

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND ELDER AFFAIRS

Senator Garcia, Chair

Senator Thompson, Vice Chair

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, January 17, 2023

TIME: 1:30—3:00 p.m.

PLACE: *Mallory Horne Committee Room, 37 Senate Building*

MEMBERS: Senator Garcia, Chair; Senator Thompson, Vice Chair; Senators Baxley, Book, Bradley, Brodeur, Ingoglia, and Rouson

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	Presentation by the Department of Children and Families on the: -Implementation and effectiveness of Senate Bills 80 and 96 (2021), and 7034 (2022); and -Implementation of the Office of Continuing Care. Presentation by the Department of Children and Families on the:	Presented	
2	Presentations from the Department of Children and Families and Family Support Services of the SunCoast and Children's Network of Hillsborough on the transition from Eckerd Connects in Pinellas, Pasco, and Hillsborough Counties.	Presented	
Other Related Meeting Documents			



DCF CHILD WELFARE UPDATE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND
ELDER AFFAIRS

JANUARY 17, 2023



Strong and Resilient Families

Statutory Mission:

- The mission of the Department of Children and Families is to work in partnership with local communities to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency.

Strategies:

- Enhanced prevention programs that avoid crises.
- Better integration of services and resources to ensure we are holistically meeting the needs of those we serve.
- Accelerating pathways to permanency.





Presentation Topics

Senate Bill 80 (2021)

- Multidisciplinary Teams
- Transition Plans
- Office of Continuing Care

Senate Bill 96 (2021)

- Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Family Finding and Kinship Navigation
- Critical Incident Rapid Review Team Expansion

Senate Bill 7034 (2022)

