distributed monthly since July 2011.

Heartland for Children recognizes the importance of recruiting and retaining adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of our children awaiting adoption. HFC's adoption staff, in collaboration with the case management organization staff, conduct regularly scheduled reviews of all children who are free for adoption and not yet matched. Additional attention is given to those children who have been in care the longest, to identify barriers and areas for targeted recruitment. As of July 2013, Heartland finalized 63.6% of adoptions within 24 months of removal which is congruent with our continuously decreasing lengths of stay in care.

Do you think your circuit is on target to accomplishing your four target goals by June 2015? Why or why not?

Yes, our circuit is on target to accomplishing our goals as set out in our 5 year plan. The general intent of the plan is to increase faith community partnerships, educate the community on protective factors and build in some additional supports related to increasing protective factors in families, enhance our adoption promotion activities through the use of a heart gallery and help enhance our efforts to support local adoptive parents. Even if specific numerical targets are not met, the accomplishments and improvements in each of these areas are already evident (as reported in this document). Considering there is a significant amount of time remaining in the 5 year term, the opportunity exists to continue to improve upon those results.

Highlights and Accomplishments

Please describe any highlights and accomplishments connected to your circuit's five-year plan.

125 child adoptions were finalized in the FY 2012-2013.

Approximately 245 children were provided post adoption supports for FY 2012-2013.

The online Heart Gallery continues to be up and running. The Heart Gallery brings in many inquiries and seems to be an effective tool for adoption recruitment. There is a link of the Heartland Heart Gallery on the Heart Gallery page of www.adoptflorida.org. In addition, HFC is in the process of developing and launching their new website which will include an interactive up to date adoption gallery.

The local Bartow Rotary Club helped to coordinate another Adoption Matching Event that was held on May 18, 2013. The event was held at a local park in Bartow, Florida and the Bartow Rotary Club not only played an instrumental role in organizing the event, but donating food and prizes for the children and families in attendance. 22 children available for adoption attended the matching event and 16 available families attended the event. Many Bartow Rotary Club volunteers assisted as well as many volunteers from Heartland for Children and the Community Based Care Agencies. Seven children were matched as a result of this Adoption Matching Event.

Children available for adoption continue to be presented at Adoption 101 meetings on a regular basis. Additionally, special meetings called "Pre-Adoption Meetings" have been created and the purpose of this meeting is to clarify and answer questions related to the adoption process as well as to showcase children available for adoption. . A Pre-Adoption Meeting was held on 1/8/13. The Adoption Newsletter that was created to send to approved adoptive families that will include information pertaining to adoption as well as showcasing an available child/sibling group that is available for adoption continues to be distributed monthly since 8/2011. The Adoption Newsletter created for Adoption Case Managers which includes information relating to adoption and will showcase a waiting approved Adoptive Family also continues on a monthly basis and has been distributed monthly since July 2011.

In recognition of National Adoption Month, Heartland for Children will be mailing formal invitations to families who finalized their adoptions from December 2012 to October 2013 to join us at an Adoption Celebration that will be held on November 20, 2013. This event will be held at the local Bartow Courthouse. The event is family friendly and will have food, raffle prizes, a coloring station, and a photographer to take family photos. We are anticipating inviting approximately 100 families to join the celebration.

Highlights and accomplishments related to the faith based initiative are:

- Fifty active faith based community relationships
- 111 Project Partnership
- JOY FM partnership – contracted radio ads
- Foster care and adoptive recruitment within the faith community
- Involvement of the faith community in Child Abuse Prevention month activities
- Participation in faith based mission fairs, festivals, events, and Association meetings
- Participation in DJJ Faith Network Meeting
- Development of faith based messaging within Heartland for Children’s website (November)
- Participation in the Faith Based Symposium (November)
- Participation in the Christian Alliance for Orphans event (November)

Highlights and accomplishments related Protective Factors and Education are:

- Child Abuse Awareness messaging related to the Protective Factors
- Partnership with community businesses, faith based communities and schools
- March Child Abuse Prevention awareness activities ad proclamations
- Existing community resources and supports related to the Protective Factors

Next Steps

Please identify what your circuit’s proposed next steps are for 2014 related to the five-year plan.

Circuit 10 will be implementing some changes to the way that the Local Planning Team will be structured and led in the tri-county area. Meetings will actually be held quarterly in each county and will focus specifically on issues and data related to that particular county, rather than the circuit as a whole. This new meeting structure will begin in 2014 after some smaller leadership meetings to identify participants and a basic structure.

Continued work with the Faith Based Initiative through our partnership with the JoyFM and Project 111 to increase local opportunities to work with the Faith Community.

New website launched for Heartland for Children with enhanced capabilities for the adoption gallery, a better linkage for families interested in potentially adopting or fostering, regular blog entries related to fostering, adoption, parenting and protective factors. An increased social media presence is planned to extend our reach in these areas.

Next steps related to the faith based initiative is to:

- Continue to build on existing partnerships
- Continue to identify new faith based partnerships
- Obtain Faith Based Community Contact profiles for all active faith based communities
- Develop an MS-Access database
- Continue to engage Faith Based Champions to educate their congregation and community on Child Abuse Prevention and Protective Factors
- Continue to identify and track new systems/program developed as a result of the faith based initiative
- Continue faith based efforts with a focus on areas related to prevention, foster care and adoption in an effort to build family safety, stability, strengthening and permanency throughout our local communities through increased awareness and partnership within the faith communities.

Next steps related to Protective Factors and Education is to:

- Adjust current Protective Factors presentations as needed to meet the need of the audience
- Develop 5 minute presentation providing a brief overview of Protective Factors
- Continue to identify groups to educate on Protective Factors
- Continue to identify media opportunities to share Protective Factors
- Continue to work with community and faith based partners to identify new/additional programs and supports for families