



# Whole Child Leon

THE FUTURE OF LEON COUNTY  
A REPORT ON THE STATUS OF OUR CHILDREN  
JUNE 2013

*Working Together to Build a Community Where All Children Thrive*



# The Future of Leon County

## A Report on the Status of Our Children 2011-12

The purpose of Whole Child Leon is to engage the entire community in doing whatever is necessary to ensure that all children in Leon County are healthy and thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments. The Whole Child philosophy is grounded in the notion that communities must address and nurture all 6 dimensions of a child's well-being in order to raise a healthy child. A growing body of research shows that the first 5 years of life are crucial to brain development, to acquiring social skills necessary to be good citizens, and to developing emotional, physical, and mental health. Embracing the idea that we must nurture the whole child is key to giving our children the best start in life. Whole Child Leon is committed to ensuring that mothers receive physical and mental health care before, during, and after pregnancy and that children:

- Receive quality healthcare
- Live in an economically stable family
- Participate in quality early education and development activities from birth through age four
- Live in a safe and nurturing environment

- Develop positive social and emotional behavior
- Have a sense of hope, wonder and connectedness to others and the larger world that comes from a strong spiritual foundation

Whole Child Leon focuses on children from birth to age 5 because of how incredibly important these years are for the development of a child's brain. Childhood brain development affects the ability to learn and participate constructively in society throughout life. The figure on the following page illustrates that the majority of neurological development for basic senses, language, and higher cognitive functions happens before a child turns five years old.



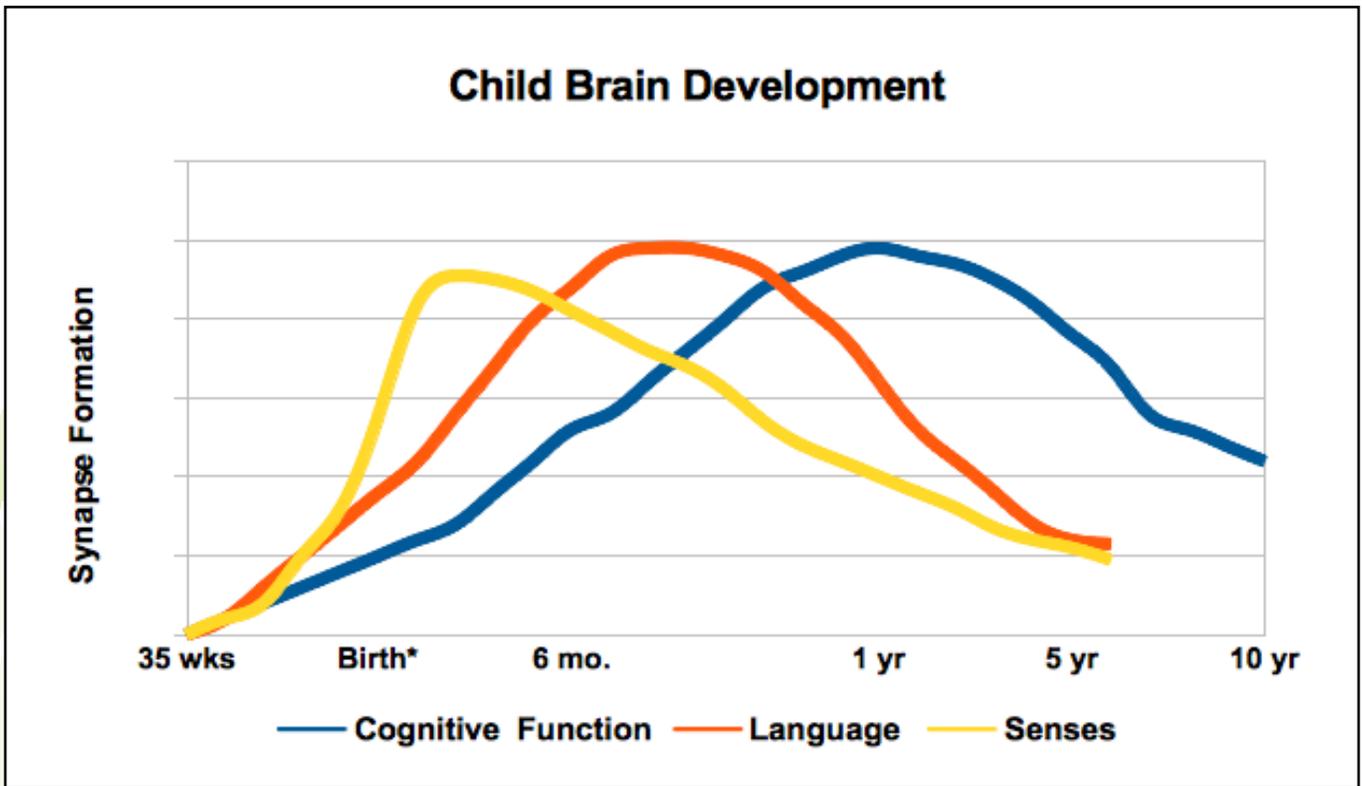


Figure 1 - Adapted from National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000 From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.

