

*Promoting Positive  
Parent-Child Relationships  
and Family Self-sufficiency*



*Strategic Plan*

2012 - 2015

## *Acknowledgements*

*The success of Healthy Families Florida would not be possible without the enduring support of the Governor, the Legislature, the Department of Children and Families, the dedicated members of the Healthy Families Florida Advisory Committee and the project and central office staff.*

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## *Special Recognition of Our Devoted Program Managers*

*In appreciation of your tireless commitment to preventing child abuse and neglect.*

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*Special Thanks to Our Advisory Committee Members Who  
Have Contributed Their Time and Expertise to Make Healthy  
Families Florida a Success*

- Mr. Ted Granger* United Way of Florida  
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- Mr. Alan Abramowitz* Florida Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program
- Ms. Kris-Tena Albers* Florida Department of Health
- Ms. Patricia Armstrong* Florida Department of Children and Families
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- Mr. Guy Spearman, III* Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida Board of Directors
- Mr. Mike Stone* Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County
- Ms. Judi Vitucci* Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions

## *Status of Children and Families in the State of Florida*

- ☞ The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2011 Kids Count Data Book ranked Florida 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation on ten key indicators of overall child well-being. Based on data from 2009, three indicators contributing to Florida's ranking were:
  - 21 percent of children were living in poverty;
  - 38 percent of children were living in single parent families; and,
  - 32 percent of children were living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment.
  
- ☞ According to the United States Census Bureau, 5.7 percent of Florida's population consists of children under five years old (2010).
  
- ☞ In 2011, 4,917 Florida children under age 18 gave birth (Florida Department of Health, 2012).
  
- ☞ In Fiscal Year 2010-2011, the Florida Abuse Hotline accepted calls to commence investigations for 228,018 alleged victims of child maltreatment (Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Annual Report 2011).
  
- ☞ Of the investigations commenced in FY 2010-2011, 51,555 (22.6%) resulted in verified findings of child maltreatment (Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Annual Report 2011).
  
- ☞ According to the Florida Child Abuse Death Review 2011 Annual Report, 155 children died from abuse or neglect during the year 2010. The Committee reviewed 136 of these. Of the 136 deaths reviewed:
  - 37.5 percent resulted from abuse.
  - 62.5 percent resulted from neglect.
  - 38 percent were children under the age of one.
  - 88 percent were children age five or younger.
  - 58 percent were accidental deaths. Of these, 80 percent were due to drowning (53%) and unsafe sleeping conditions (27%).
  - 36 percent were a result of homicide.
  - 80 percent were definitely preventable.
  - 30 percent occurred in a family with prior reports of abuse/neglect.
  - 52 percent occurred in a family with a history of substance abuse.
  - 34 percent of the 174 perpetrators identified in these cases had a history of domestic violence in the home.
  - 44 percent were caused by the child's mother (including biological, adoptive and stepmothers).
  - 34 percent were caused by the child's father (including biological, adoptive and stepfathers).
  - 7 percent were caused by other relatives, such as grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles and aunts. Other caretakers in the home (i.e., the primary caregiver's male or female significant other) were responsible for five percent of the deaths.

## *Overview of Healthy Families Florida*

Healthy Families Florida is a nationally accredited, evidence-based home visiting program modeled after Healthy Families America (HFA). The program is designed to work with overburdened families who are at-risk for child abuse and neglect and other adverse childhood experiences. The HFA model, developed in 1992 by Prevent Child Abuse America, is based upon 12 Critical Elements derived from more than 30 years of research. These Critical Elements provide best practice standards for ensuring program quality. Currently, there are nearly 400 affiliated HFA program sites in 40 States, the District of Columbia, all five US territories and Canada.

Child advocates in Florida recognized a need for a statewide child abuse prevention program and began laying the groundwork for change in 1996, stressing to key legislators the effectiveness of such programs and the potential benefits to the state. In the two years that followed, a combination of factors brought this issue to the forefront. First, Florida experienced both an increase in the number of children being abused and neglected and an increase in child deaths due to abuse and neglect. Second, in 1997, six locally-funded Healthy Families programs started showing positive results in child abuse prevention. Third, compelling research was published revealing that bonding between an infant and caregiver was an important factor in the healthy brain development of a child.