- Board Rate Parity
- Child Care Subsidies

Circuit 6 and 13 Transition Updates



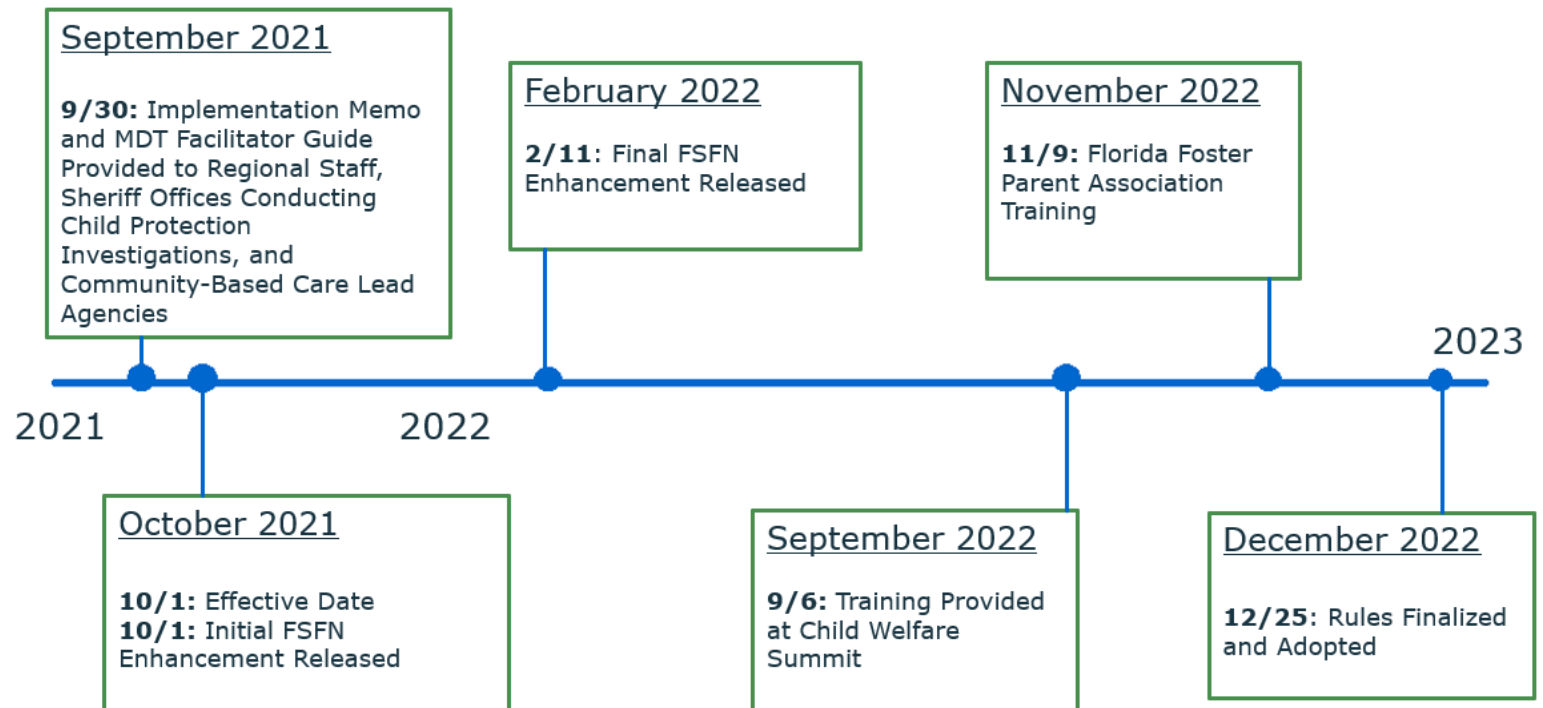
Multidisciplinary Teams

- Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staffing meetings bring together a diverse and integrated group of individuals who collaboratively develop a plan aimed at strengthening and empowering a family in achieving child safety, permanency, and overall family well-being.
- Implemented in October 2021
- MDT scope includes important decisions regarding a child's life including:
 - Initial placement into out-of-home care
 - Changes in physical custody
 - Changes in educational placement
 - Placement with siblings
 - Any other important and complex decisions as identified by the Department or a CBC Lead Agency
- 45 total facilitator positions, 44 onboarded statewide



Senate Bill 80

MDT Timeline





Senate Bill 80

Multidisciplinary Teams

Measure	Count
Total Number of MDTs	24,376
Number of Non-consensus MDTs	419

Data timeframe: February 14, 2022, to December 31, 2022

Measure	FY 21-22*	FY 22-23**
Removal MDT within 72 hours	34.90%	58.67%
Placement Change MDT within 72 hours	16.65%	27.27%
Number of Children Entering Care	11,384	4,430
Rate of Placement Changes	5.32	5.27
Percent Placement w/ Relative	60.71%	60.26%
Percent of Siblings Placed Together	61.46%	60.29%

*Baseline year

**Incomplete reporting period



MDT Opportunities

- Emergency Removal
 - Timeframes of emergency removals limit participation due to short notice, even if staffing is held after the placement change
- Fidelity
 - Training is needed to ensure appropriate practice and documentation of MDTs and participants
- Planned Moves
 - Even if all parties agree to an earlier move, statute requires 14-day notice prior to moving to new placement
- Non-consensus at MDT Staffing meetings
 - Even when a caregiver is requesting a placement change, participants may disagree with the move, leading to non-consensus
- Experts in Bonding
 - Court system was not allocated funding to support bonding experts



Transition Plans

- Requires development and implementation of a transition plan before each placement change and school change.
- Goal: Reduce the unintended negative impacts of multiple placement or school changes and ensure child is provided all the supports needed when changes must occur.
- Quality Parenting Initiative developed tool and guides for staff and foster parents.
- FSFN enhancement pending to implement a formalized assessment tool to document the transition plan and track data and outcomes.



Office of Continuing Care

- Office of Continuing Care was established as a point of contact for young adults who age out of care from 18 to 26.
- The Department serves as a direct contact to the young adult for information to access services to support self-sufficiency including food assistance, behavioral health services, housing, Medicaid, and educational services.
- The Department also collaborates with CBC Lead Agencies to identify and access local resources to support young adults served by the office.



Office of Continuing Care

Programmatic Updates

Nearly **500** youth and young adults served since inception in October 2022.

Lived Experience

- Fully staffed team with lived experience serving clients ages 18-26 who have or will soon be transitioning out of foster care.
- Created a Youth Advisor position to connect directly with youth, educate about the office and provide invaluable lived experience in daily decisions.

Team Support

- Provide on-going professional development and growth opportunities for young adults with lived experience to flourish in their positions at the Department.
- OCC specialist on the ESS team to provide immediate resolution to benefit application questions.