## The Condition of Children in Leon County

This Status of the Child Report tracks the well-being of children in our community by highlighting key indicators of the condition of children 0-5 in Leon County. By providing high-quality data and trend analysis, Whole Child Leon seeks to enrich local and state discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children — and to raise the visibility of children’s issues through a nonpartisan, evidence-based lens. Data in the following pages show that many children in Leon County face risks that are barriers to success in school and life. This in turn means our community will be less able to compete and thrive.

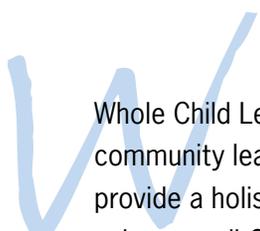
This report shows many children are able to thrive when they experience the six conditions listed above. It also shows, however, that too many children in our community do not experience one

or more of these conditions. The quality of life of our children and the economic health and stability of our community are interdependent. Whole Child Leon will use this report to engage the community and encourage their ownership of early childhood success.

We selected indicators for this report that provide good markers of the health and well being of children in Leon County and for which quality data were available. We limited the number of indicators to keep the report manageable and easy to understand. Although data collection has improved, there are many indicators of child well-being that lack comparable, consistently collected county and state level data. We will continue to work with our community partners to increase the quality and amount of data available.



# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

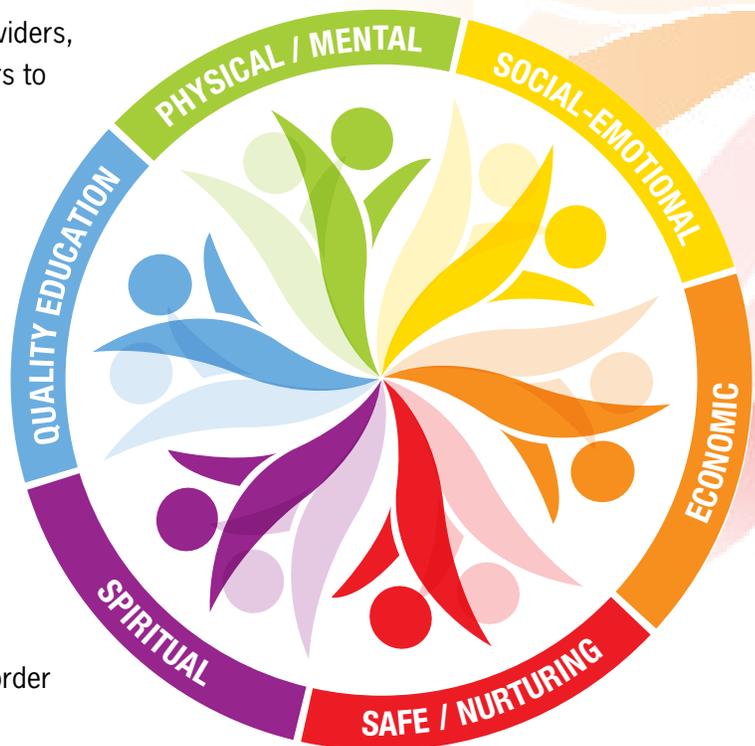


Whole Child Leon unites the efforts of service providers, community leaders, child advocates and volunteers to provide a holistic service delivery network that enhances all 6 dimensions of a Whole Child:

1. quality health care for all children
2. safe and nurturing environments for children and families
3. economic stability for families with small children
4. quality early education
5. social-emotional development
6. spiritual foundation and strength

The Whole Child philosophy is grounded in the notion that communities must address and nurture all 6 dimensions of a child's well-being in order to raise a healthy child.

The following pages outline the data indicators and specific information about each of these 6 dimensions.





## The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

### Physical & Mental Health “Children Are Healthy at Age 1”



Children’s health is the foundation of their overall development and ensuring that they are born healthy is the first step toward increasing the well-being of all children. Poverty, poor nutrition, lack of preventive health care, substance abuse, maternal depression, and family violence put our children’s health at risk. Poor health in childhood impacts other critical aspects of a child’s life and can have irreversible consequences for their future health. Children whose physical and mental health needs are met in their early years are more likely to be ready to learn and succeed in school. Indicators such as infant mortality reflect the health and well-being of the mother and child during the prenatal period and first year of life. Other indicators such as low birth weight, immunizations, child obesity, and access to healthcare offer us a glimpse of the health status of Leon County’s youngest citizens.