As a result, in Fiscal Year 1998-1999, the Florida Legislature enacted legislation that created Healthy Families Florida and funded the program through a \$10 million appropriation to the Department of Children and Families. The legislation called for the Department of Children and Families to contract with a private, nonprofit corporation to implement Healthy Families Florida in targeted geographic areas throughout the state. The Department of Children and Families contracted with the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida to administer Healthy Families Florida beginning July 1, 1998.

In the decade that followed, Healthy Families Florida experienced progressive growth, expanding into all of Florida's 67 counties. Legislative funding peaked at \$30.4 million during fiscal year 2007-2008. However, the state experienced a significant deficit in the following years. At first, cuts to the program were incremental, but during the 2010-2011 Legislative Session the Legislature cut \$10 million, reducing the Healthy Families Florida funding to \$18.1 million. As a result, Healthy Families Florida lost services in 14 counties and significantly reduced services in an additional 18 counties. Currently, Healthy Families Florida has 32 projects serving 53 counties (26 entire counties and targeted high-risk zip codes in the remaining 27 counties).

Despite these funding challenges, Healthy Families Florida has maintained its community partnerships. Projects are required to provide a minimum 25 percent cash and in-kind contribution to show the community's commitment to the Healthy Families Florida program. During Fiscal Year 2011-2012, community organizations provided \$10,236,904 cash and \$1,638,865 in-kind contributions, representing more than one-third of total program costs statewide. This funding allowed projects to serve additional families and support local operational costs.

Healthy Families Florida is proven not only to prevent child abuse and neglect, but also to promote healthy child development, increase family stability and self-sufficiency and contribute to our state's long-term economic prosperity.

**Services begin early, during pregnancy or shortly after the birth of a baby and can last up to five years, depending on the unique needs of each family** – The most rapid period of brain development occurs in the first five years of life, the period when most abuse and neglect occurs. Research shows that the key to preventing child abuse and neglect is intervening early when parents are eager to learn. Healthy Families Florida helps participants gain the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the challenges of parenting right from the start, before negative patterns of behavior develop that will have a detrimental impact on their child.

**Services are voluntary** - Parents volunteer to be assessed to determine whether they are eligible for the program. Parents having factors that place their children at risk of abuse and neglect and who live in the service area are invited to join the program. Parents volunteer to participate in Healthy Families Florida because they want to be good parents and they recognize that they may not have all of the knowledge and skills needed to handle the toughest job they will ever have.

While Healthy Families Florida participants are demographically diverse, many share common risk factors including:

- Incomes at or below 200% poverty
- Single parents
- Limited awareness of positive discipline options
- Multiple children under the age of five
- Do not have a GED or high school diploma
- Parent experienced abuse as a child
- Mental health problems
- Parent was raised by an alcoholic, drug-addicted or mentally unstable parent
- Prior Child Protection Service involvement
- Experienced intimate partner violence

**Services are intensive** – Families receive weekly home visits that decrease in frequency and duration as families increase protective factors and make progress in providing a safe, healthy, stable environment for their children. During visits, family support workers:

- Educate parents on how to recognize and respond to their babies' needs at every developmental stage
- Educate parents on the importance of immunizations and well-child checks
- Connect parents and children to medical providers
- Serve as mentors and model positive parent-child interaction that promotes bonding and healthy brain development
- Screen for maternal depression and child developmental delays
- Teach parents positive discipline techniques, how to cope in healthy ways with the day-to-day stress of parenting and how to problem solve when crises arise
- Instill confidence and empower parents and caregivers to accept personal responsibility for themselves and their children by setting goals that lead to family self-sufficiency
- Help them recognize and address potential safety hazards in and around their homes



- Provide information on prevention topics including safe sleep to prevent infant suffocation, water safety to prevent drowning and ways to cope with crying to prevent shaken baby syndrome
- Connect them to community resources and a support network of family, friends, neighbors and faith-based organizations

**Services are proven to achieve results** - A rigorous five-year independent evaluation and follow-up study show that Healthy Families Florida prevents child abuse and neglect before it ever starts and achieves other positive outcomes.