Office of Continuing Care

Programmatic Updates

Areas of Need Identified

- Understanding and connecting with Independent Living specific services
- Housing
- Basic needs: clothing, food, employment, education, financial assistance/budgeting

Resolution of Cases

- 63% handled immediately over the phone
- 37% required continued follow up through care navigation

Additional Services Provided

- Assistance applying for scholarships
- Family finding pilot launched to connect young adults with positive connections
- Pre and Post storm outreach to young adults in the hurricane path for preparation and response
- Peer support and encouragement



Office of Continuing Care

Programmatic Updates

Opportunity for Quality Assessment and Improvement:

- Direct client interaction and feedback loop with CBC lead agency partners opened the door for many quality improvement exercises:
 - Statewide site visits
 - Independent living specific quality measures

Outcomes of Quality Measures:

- Prioritizing independent living requirements through restructuring and contract changes
- Hiring with lived experience as a priority

Insight from External Stakeholders:

- Standing cadence of meetings with youth advocacy groups
- Continued research efforts and reports



Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- The Commission was created to review and evaluate the current effectiveness of behavioral health services in the state, identify barriers to care, and make recommendations regarding policy and legislative action to implement improvements.
- The Commission submitted an interim report to the Legislature on January 1, 2023, that put forth 10 recommendations for improving the behavioral health system of care.
- The recommendations are categorized into the following:
 - Data Transparency
 - Access to Care
 - Service Gaps
- The final report is due September 1, 2023.



Senate Bill 96

Family Finders and Kinship Navigators

The Family Finder Program and Kinship Navigators ensure:

- Robust and exhaustive search to identify relatives for placement early in a case.
- Families have the support and services necessary to take care of children in their care.

	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Initial Placement w/ Relative	59.06%	62.30%	65.17%	60.71%
Exits to Guardianship- Kin	14.94%	13.74%	14.94%	14.58%
Exits to Adoption- Kin	15.71%	17.08%	16.24%	17.24%
Total Exits to Kin	76.71%	75.35%	76.15%	75.51%

The data above represent exits to relatives as a percentage of total exits age 0-18. Data source: FSFN



CIRRT Expansion

- The Critical Incident Rapid Response Team (CIRRT) process was expanded to include verified reports of sexual abuse of a child in out-of-home care AND the child was a subject of another verified report of abuse or neglect during the previous six months OR at the discretion of the Secretary
- CIRRT Evaluation, Supported, Screened, Deployed:
 - **790** cases were evaluated by the CIRRT unit
 - **188** were assigned to a CIRRT Coordinator who supported the investigation until case closure
 - **8** cases that met the new criteria for a CIRRT deployment
 - **13** cases that warranted a Special Review given the circumstances of the case and prior history of other parties



CIRRT Findings & Opportunities

- Of the eight CIRRT Deployments, six met the statutory criteria and two were conducted at the request of the Secretary.
- Continuous Quality Improvement Opportunities:
 - Training on Child Placement Agreements and Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome
 - Consistent licensing practices statewide
 - Essential partner collaboration with law enforcement and Child Protection Teams
- Closed seven foster homes due to concerns or disclosures.



Senate Bill 7034

Board Rate Parity

The monthly payment made to relative and nonrelative caregivers and Level I licensed family foster homes was increased to match the rates for Level II through Level V family foster homes. However, for relative and non-relative caregivers who do not achieve Level I licensure within 6 months, the payment drops to a lesser amount set by the Department.

Measure	Count	Children Placed
Relative Caregivers	1,048	1,697
Non-Relative Caregivers	726	1,053
Relative & Non-relative Caregivers who Transitioned to Level 1	270	444

The caregiver numbers above represent the unduplicated count of caregivers receiving at least one enhanced rate payment from July 2022 to December 2022



Senate Bill 7034

Child Care Subsidy

The child care subsidy is a \$200 per month payment made to any foster parent and relative or nonrelative caregiver who has a child between the age of birth to school entry placed in their home, regardless of their program participation or licensure status, to pay toward the cost of an early learning or child care program.