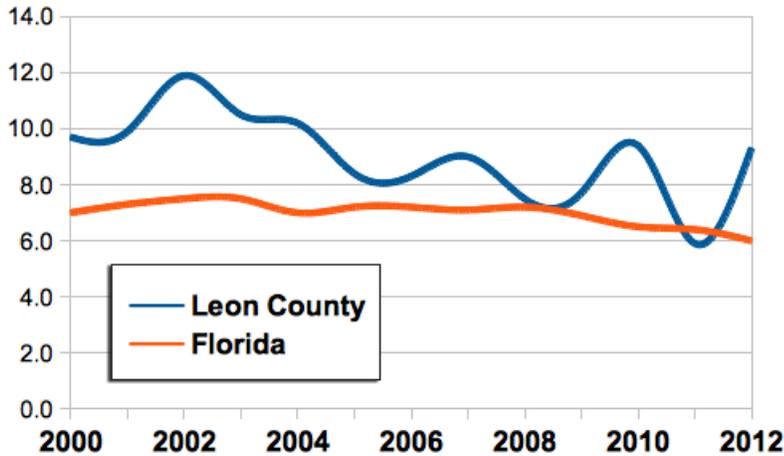
#### Data Indicators

- Infant Mortality
- Immunizations
- Obesity measure
- Access to primary care

# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

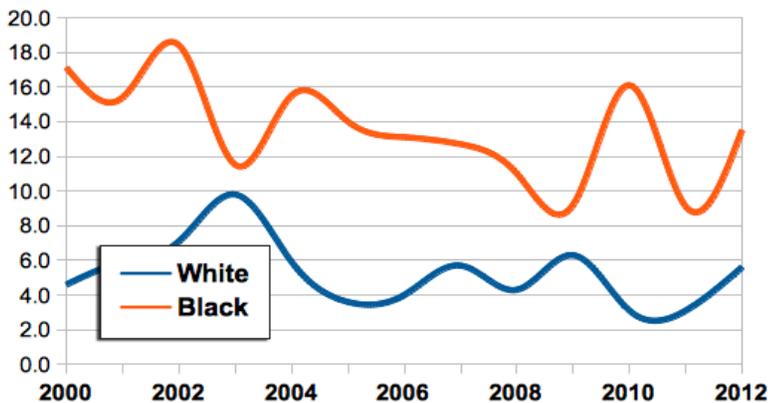


### Infant Mortality Rate



This figure shows the infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) in Leon County and Florida for the last 12 years. Deaths to infants in the first year of life is an indicator for an area's general health, maternal health, quality and availability of pediatric care, and general public health practices. While Leon County's infant mortality rate has declined since 2000, the county's rate is still higher than the statewide average. Infant mortality is not experienced equally across races within Florida or Leon County. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

### Infant Mortality Rate by Race



This figure shows the disparity between white and black rates of infant mortality over the same time period. While the black rate has declined since 2000, the black rate is consistently higher than the white rate. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

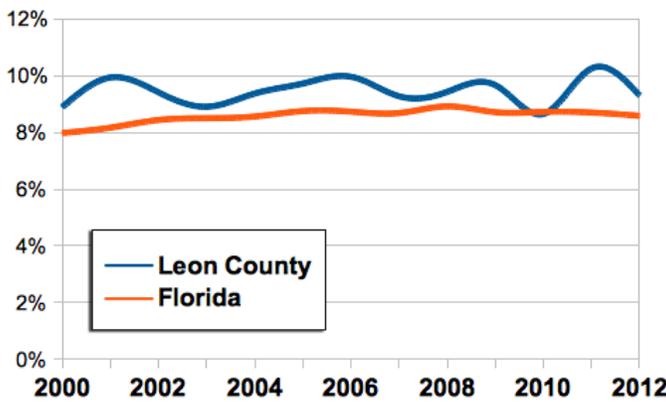


# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

## Physical & Mental Health

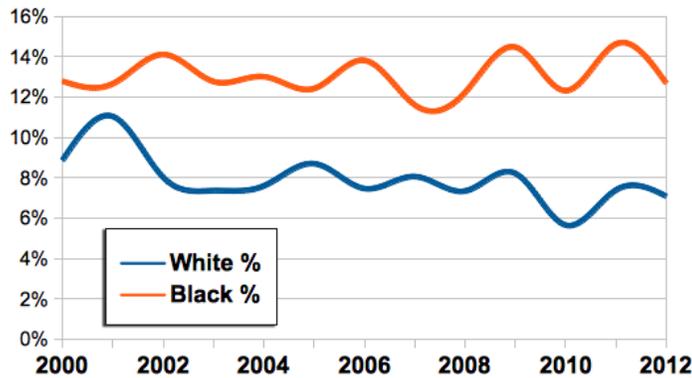


**Low Birthweight Births**



Birth weight can be an important indicator of health for the mother and the child. Low birth weight infants (less than about 5.5 pounds) have a high probability of experiencing developmental problems, short or long term disabilities, and are at greater risk of dying within the first year of life. For pregnant mothers, smoking, poor nutrition, poverty, stress, infections and violence can increase the risk of a baby being born with a low birth weight. The rate for low birthweight births has remained relatively stable since 2000. Roughly 9 out of every 100 babies in Leon County have a low birth weight, slightly higher than the state average. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

**Low Birthweight Births by Race**



This figure shows the disparity between white and black low birth weight infants. The black rate is consistently higher than the white rate and the disparity has increased since 2000. The percentage is trending down for white births, but remaining steady for black births. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

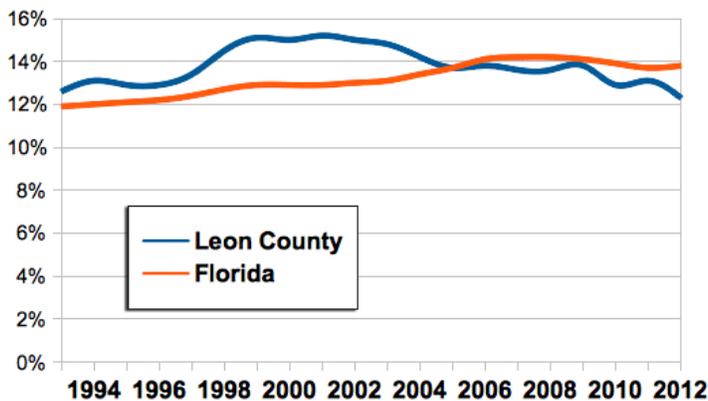
# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child



