

## 2013 Annual Report for Circuit 15

### **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.*

### **PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE, ABANDONMENT and NEGLECT:**

Our objective was to 1) enhance the focus on early childhood 2) increase the access to basic needs services 3) increased early access to Domestic Violence services and 4) increased service coordination access for targeted populations. To carry-out this objective Circuit 15 focused on four of the five protective factors:

- Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development
- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports for Parents

Specifically in the area of Prevention the focus to enhance early childhood services has centered on:

1. Continuing to implement all levels of the evidence-based parenting program Triple P throughout Palm Beach County (PBC), inclusive of marketing and public awareness of the program;
2. continued implementation of BRIDGES, a place based strategy targeted 10 neighborhoods in Palm Beach County; and
3. the development of a collaborative community plan for inclusion of infant mental health services within existing community services and systems to ensure an integrated continuum of service availability.

In terms of increasing access to the basic needs services and increased service coordination for targeted populations (0-5) the effort has been to unify the efforts to improve service access through the implementation of Common Eligibility Software Solution, which is tool to increase access to basic needs and health and human services. In addition the through the place-based implementation of BRIDGES there has been an heightened focus on ensuring families have improved service access with the development of key partnerships within the BRIDGES localized communities. Lastly, the work on increased early access to Domestic Violence services resulted in the Circuit's ongoing implementation of Domestic Violence Steering Committee Recommendations. Our progress to each of these priority areas is detailed below.

### **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.)*

### **Objective #1 - Enhance Focus on Early Childhood**

Circuit 15 has completed 6 of the 10 action items (60%) outlined in its Child Abuse Prevention Plan aimed at priority #1--enhanced the focus on early childhood services for parents and their children 0-5.

**Objective #2 – Increase Access to Basic Needs Services**

We have accomplished 80% of the action items related to increase access to basic needs services

**Objective #3 – Increased Service Coordination Access for Targeted Populations**

60% of the plan activities that aim to increase service coordination access to targeted populations.

**Objective #4 – Increased Access to Services (Domestic Violence)**

100% of the activities have been completed for increasing early access to DV services; however, one of those efforts is ongoing through the plan cycle.

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

The Circuit has accomplished 75% of the activities outlined in its permanency plan and despite the change in leadership of our community-based lead agency anticipates achieving the remainder of the plan goals by June 30, 2015. The dedicated work and focus of the Children's Services Council (CSC) has been instrumental in meeting and exceeding many of the targets set-forth in the child abuse prevention plan. The Circuit's ability to leverage the expertise and resource of the Council has been a key driver in completing many of the objectives in the plan to date.

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

As the Circuit has been evaluating the activities outlined in its Child Abuse Prevention Plan and it recognizes that although many of the action items were built to be accomplished per fiscal year; many of the action items that have completed are efforts that our community will continue to implement ongoing. We understand that to truly achieve our outcomes by June 30, 2015 we need to build upon on efforts, which means a continuous effort on expanding our reach and recalibrating strategies to meet new and emerging needs.

**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.)*

**PROMOTION OF ADOPTION:**

The activities that were planned under the promotion of adoption included the Heart Gallery, recruitment focused on teenagers, children with medical needs and children who had been waiting in the system the longest, use of National Adoption Day to promote adoption awareness, ongoing participation in the Explore Adoption Campaign, use of recruitment websites to include our children and use of the community partners, such as Children's Home Society and Place of Hope to conduct MAPP classes and recruit potential adoptive families.

The Heart Gallery has continued to be a part of Children's Home Society, having merged with the Palm Beach Division in recent years. The Heart Gallery promotes the idea of adoption to families in the community and displays the portraits of our children waiting for adoption. Recruitment efforts focused on specific children and specific populations within our children available for adoption have been made to identify potential adoptive families for those children. National Adoption Day presents an opportunity for positive media coverage regarding adoptions that are happening that day and also presents an excellent opportunity to introduce the idea of adoption to people who may not have previously thought about the

idea. The ongoing use of recruitment websites and participation in statewide recruitment campaigns increases that number of people who may be exposed and introduced to our children awaiting adoption. The MAPP classes offered by agencies within the circuit allow families who are interested in adoption to receive the necessary training and then move on to the selection process where a child can be matched with them when there is an appropriate fit.