Clients Served as of 12/31/2022

Number of Caregivers Served	7,435
Total Payment Amount	\$7,676,675

Total Funding Available

General Revenue	\$19,206,037
Federal Grants Trust Fund	\$5,674,796
Total Appropriation	\$24,880,833

The caregiver numbers above represent the unduplicated count of caregivers receiving at least one child care subsidy from July 2022 to December 2022



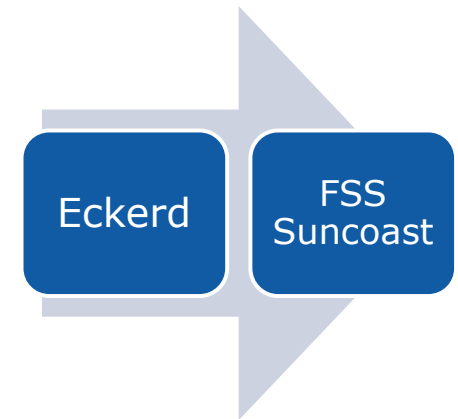
CBC Transition

Circuit 6

Successful Transition to CBC Lead Agency in January 2022.

FSS Suncoast Accomplishments Since January 2022:

- Successful implementation of prevention programming has led to a **27% reduction in removal rate** from SFY 20-21 to SFY 21-22.
- FSS increased the number of front-line case managers and have **85% of case manager positions filled** as of January 2023 from 58% filled in January 2021.
- Group Care utilization **down to 9.67%** in SFY 21-22 from 10.90% in SFY 20-21
- Children Achieving Permanency within 12 Months **up to 27.18%** in SFY 21-22 from 26.30% in SFY 20-21





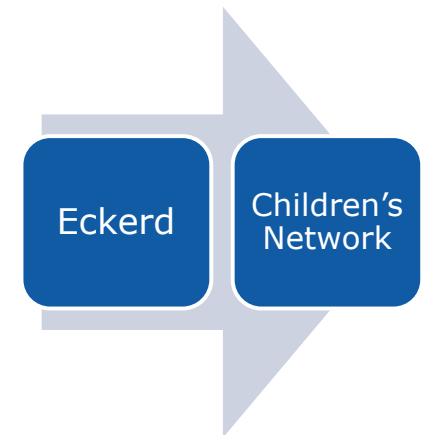
CBC Transition

Circuit 13

Successful Transition to new CBC Lead Agency July 1, 2022

Children's Network of Hillsborough County
Accomplishments since transition July 1, 2022:

- Successful implementation of prevention programming has led to a **37% reduction in the removal rate** from SFY 21-22 to November 2022.
- Implemented Intensive Family Services Team with HCSO serving over **700 children** in their homes since July 1 with only 5 children being removed.
- Peer Recovery Specialists imbedded within system of care to provide support to parents and youth.



S. CFE

Meeting Date

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic

Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Assistant Secretary Jess Tharpe

Phone 850-488-9410

Address 2415 North Monroe Street

Email jess.tharpe@myflfamilies.com

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32303

City

State

Zip

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information **OR** Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

☒ I am appearing without
compensation or sponsorship.

☐ I am a registered lobbyist,
representing:

Florida Department of Children
and Families

☐ I am not a lobbyist, but received
something of value for my appearance
(travel, meals, lodging, etc.),
sponsored by:

While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

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S-001 (08/10/2021)

The Florida Senate

DUPLICATE

1.17.2023

APPEARANCE RECORD

Deliver both copies of this form to
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Bill Number or Topic

S. CFE

Meeting Date

Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Secretary Shevaun Harris

Phone 850-488-9410

Address 2415 North Monroe Street

Email shevaun.harris@myflfamilies.com

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32303

City

State

Zip

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S-001 (08/10/2021)



Circuit Six Transition Update

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs 1-17-23





MISSION

The mission of Family Support Services, Inc. is to be the leader in providing safety, stability and quality of life for all children by working with the community to strengthen the family unit.

Leaning into our Values

Partnership

At FSS, a belief that [we are better together](#) is core to who we are. Partnership is an essential component of a healthy system of care. Our team is committed to a [respectful, open-minded, collaborative](#) approach to [co-creating](#) solutions with the community. This extends to the children and families we serve as well.

Excellence

FSS challenges ourselves to always strive for better on behalf of those we serve. We foster [innovative](#) practices, encourage [continuous quality improvement](#), and engage in [strategic planning](#) with our partners to achieve the [highest possible outcomes](#) for children, families, and the community.