## Physical & Mental Health

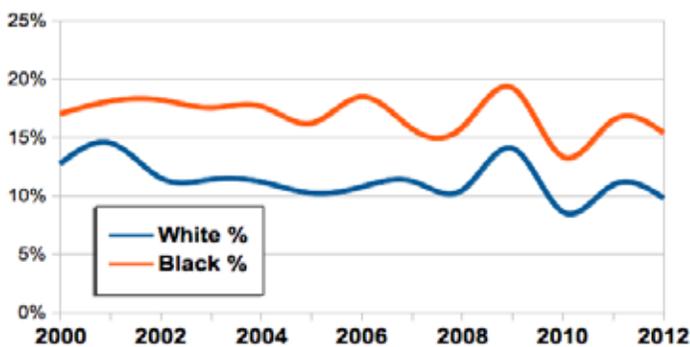


### Preterm Births



Children who are born preterm are at greater risk for short and long term complications including disabilities and impediments to growth and mental development. Like low birth weight, this data can also be associated with poorer prenatal care or poor maternal health. The percentage of births that are preterm has declined since 2000 in Leon County and is lower than the state average. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

### Preterm Births By Race



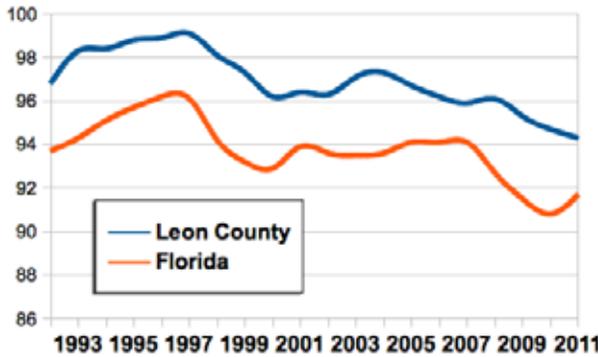
This figure shows the disparity between white and black preterm births. While both percentages have declined since 2000, the black rate is consistently higher than the white rate. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)



# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

## Physical & Mental Health

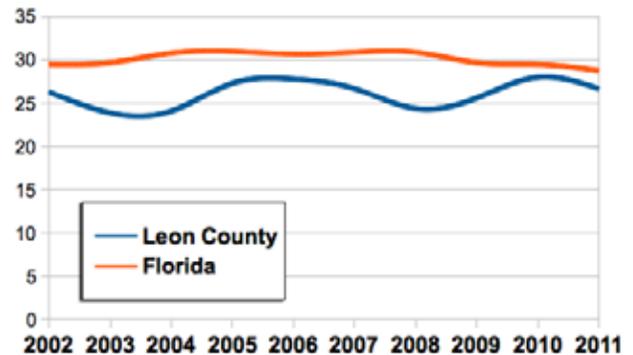
**Percent of Kindergarten Children Immunized**



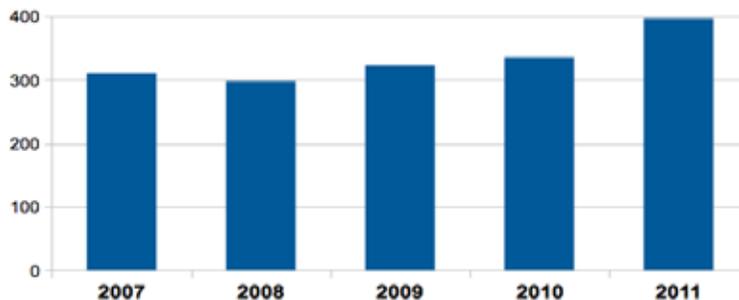
Immunization rates are an important indicator of general public health. Children who have been immunized greatly reduce their risk for a variety of serious illnesses and also reduce the risk of those illnesses appearing in the population. The percent of children immunized has declined in both Leon County and Florida since 1997, although Leon County's rate is higher than the state average. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

**Percent of WIC Children >1 Overweight**

Obesity poses a growing health threat, especially to low-income and minority children. Obesity increases the risk of high blood pressure and cholesterol, which, if left untreated, raises the risk of serious chronic diseases like Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease. While Leon County's ratio is below the state average, approximately 25% of children enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program of the USDA are overweight. Titus Sports Academy, a local organization that provides physical fitness activities for pre-K children through their "Champions" program, has also collected weight data for the participants. In 2011, 37% of the participants in the program were classified as "at risk" (either overweight or obese). (Data from Titus Sports Academy™, WIC and FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)



**Asthma Hospitalizations, Ages 1-5**



The incidence of asthma in children is an indicator for environmental health as well as the health of the child. The number of children hospitalized for asthma in Leon County has increased each year since 2008. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)



## The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

# Social-Emotional Development



Social/emotional development refers to young children's behaviors, self-control, initiative, attachment and ability to form positive, trusting relationships with others. These skills are essential to a child's well-being and success in school and in life.