### **PROMOTION OF ADOPTION:**

All objectives are currently in the process of being met, but they are long-term goals that have not yet been completed. 100% of the objectives are in progress; about 70% have shown outcomes achieved at this point. The other 30% remain in progress and are at the appropriate milestones. Staffings have been completed on all of the youth awaiting adoption based on the different time frames. They are staffed in many different forums, using whichever staffing forum is the most likely to address the child's specific needs and increase the opportunities to find forever families. The Adoption Recruiter has been assigned to each child available for adoption with no identified placement. The recruiter completes an individualized recruitment plan for each of these children addressing their specific needs and identifying strategies and goals to meet to recruit for an appropriate family. These special needs include medical needs, age of the child, sibling groups and other needs. Based on the recruiter's knowledge of the children's special needs, the adoption recruiter has held recruitment events targeted at different populations. During the last year there have been events focused on medically needy children and adolescents as these two populations were the most in need of targeted recruitment events.

**Objective #1:** By 30 June 2015, Circuit 15 will decrease the number of youth waiting for adoption for more than 12 months.

Each and every youth awaiting adoption in Circuit 15 has a current individualized, special needs recruitment plan. This plan identifies the recruitment activities that have taken place as well as those expected to take place in the upcoming months. This recruitment plan is reviewed at a minimum of once per 6 months and is updated on an annual basis or whenever it is appropriate to update sooner based on changed circumstances.

**Objective #2:** Targeted recruitment for teens

In FY 2012 – 2013, there were 29 teenagers who were adopted. Individualized recruitment plans have been developed for all teenagers awaiting adoption in Circuit 15. These recruitment plans look at the individual recruitment activities that can be used to identify potential families for the child. Many of these children have been staffed as a part of ChildNet's Top 50 Workgroup where a multi-disciplinary team of ChildNet staff and community partners come together to discuss how to achieve permanency for these children. Recommendations from this workgroup are then added in to the recruitment plan.

### **SUPPORT TO ADOPTIVE FAMILIES:**

The activities that were planned under the support to adoptive families included provision of ongoing support groups for adoptive families and children, increasing numbers of available adoption competent mental health professionals in the circuit, and the creation of a trauma informed system of care.

1. Support groups for adoptive families and children offer an opportunity for families to participate in a support group setting where they are able to see that other families are experiencing similar challenges and are also an opportunity to gain informal supports to help families during the post-adoption process.
2. Increasing the number of adoption competent mental health professionals in the circuit would improve the support provided to families as they would be able to access services to meet their needs.

3. The integration of a trauma informed system of care is one that Circuit remains deeply committed to building and with the engagement of our new mental health/substance abuse managing entity Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network is actively working to enhance. We understand we must have a system ready to respond to the trauma that will better prepare children for the adoption process. Additionally, adoptive families would be exposed to the tenets of trauma informed care and would be able to better understand some of the children's reactions to different situations based on their knowledge of the impacts that trauma can have on children.

**Objective:** By 30 June 2015, Circuit 15 will have a formalized adoption support system.

The Circuit now has a formal position dedicated to post-adoption support. The Post-Adoption Specialist is introduced the children and families at the time of placement and or selection. The Post-Adoption Specialist is available to families at any point during and after the adoption process to discuss any challenges that the family is facing and helping to address these issues to prevent any disruption.

#### **SUPPORT TO ADOPTIVE FAMILIES:**

66% (2 of 3) objectives have currently been met. This includes the creation of a service guide and Post-Adoption Specialist position and the use of FSN to track post-adoption cases and services provided to families. The objective that is still in progress is the expansion of the availability of adoption competent mental health professionals.

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

The Circuit has accomplished 70% of the activities outlined in its permanency plan and despite the change in leadership of our community-based lead agency anticipates achieving the remainder of the plan goals by June 30, 2015.

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

The Circuit is on target to meet the objectives related to the promotion of adoption and support to adoptive families overall. There were some challenges in addressing the adoption competent mental health professionals; specifically there is not sufficient capacity of trained professionals in our community to provide this service. However there has been a recent introduction of new providers in Palm Beach County who have specific training in the area of adoptions with the engagement of the Circuit's new child welfare lead agency ChildNet. Additionally, the Adoptions Unit now has an Adoption Recruiter, a Pre-Adoption Specialist and a Post-Adoption Specialist, which dedicates three positions to the promotion of adoption and support to adoptive families allowing for an even greater focus on achieving the target goals set for June 2015.