Accountability

FSS recognizes our [leadership](#) role within the system of care and strives to be accountable to the community by being [trustworthy partners](#). FSS is committed to [ethical](#) and [transparent](#) practices, and to operate with [integrity](#) as we pursue [positive outcomes](#).

Compassion

We recognize that we often meet families at their most challenging moment and people are more than the sum of their circumstances. We provide [trauma-sensitive](#) care for the children and families in our system to [reach their full potential](#). We embrace a [service leadership](#) approach and commit to [finding the strengths](#) in everyone we encounter while we [foster resiliency](#).

Equity

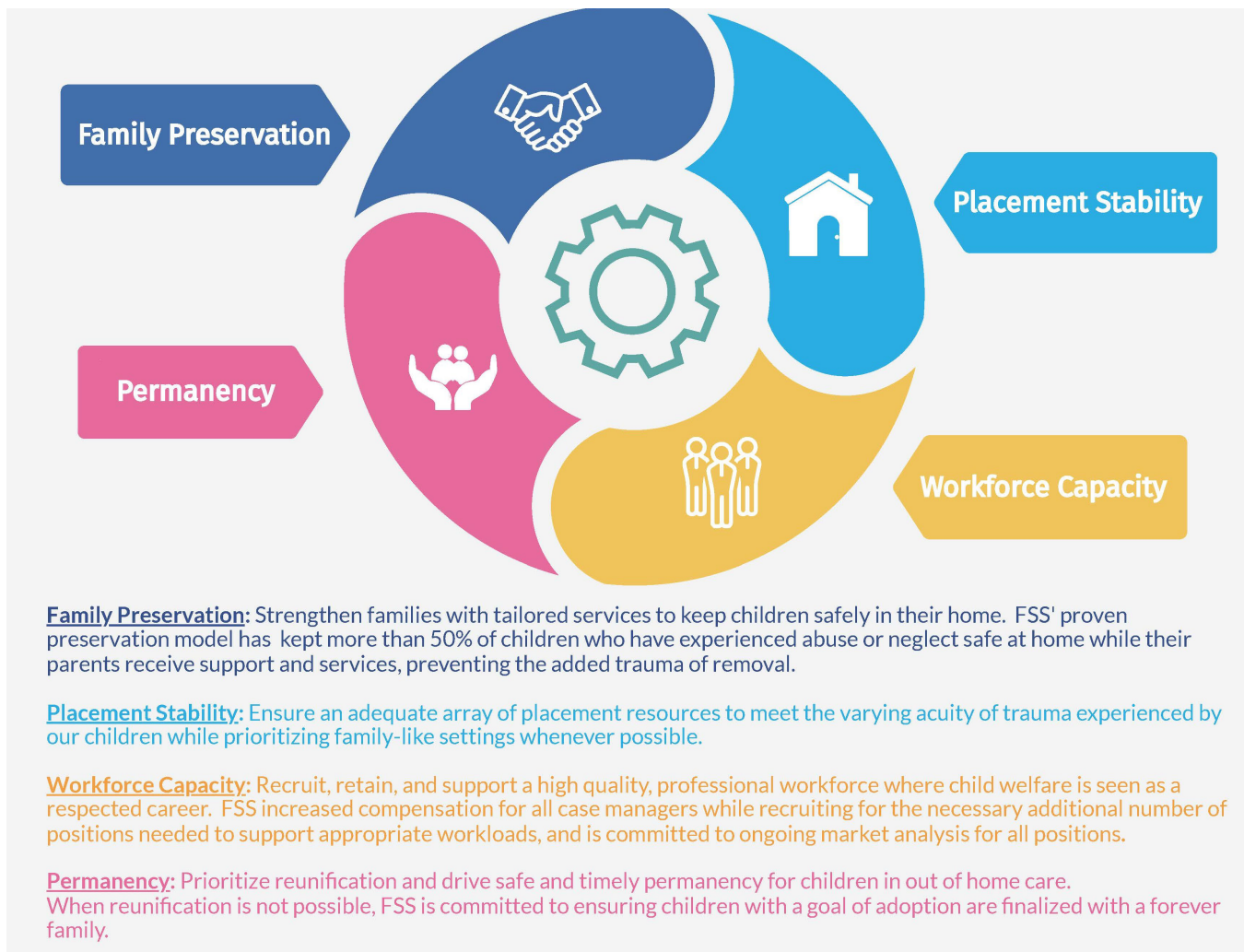
Equity goes beyond the fair treatment of all people. For FSS, equity is the commitment to recognize the [social justice](#) issues intrinsic to our work with [marginalized communities](#). We strive to [amplify the voices](#) of individuals and families impacted by [poverty, racism and discrimination in any form](#). We obligate ourselves to a belief that none of these factors should be a predictor of child welfare involvement or outcomes.