Healthy Families Florida has consistently achieved outstanding results since its inception in 1998. For 2011-2012, 98 percent of children in high risk families served by Healthy Families Florida were free from abuse and neglect. Other key measures of success achieved during 2011-2012 include:

- 98% of mothers do not have a subsequent pregnancy within two years of the target child's birth. Mothers with less frequent pregnancies have fewer pregnancy related complications and are less likely to give birth to low-birth weight and premature babies.
- 99% of participants and their children are connected to a primary health care provider, which reduces the use of costly emergency room visits and increases the consistency of care received by the mother and child.
- 92% of children in Healthy Families Florida are fully immunized by age two, exceeding the state and national averages of 81% and 71% respectively. This is significant given that Healthy Families Florida serves high risk families and the state and national rates include the general population.
- 93% of children receive age appropriate developmental screening at prescribed intervals. Early detection of developmental delays allows for early treatment and reduces the likelihood that more serious and costly problems will develop.
- 93% of participants were screened for postnatal depression, a research-based risk factor correlated with child abuse and neglect.
- 94% of families identified as having an area of concern on the Healthy Families Parenting Inventory increased their protective factors when measured again six months later, improving the parent's ability to provide a safe, stable and nurturing relationship and environment for their children.

Healthy Families contributes to workforce development by promoting personal responsibility that leads to family self-sufficiency:

- 73% of participants who were unemployed at enrollment were employed when they left the program.
- 84% improve their self-sufficiency by getting their GED or a college degree, enrolling in job skill development training, getting a job, finding more stable housing, learning English as a second language, attending literacy classes or obtaining a driver's license.

## *Introduction to the Strategic Plan*

The Healthy Families Florida Strategic Plan is a fluid document that provides direction for achieving continuous program improvement by defining the goals, objectives and strategies to be accomplished over the next four years. The Healthy Families Florida Advisory Committee, Healthy Families Florida central office and program staff and local advisory board members contributed to the development of this plan. Healthy Families Florida objectives and strategies included in Florida's Five-Year Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan are incorporated herein. This plan is implemented through the development of a detailed work plan with measurable actions steps aimed at achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

### *Vision*

Every child in Florida will grow-up healthy, safe and nurtured and become a productive citizen.

### *Mission*

To promote child and family well-being and prevent the abuse and neglect of Florida's children through a statewide system of voluntary, community-based home visitation.

### *Program Goals*

- ☞ Prevent child abuse and neglect
- ☞ Enhance family functioning by building protective factors and reducing risk factors
- ☞ Promote healthy childhood growth and development
- ☞ Promote family self-sufficiency
- ☞ Increase parents' ability to develop positive parent-child relationships
- ☞ Build and sustain community partnerships to provide integrated and holistic services to high risk families

### *Strategic Plan Goals at a Glance*

#### *Goal 1: Quality Service*

Provide training, strength-based technical assistance and continuous quality improvement to assure effective, consistently high-quality services.

#### *Goal 2: Sustainability*

Maintain, enhance and expand Healthy Families Florida to serve expectant parents and parents of newborns who need and want Healthy Families services.

#### *Goal 3: State and Local Partnerships*

Promote strong partnerships at the state and local levels to coordinate and improve services for families.

#### *Goal 4: Parent Leadership*

Empower and support parents as leaders within Healthy Families Florida.

## *Goals and Objectives*

### *Goal 1: Quality Services*

**Provide training, strength-based technical assistance and continuous quality improvement to assure effective, consistently high-quality services.**

**Objective 1A.** Collect, analyze and use data for program planning, implementation and evaluation to improve program services and effectiveness.

**Strategy 1A1** - Gather and apply research to practice to improve and enhance service delivery.

**Strategy 1A2** - Develop and implement a work plan that addresses the program challenges and improvements identified through quality assurance efforts.

**Strategy 1A3** - Review Healthy Families Florida data elements and reports and modify as needed to assist projects in monitoring services and performance outcomes.

**Strategy 1A4** - Conduct ongoing quality assurance and quality improvement activities to maintain the success and effectiveness of Healthy Families Florida.

**Strategy 1A5** - Implement quality improvement groups based on specific systemic issues that are identified through technical assistance, quality assurance and ongoing evaluation. These groups will provide recommendations to the Healthy Families Florida projects, including any work products developed.

**Strategy 1A6** - Implement the Protective Factors Action Plans, developed in accordance with Objective 1.2 of Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan, to enhance the integration of protective factors into service delivery.

**Strategy 1A7** - Conduct a Biennial Service Review (BSR) of all components of the service delivery system which includes analyses of acceptance rates, participant retention, home visit completion rates, staff turnover and cultural competency.