Many things contribute to a child's healthy social-emotional development, but none more than having a safe, stable and nurturing relationship with a caregiver. These relationships can be encouraged through breastfeeding initiation, reading and talking with your child, using positive discipline strategies, and seeking help when needed. While some of these behaviors are hard to quantify, others such as the number of young children in foster care can reveal discrepancies when they exist.

### Data Indicators

- Children 0-5 with at least one developmental delay
- Children assessed as having one or more developmental delay, but not provided sufficient services.
- Children with social/emotional problems at entry to kindergarten

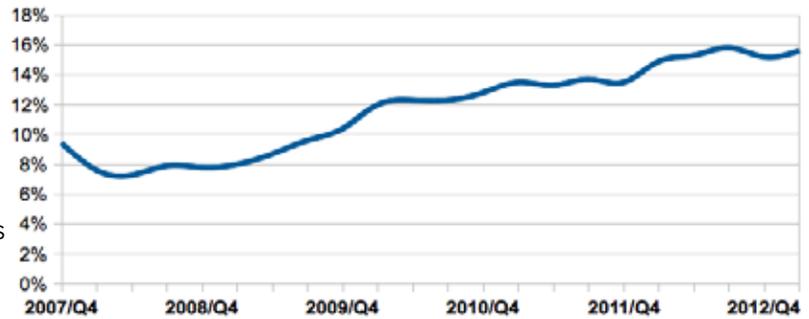


# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

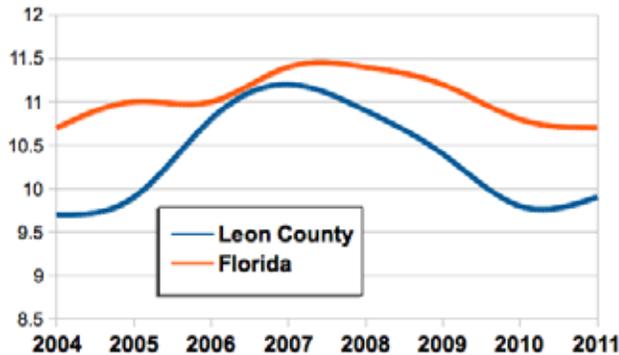
## Social-Emotional Development

**Percent of WIC Mothers Fully Breastfeeding (Infant at 26 weeks of age)**

The initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding in the first year is associated with better health outcomes for the child. Although the percent of WIC mothers who breastfeed has increased since 2007, less than 16% surveyed were breastfeeding 26 weeks after giving birth. Considering the health benefits of breastfeeding, this percentage should be much higher. (Data from Leon County WIC.)

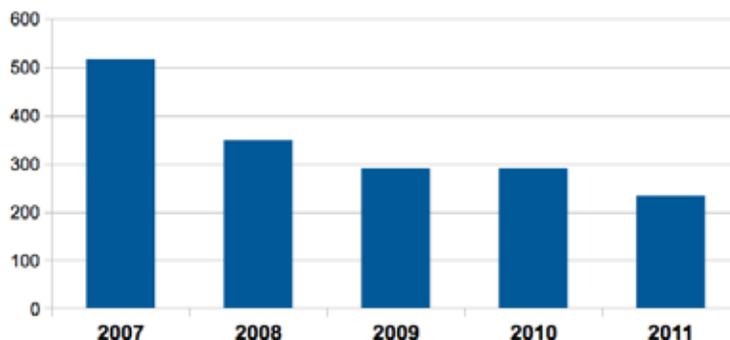


**Infants in Foster Care (per 100,000)**



Children in foster care often experience changes in caregivers that can be barriers to secure attachment with a primary caregiver and healthy emotional development. The number of infants in foster care has declined in Leon County over the past 7 years and is lower than the state average. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

**Children ages 1-5 Receiving Mental Health Services**



Children struggling with emotional or developmental difficulties can have increased difficulty with social relationships, education, and physical health. Mental health services assist children with these difficulties and prevent them from falling behind. The number of Leon County children receiving these services declined in the past 5 years. (Data from FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health.)

# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child



## Safe & Nurturing Environment



The social-emotional development of children is also impacted by their environment. Just as children need safe and stable relationships, they also need safe and stable environments. Generally, all parents strive to be the best parents they can be but, many cannot afford or do not have access to all the necessary components for a child to thrive. Their environment could describe where they live, where they learn or where they play. Further, environment is impacted not only by physical conditions but also by the people and relationships that share the environment with the young child. Indicators on child homelessness, hunger and exposure to family violence begin to reveal the true condition of children in Leon County.