#### **Highlights and Accomplishments**

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

In 2012, the county's rate of child abuse was less than Florida's and among the lowest of the largest counties. Over 200 community seminars of the Triple P program has been delivered to date and there has been a huge interest of this program amongst various systems in particular the judicial and child welfare systems. We have increased the number of mental health practitioners in our community specializing in infant-mental health service delivery and are seeking to expand this reach to other sectors in our community. Through a long-term community planning process the Circuit successfully launched the One-App and has engaged a significant number of health and human service providers to conduct this universal eligibility screening tool to increase access to many basic needs services in our community. In

the area of adoptions, one-hundred sixty-seven (167) credited adoptions were finalized in 2012-2013. Additionally, a Pre-Adoption and Post-Adoption Specialist was added into the system of care to further enhance the plans regarding promotion of adoption and support of adoptive families.

### ***Next Steps***

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

### **PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE, ABANDONMENT and NEGLECT:**

For next FY 2014 we will continue our efforts to complete the outstanding objectives of our prevention plan and with an increased focus on building parental resilience and family functioning resiliency. Palm Beach County recently engaged in a community planning effort to examine what should happen from prenatal to young adulthood to ensure our children graduate high school and successfully enter adulthood. Many of the recommendations made through that planning process will impact our work around child abuse, abandonment and neglect for children and families in our community. Our intent is to continue exploring and implementing evidence-based family-strengthening interventions to meet the needs of our community to continue our trajectory of reducing the incidents of child abuse and neglect for our most vulnerable populations. Therefore, we will continue our current efforts on: enhanced the focus on early childhood services, increased access to basic needs services and increasing service coordination for targeted populations and early access to those in need of domestic violence services.

### **PROMOTION OF ADOPTION:**

ChildNet is introducing Permanency Roundtables to Circuit 15. These will offer opportunities for a multi-disciplinary group to come together and discuss permanency options for children and look at ways to think differently about identifying potential connections and options for children who have been in care, some of whom will be awaiting adoption. This process will offer opportunities to explore options that may have not been considered before and allows new perspectives to be introduced to potentially think about options that are "outside of the box."

Children's Home Society now has a Pre-Adoption Specialist that has been added to the system of care by ChildNet. This Pre-Adoption Specialist begins working with children and families at the time that the goal of adoption is initially identified, prior to the termination of parental rights. The role of this staff will be to work on identifying permanent options early and will allow for more open discussions to happen with families around the adoption process, will improve focus on identifying potential relative placements and begin truly implement adoption planning prior to the termination of parent rights.

### **SUPPORT TO ADOPTIVE FAMILIES:**

Children's Home Society now has a Post-Adoption Specialist that has been added to the system of care by ChildNet. The Post-Adoption Specialist is introduced to the adoptive families at the time of selection or placement. The Post-Adoption Specialist's role is to provide ongoing support to families who have adopted special needs children. This support may range from crisis intervention, to referrals for services or simply being available to speak with and visit with adoptive parents encountering some problems during or after the adoption process. This position will be a single point of contact for families to use to work through the problems they are experiencing or simply to have questions answered.

Adoption competent therapists are being identified to be able to provide therapeutic support to families during and after the adoption process. The goal is to ensure that we have an effective network of service providers with the necessary skill set to meet the needs of our families.

**CLOSING SUMMARY:**

The Circuit has taken a very data-driven approach to examine the incidents of maltreatment in our community and to engage the Local Planning Team (LPT) in determining the contributing factors to the Circuit's maltreatment rate. As a result there has been increased attention on focusing on several protective factors that will positively impact a continued reduction in child abuse, abandonment and neglect in Palm Beach County. As we continue our work and refine the focus of our LPT to complete the existing activities of our CAPP plan we will continue to integrate the protective factors framework in our completion of targeted objectives and use it as a cornerstone of our planning process in developing strategies for our next five year plan Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan (CAPP).