**Strategy 1A8** - Conduct periodic reviews of tools used by home visitors to determine utility, effectiveness and frequency of use, and make changes as needed.

**Objective 1B.** Evaluate the quality, content, effectiveness, timeliness and accessibility of Healthy Families Florida training and make appropriate improvements.

**Strategy 1B1** - Analyze project staff evaluations of each Healthy Families Florida training module and use the data to improve future trainings.

**Strategy 1B2** - Explore, develop and implement processes to improve knowledge retention, increase practical application expertise and enhance skill development.

**Strategy 1B3** - Revise and maintain the Healthy Families Florida Training Guide.

**Strategy 1B4** - Update and develop new trainings based on the needs of Healthy Families Florida participants and project staff.

**Strategy 1B5** - Develop a protocol for observing trainings and making appropriate changes.

**Strategy 1B6** - Collaborate with Healthy Families America to integrate any updated HFA Core trainings into the existing Healthy Families Florida Core trainings.

**Strategy 1B7** - Explore and develop innovative ways to deliver training and/or components of training.

**Objective 1C.** Evaluate the effectiveness of the technical assistance and quality assurance monitoring provided by Healthy Families Florida and make appropriate changes.

**Strategy 1C1** - Provide project staff opportunities to give feedback on the quality, content and effectiveness of technical assistance and quality assurance provided by Healthy Families Florida staff, and make changes as needed.

**Strategy 1C2** - Develop and implement technical assistance based on feedback from Healthy Families Florida project staff.

**Strategy 1C3** - Explore and implement new methods for conducting quality assurance activities.

**Strategy 1C4** - Develop, collect and share Innovative Strategies on the HFF website as an additional method for providing technical assistance.

**Objective 1D.** Improve the engagement and retention of families.

**Strategy 1D1** - Identify and implement best practices for conducting effective screening, assessment and enrollment of families.

**Strategy 1D2** - Identify and implement best practices for conducting creative outreach to engage and/or re-engage families.

**Strategy 1D3** - Analyze the Biennial Service Review(s) at the state and local levels to better identify issues related to participant attrition and develop strategies to overcome these issues.

**Strategy 1D4** - Explore the characteristics of the relationship between the home visitor and the family that leads to better family retention.

**Strategy 1D5** - Conduct web conferences to share lessons learned and successful strategies for the engagement and retention of families.

**Objective 1E.** Employ and retain highly qualified staff at the state and local levels.

**Strategy 1E1** - Convene a quality improvement group to develop recruitment, interviewing and staff development strategies that will contribute to the hiring and retention of qualified and competent staff.

**Strategy 1E2** - Share and implement innovative methods of providing recognition to staff for exceptional performance.

**Strategy 1E3** - Develop and implement strategies based on analysis of data collected on staff salaries, attrition and retention.

**Objective 1F.** Increase involvement of fathers in Healthy Families Florida services.

**Strategy 1F1** - Develop a workgroup, which includes fathers, to provide recommendations for increasing and improving services to fathers and implement changes.

**Strategy 1F2** - Create face-to-face training on father engagement for program managers, supervisors and direct service staff.

**Strategy 1F3** - Review all trainings for father inclusiveness and update as needed.

**Strategy 1F4** - Review all educational and promotional materials for father inclusiveness and update as needed.

**Strategy 1F5** - Review the Healthy Families Florida website to determine father-friendliness and update as needed.

## ***Goal 2: Sustainability***

**Maintain, enhance and expand Healthy Families Florida to serve expectant parents and parents of newborns who need and want Healthy Families services.**

**Objective 2A.** Maintain the Multi-site Healthy Families America Accreditation.

**Strategy 2A1** - Develop a work plan that includes a timeline to complete the self-assessment tools required for accreditation.

**Strategy 2A2** - Provide training for project staff to prepare for the accreditation process and to complete the self-assessment tools.

**Strategy 2A3** - Review policies and procedures on an annual basis at the state and local levels to ensure adherence to the Healthy Families America model and standards.

**Strategy 2A4** - Develop and revise reports in the data system to support the gathering of evidence for the self-assessment tool.

**Objective 2B.** Advocate for maintaining and increasing Healthy Families Florida base funding.

**Strategy 2B1** - Work with the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Executive Office of the Governor to develop a budget issue each fiscal year that maintains the quality, enhances and/or expands Healthy Families Florida.