### Data Indicators

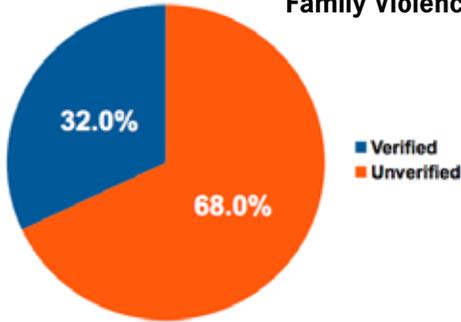
- Abused/neglected children 0 5
- Children in foster care 0 5
- Domestic violence involving children 0 5
- Food deserts
- Homeless children



# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

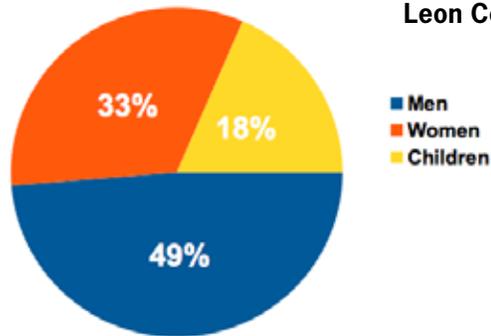
## Safe & Nurturing Environment

**Family Violence Cases Involving Children Ages 1-5**

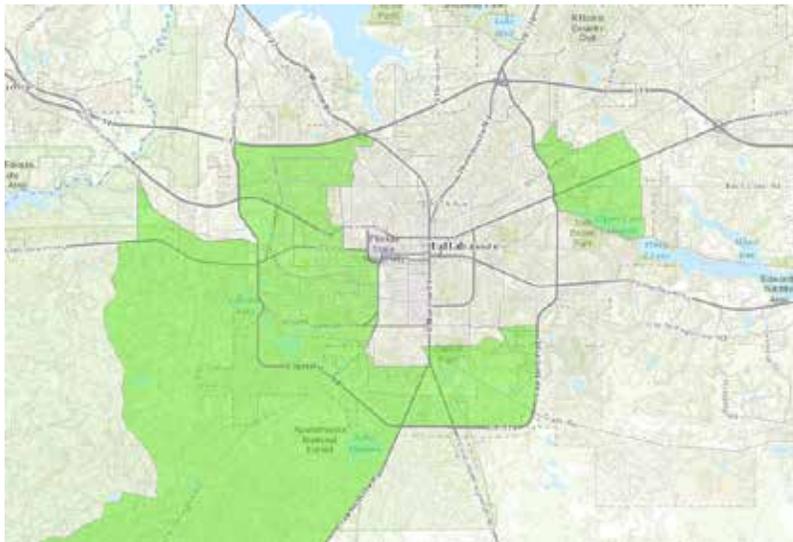


When young children live in unstable or hostile environments it can prevent them from achieving many of the Whole Child dimensions. Homes with family or domestic violence and abuse can cause long-standing mental health problems for young children and provide a poor model for social relationships. Of the total reported cases, 32% of reported cases in Leon County were verified. *(Data from Florida Department of Law Enforcement, UCR Domestic Violence Data.)*

**Leon County Homeless — 2012**



Any period of homelessness disrupts a child's life and the parents' ability to provide a safe and stable environment. As Figure 13 shows, young children make up almost 20% of the homeless population in Leon County. Of this 18% (approximately 500 children), 50 children were either pre-K or kindergarten age in the 2012 school year. *(Data provided by the Big Bend Homeless Coalition.)*



**Food Deserts**

Food deserts are areas where there is limited access to grocery stores or supermarkets. These stores have a wider variety of food items and healthier choices are readily available. Easy access to these stores (walking, biking, or short car trip) increases the chances that residents can make healthier food choices. The areas with higher percentages of low income households and lower access to healthier food stores in Leon County are shown in green in the map above. *(Data from the USDA Food Access Research Atlas.)*

# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child



## Quality Education

“All Children in Leon County Enter School Ready to Learn”



Often young children form relationships with caregivers outside the home and in child care centers. Therefore, it is imperative that efforts to ensure healthy child development also include early learning environments outside of the home. National research has shown that access to high quality early learning results in children more prepared for school, less third grade remediation and higher earnings later in life. Locally, we are in the process of collecting more data on this to show just how the impact of quality early learning affects the young children in Leon County.

### Data Indicators

- Percent of children who attend pre-school
- Percent of children ready for Kindergarten
- Percent of children in quality early learning centers (data unavailable at this time)

<sup>1</sup> Florida Department of Education, Florida Statewide Assessment Scores, <http://fcat.fldoe.org/mediapacket/2013/default.asp>



# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

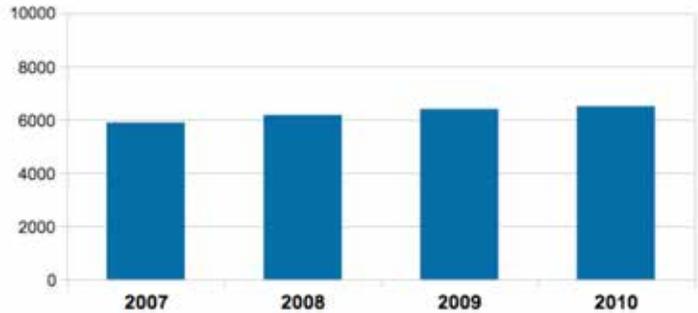
## Quality Education “All Children in Leon County Enter School Ready to Learn”