The Principles that Guide our Work with Families

1. We believe [children grow and thrive best in their own families](#) and do everything in our power to [maintain children safely in their homes](#).
2. When [children must be removed](#), our first focus is to provide an appropriate [healing placement](#), [prioritizing kin](#) settings whenever possible.
3. We believe children should experience [permanency as quickly as possible](#) and no child should grow up in foster care.
4. We [collaborate with partners](#) to ensure the best outcomes for our community.
5. We believe that when we put the [best interests of children and their families first](#), everything else will fall in place.

Our Strategic Focus for Circuit Six



Year 1 Milestones We're Most Proud Of:



FAMILY PRESERVATION

In 2022, there were **28% less children removed from their homes** in Circuit Six than were removed the year before FSS became the lead agency.



PERMANENCY

In 2022, **more children exited the foster care system than entered it, for the first time since 2014**, with a higher percentage due to reunification than the year before.



WORKFORCE CAPACITY

In January, FSS' in-house case management team had only 25% of needed positions filled. Now, system-wide teams have **85% of case manager positions filled**.

Year 2 Focus Areas:



Safe Exits to Permanency

In collaboration with the State Attorney's Office and case management partners, we're evaluating if Conditions for Return have been met to allow safe reunification.

Priority Push for 200+ children with a goal of Adoption we believe can finalize before the end of March

Utilizing new statutory allowances to reinstate parental rights, we're exploring this possibility for youth who have languished in foster care.



Placement Capacity

We've welcomed new contracted partners to recruit and support family foster homes and have launched a comprehensive recruitment campaign.

Working with DCF to explore non-traditional options for specialized group care for high-trauma youth, our most critical need.

Boosting supports for Kinship Placements, where 57% of children are placed, to ensure they remain stable and without need for traditional foster homes.



Family Support Services

PASCO AND PINELLAS COUNTIES

www.familysupport.org

Jenn Petion, MA, APR
CEO and President

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

Meeting Date _____

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic _____

Committee _____

Amendment Barcode (if applicable) _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

Street

City

State

Zip

Speaking:

☐

For

☐

Against

☐

Information

OR

Waive Speaking:

☐

In Support

☐

Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

☐

I am appearing without
compensation or sponsorship.

☐

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representing:

☐

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S-001 (08/10/2021)

APPEARANCE RECORDTransition to Circuit

Bill Number or Topic

01/17/2023

Meeting Date

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meetingChildren, Families & Elder Affairs
Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name

Jenn Petion

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City

State

Zip

Speaking:

☐ For☐ Against☒ Information**OR**

Waive Speaking:

☐ In Support☐ Against**PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**I am appearing without
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S-001 (08/10/2021)

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: SB 37

Case No.:

Type:

Caption: Senate Children and Families

Judge:

Started: 1/17/2023 1:33:01 PM

Ends: 1/17/2023 3:00:01 PM **Length:** 01:27:01

1:33:00 PM Chair comments
1:33:26 PM CAA calls roll
1:33:38 PM CAA confirms quorum present
1:33:48 PM Chair calls for tab 1
1:34:06 PM Chair calls for Secretary Shevaun Harris
1:34:31 PM Sec. Harris presents on implementation of child legislation
1:34:43 PM Sec. Harris presents other panelist
1:35:18 PM Presentation begins
1:36:12 PM Presentation topics Bill 80, 96 7034
1:37:16 PM Senate Bill 80 presented
1:38:30 PM Senate Bill timeline presented
1:40:14 PM Multidisciplinary Teams presented
1:45:10 PM MDT Opportunites presented
1:49:05 PM Senator Books quesitons about children being placed together
1:49:21 PM Sec. Harris responds
1:49:50 PM Senator Book questions about numbers
1:50:13 PM Sec. Harris responds
1:51:53 PM Senator Book comments
1:52:35 PM Sec. Harris responds
1:52:56 PM Senator Book comments on numbers
1:53:14 PM Chair speaks
1:53:33 PM Sec. Harris talks Transition Plans
1:54:27 PM Sec. Harris presents Office of Continuing Care
1:55:33 PM Sec. Harris with Programmic Updates with Office of Continuing Care
2:00:27 PM Sec. Harris on SB 96
2:01:31 PM Overview of Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse
2:02:18 PM Sec, Jess Tharpe with Florida Department of Children and Families presents
2:03:41 PM Family Finders and Kinship Navigators slide presented
2:06:38 PM CIRRT Expansion slide
2:08:44 PM CIRRT Findings & Opportunites slide
2:09:38 PM Senate Bill 7034 presented -- Board Rate Parity slide
2:11:33 PM Child Care Subsidy slide
2:12:18 PM CBC Transition - Circuit 6 slide
2:14:19 PM Circuit 13 slide
2:15:45 PM Presentation concluded
2:15:53 PM Senator Rouson with question
2:16:36 PM Sec. Harris responds
2:18:04 PM Senator Rouson questions on staffing
2:18:25 PM Sec, Harris responds
2:18:56 PM Senator Garcia speaks
2:19:00 PM Senator Book questions on SB 96
2:19:51 PM Sec. Harris responds on sexual abuse cases

2:20:34 PM Senator Book questions and comments on abuse
2:22:05 PM Sec.Harris responds on legal action of closed foster homes
2:22:33 PM Senator Book comments
2:22:55 PM Sec.Jess Tharpe responds
2:23:14 PM Senator Books thanks Harris and Tharpe
2:23:17 PM Chair comments
2:23:34 PM Senator Brodeur comments on SB 80
2:24:37 PM Sec.Harris responds
2:24:49 PM Senator Baxley with question about child on child abuse
2:25:47 PM Sec.Harris responds
2:26:22 PM Tharpe responds with info on child placing agreement
2:27:07 PM Senator Book ask question
2:28:31 PM Tharpe responds on services available for children with complex needs
2:29:03 PM Harris speaks on support opportunities and services
2:29:51 PM Senator Book follow up question on human trafficking
2:30:04 PM Harris responds
2:30:36 PM Senator Book follow up question on services in rural areas
2:30:55 PM Sec.Harris responds
2:31:37 PM Sec.Tharpe speaks
2:31:58 PM Senator Book comments
2:32:22 PM Tharpe responds
2:32:34 PM Senator Books thanks presenters
2:32:36 PM Senator Rouson with statement on slide 13
2:32:55 PM Chair questions
2:34:10 PM Sec.Harris speaks on rural areas
2:35:11 PM Senator Baxley with questions
2:36:36 PM Sec.Harris responds of timeframe of permanency
2:38:18 PM Senator Rouson responds
2:38:33 PM Harris speaks
2:38:36 PM Chair comments
2:38:48 PM Next presentation called by chair
2:38:57 PM Jenn Petion with Children, Families and Elder Affairs presents
2:39:35 PM Petion talks Mission
2:40:12 PM Leaning into our Values slide
2:41:27 PM Principles that Guide our Work with Families slide
2:42:33 PM Strategic Focus for Circuit Six slide
2:44:17 PM Year 1 Milestones We're Most Proud of slide
2:46:15 PM Year 2 Focus Areas slide
2:46:36 PM Petion ask if there are any questions
2:47:42 PM Vice Chair ask question about children in judicial system
2:48:17 PM Petion responds
2:49:02 PM Vice Chair ask additional question if there is coalition to combat children in judicial system
2:49:15 PM Petion responds
2:50:04 PM Senator Rouson ask question
2:50:52 PM Petion responds
2:51:51 PM Chair comments
2:51:57 PM Chair calls up final presenter
2:52:10 PM Terri Balliet introduction
2:52:42 PM Chair comments on time
2:52:50 PM presentation by Balliet begins with Challenges slide
2:54:56 PM Balliet speaks of Priorities

2:56:59 PM Early Wins slide
2:58:04 PM Innovation at its Best - IFST slid
2:58:57 PM Balliet ask if there are any questions
2:59:02 PM Chair makes closing remarks
2:59:22 PM Senator Ingoglia calls to adjourn and meeting adjourned