**Strategy 2B2** - Develop advocacy materials to educate and engage business and community leaders, legislators, funders and the media on the value of Healthy Families Florida.

**Strategy 2B3** - Identify and engage key partners and parents to support and advocate for Healthy Families Florida.

**Strategy 2B4** - Develop annual state-level and grassroots advocacy strategies and mobilize advocates when it is time to take action.

**Objective 2C.** Enhance the Healthy Families Florida model to better serve families experiencing intimate partner violence, substance abuse and mental health issues.

**Strategy 2C1** - Seek funding for adding licensed clinical specialists to the Healthy Families Florida core staffing.

**Strategy 2C2** - Implement a strength-based curriculum designed to prevent intimate partner violence.

**Strategy 2C3** - Improve trainings for program staff to include practical applications for working with families experiencing intimate partner violence, substance abuse and mental health issues.

**Objective 2D.** Pursue additional funding opportunities for Healthy Families Florida.

**Strategy 2D1** - Seek federal, state and local grant opportunities.

**Strategy 2D2** - Explore options for maximizing state general revenue.

**Strategy 2D3** - Expand fundraising opportunities at the state and local levels.

**Objective 2E.** Increase the awareness of Healthy Families Florida through education and public awareness efforts.

**Strategy 2E1** - Educate legislators, business and community leaders, civic groups, law enforcement and faith-based organizations about Healthy Families Florida and its effectiveness in preventing child abuse and neglect.

**Strategy 2E2** - Develop educational materials that can be used for community awareness campaigns, including tailored messages for parents, teachers, child care providers, health care professionals, community leaders and others.

*Strategy 2E3* - Develop and broadcast public service announcements.

*Strategy 2E4* - Work with the media through letters to the editor, opinion editorials and feature articles.

*Strategy 2E5* - Address issues relevant to Healthy Families Florida through periodic publication of journal articles and white papers.

### ***Goal 3: State and Local Partnerships***

**Promote strong partnerships at the state and local levels to coordinate and improve services for families.**

***Objective 3A.*** Establish and enhance partnerships with other home visiting programs and family support services, as needed.

*Strategy 3A1* - Participate in quarterly liaison meetings at the state level between the Florida Department of Health/Healthy Start and Healthy Families Florida staff.

*Strategy 3A2* - Participate in state and local level opportunities that foster the sharing of best practices and improve coordination among home visitation programs.

*Strategy 3A3* - Establish and update collaborative written agreements and participate in local initiatives that maximize the coordination and availability of mental health services, substance abuse treatment, intimate partner violence services, early learning and other family support services.

*Strategy 3A4* - Enhance partnerships with Child Protection Investigators and Community-Based Care Case Managers by increasing their knowledge of Healthy Families Florida services and improving communication.

*Strategy 3A5* - Facilitate the Home Visiting Protective Factors Workgroup in its efforts to integrate the protective factors into home visiting programs and other programs with a home visiting component, where appropriate, as part of Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan.

*Strategy 3A6* - Coordinate with the Department of Health and Department of Children and Families on the implementation of the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant in Florida.

## ***Goal 4: Parent Leadership***

**Empower and support parents as leaders within Healthy Families Florida.**

***Objective 4A.*** Prepare staff to incorporate parent leadership into program services and activities.

***Strategy 4A1*** - Research and learn from other programs with historical experience and success in implementing and sustaining parent leadership strategies.

***Strategy 4A2*** - Develop and provide training to staff on the expectations for implementation and maintenance of meaningful parent leader involvement in program activities.

***Strategy 4A3*** - Identify and train staff and parents who are current or past Healthy Families Florida participants to be Parent Leadership Ambassadors.

***Strategy 4A4*** - Identify and share innovative strategies for developing parent leaders and maintaining parent leader engagement.

***Objective 4B.*** Integrate past and current Healthy Families Florida participants as parent leaders in program services and activities.

***Strategy 4B1*** - Include parent leaders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Healthy Family Florida services.

***Strategy 4B2*** - Engage parent leaders as advocates at the state and local level.

***Strategy 4B3*** - Engage parent leaders to assist in the coordination, facilitation and/or topic selection for parent support groups within each Healthy Families Florida project.

***Strategy 4B4*** - Seek state and local funding opportunities to support and sustain parent support groups.



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