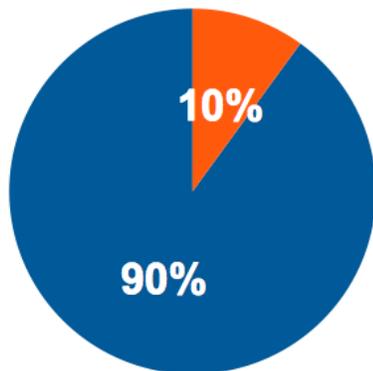
**“Professionally trained early care providers create high-quality learning environments to stimulate children and support their readiness for kindergarten.”**

**Children Enrolled in Pre-K Programs**

Pre-kindergarten programs are designed to give children a head start before primary school begins. The higher percentage of children enrolled in these programs, the earlier any issues that might prevent school readiness can be detected. The Leon County School District surveys incoming kindergarten students each year to determine pre-K attendance and school readiness. The most recent data shows while 90% of Leon County kindergarteners attended some form of pre-K (right), 26% of children are not consistently demonstrating the necessary skills (below).

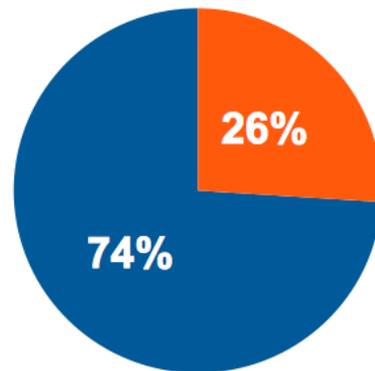


**Kindergarteners with Pre-K Experience**



■ Pre-K ■ No Pre-K

**Kindergarteners Demonstrating Necessary Skills**



■ Demonstrating ■ Not Demonstrating

# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child



## Economic Stability



Research shows that economically stable families have children who are better prepared for school, who tend to stay in school and are more likely to go on to college. From 2000 to 2010, the number of children living in poverty in the United States jumped from 12.2 million to 15.7 million, an increase of nearly 30 percent.

### Data Indicators

- Children 0-5 in poverty
- Unemployed parents with children 0-5
- Children 0-5 in single parent households



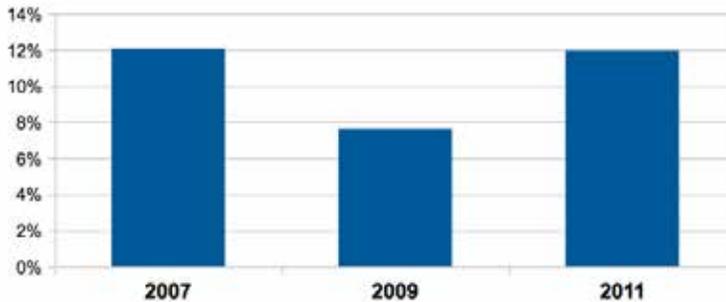
# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child

## Economical Stability

YEAR	FAMILIES IN POVERTY	INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY
2007	9.9%	18.5%
2008	9.8%	18.9%
2009	10.7%	21.8%
2010	12.2%	23.3%
2011	13.6%	24.7%

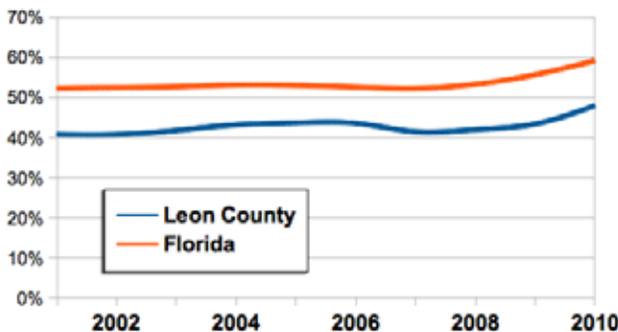
Information for individuals or families living in poverty (income below 100% of federal poverty level) can show the prevalence of barriers to economic stability. The more families or individuals living in poverty, the more challenges to healthy lifestyles, healthy diets, adequate medical care, and overall quality of life. The number of families and individuals in Leon County living in poverty has increased steadily since 2007  
*(Data from the 3-year American Community Survey).*

**Children Under 5 Wth Unemployed Parents**  
 (American Community Survey, U.S. Census)



Any period of joblessness experienced by parents is a risk for the children. The ability to provide the same quality food, health care, and financial stability for children is challenged during unemployment. The latest American Community Survey estimates show that 12% of children under 5 in Leon County have unemployed parents, whether married or single. *(Data from the 3-yr American Community Survey.)*

**Percent of Students Eligible For Free/Reduced Lunch**  
 (Elementary School)



The percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches is another indicator of income instability or poverty. While Leon County's percentage of eligible students is below the state average, 50% of children are eligible for free and reduced lunches and this number has increased steadily since 2008.

# The 6 Dimensions of a Whole Child



## Spiritual Foundation and Strength



A

A whole child is a combination of body, mind, and spirit. Spiritual development is the focus of this dimension. Whole Child Leon does not endorse one approach to spiritual development over another, but rather encourages parents, families and our community to encourage children to pursue spiritual fulfillment. This can be done through participating in a faith based organization; experiencing the wonder of nature; understanding and appreciating the interdependence of all forms of life; nurturing a child's imagination and creative instincts through music, art, books and movement; and instilling a sense of hope.

**"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even heard, they must be felt in the heart".**

***Helen Keller***

# Whole Child Leon Accomplishments in 2012-13



## Connecting Children and Families to Services

**WHOLE CHILD CONNECTION**  
Our web-based technology assists parents of young children and families in identifying their needs and connects them with appropriate service providers. In the last year, more than 11,000 families and providers accessed information from our websites and more than 2500 accessed our comprehensive resource guide. Whole Child Leon maintains a central community-wide calendar of children's meetings, events and activities that had more than 2100 visitors.



**COMPUTER KIOSKS** have been installed in over 26 key locations around town to provide families immediate access to the Whole Child Connection, including:

- 24 Elementary schools
- Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend
- Leon County Courthouse

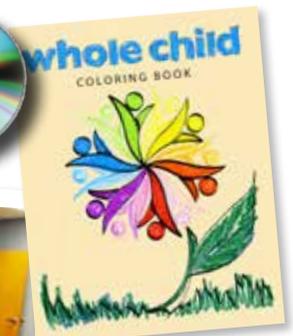


Photo: Reid Compton

# Creating Partnerships



**PROFESSIONAL NETWORK**—Whole Child Leon hosts a monthly meeting which provides a forum for more than 60 professionals from agencies and organizations to encourage and enable service providers to receive information on current best-practices, to build collaborative networks, and to create comprehensive systems of care for young children.

**HEALTHY INFANT PARTNERSHIP**—is finding ways to address the high infant death rate and other poor birth outcomes in our area. The partnership is disseminating a survey, approved by the Institutional Review Board of FAMU to determine the health status of women of childbearing age in our community.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM OF CARE**—Whole Child Leon is the facilitating agency to engage more than 25 agencies in Leon and Gadsden County to share resources, information and best practices to produce meaningful improvements in the social-emotional health of young children. This collaboration of providers is committed to going beyond the coordination of services, to true integration of services for young children from infancy through eight years of age “at risk” of an identified early childhood social, emotional or behavioral disorder

**FREE COMMUNITY WIDE DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING** for infants, toddlers and preschoolers is made possible by Whole Child Leon’s coordination and collaboration with over 25 agencies/businesses. As a result, more than 400 children have been screened and when issues were detected, their families were connected to appropriate agencies for early intervention assistance. The process used in the Free Community Wide Developmental Screening connects 100% of families immediately at the screening site with early intervention programs.





PARENT ADVOCACY COUNCIL WHOLE CHILD LEON is in the process of organizing a council or forum where parents work in partnership with providers to improve early childhood services (availability, accessibility, and quality). We aim to empower parents to take ownership of the Whole Child philosophy and hold the community accountable to prioritizing the needs of young children.



95210: THE WHOLE PICTURE OF HEALTH (TWPH)—Whole Child Leon took the lead on this community-wide effort to address childhood obesity by promoting behavioral and policy change by creating a partnership that brought the 95210 healthy lifestyle for children campaign to our community. This initiative has evolved into the backbone for Tallahassee's efforts to change neighborhood food environments, increase physical activity and educate across all sectors on obesity prevention.



DENTAL SEALANT PROGRAM—Cavities, or dental caries, remains the most prevalent childhood disease and continues to take a heavy toll on children's health and well-being across certain socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups. From all available data it is clear that inadequate access to dental care is commonplace for children of families living in poverty despite tremendous advances in prevention. School-based sealant programs are especially important for reaching children from low-income families who are less likely to receive private dental care. Tooth decay may result in pain and other problems that affect learning in school-age children. Whole Child Leon has collaborated with the Leon County Health Department and Leon County Schools, to implement a School-based dental sealant delivery program to provide sealants to children unlikely to receive them otherwise.

# Call to Action

Our children are our future, and it is the responsibility of parents, lawmakers, business people, teachers and everyone in our community who affect the daily lives of our children to work together to ensure that the needs of our children are met. Unfortunately, many of the obstacles facing our children today are the same problems that are left unsolved year after year...



We need to work together as a community if we are to improve conditions for children and families. This should be a goal on which political partisans can agree, and we hope that our elected officials at the state and local levels will rise to the occasion. Over the next several months, Whole Child Leon will work with neighborhood groups on identifying their priorities for improving conditions of children 0-5 and then host a community-wide summit where we come together as a community in a spirit of shared responsibility and shared sacrifice, and commit ourselves to investing in our youngest residents.

## Whole Child Leon Steering Committee



Lorraine Ausley  
(Founding Chair)



Kristin Dozier



Susan Ellis



Meade Grigg



Shonda Knight



Angel Trejo, Chair



Laurie Dozier



Ed Feaver



Brooke Hallock



Holly McPhail



Tracey Cohen



Vincent Edwards



Bob Gabordi



Ed Holifield



Peggy Youngblood

Not Pictured: Susan Dunlap

SCAN & LOAD



Courtney Atkins, Whole Child Leon Executive Director

PARENTS: Get connected to community resources that can assist you and your family at the Whole Child Connection available at [www.WholeChildLeon.org](http://www.WholeChildLeon.org). Contact a Whole Child Leon Advisor today, at 850.414.8344

