



strength

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OF NORTH FLORIDA, INC.
2004 Report to our Community

vision

That children grow up connected to their own families, supported by foster families and protected by the community.

That children have the opportunity to succeed in school and to learn to be productive citizens.

That Duval County citizens, organizations, and agencies, recognize that child protection is a community responsibility and represents the best interests of all County residents.

Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc. (FSS) is the lead agency delivering foster care services to children and families throughout Duval County, Florida.



Our mission is to provide for the safety and stability of children and families by strengthening the child protection system and involving neighborhood networks to ensure success.

focus

In the United States today, there are more than half a million children in foster care. The majority will remain in care for more than three years and live in at least three different foster homes. Some will stay much longer and be placed in even more homes.



In Florida, each year there are 9,000 to 10,000 children who are not able to sleep in their own beds. They have been abused or neglected so it is no longer safe to live at home, at least for awhile or maybe forever. These children are newborns; middle schoolers; teenagers; they have brothers and sisters in the same situation; they are all races and nationalities; a few have serious medical problems and handicaps; most have hidden wounds on their souls.

Currently, in Duval County, over 2,000 children are in protective custody and 1,000 children live with foster families.

When tragedy strikes a child in foster care, the media and policy makers shine a spotlight on the child welfare agency, caseworkers, parents, and foster parents. Sadly, that spotlight rarely illuminates some of the structural factors that limit the ability of a child welfare agency to respond appropriately to the needs of children in their care. Typically, the child welfare system has an over-reliance on foster care services at the expense of services that might keep children safely out of foster care or move them more quickly to a safe, permanent home.

Nor does the spotlight generally find the unsung heroes—the caseworkers, foster parents, and adoptive parents who nurture and protect vulnerable children; the parents who overcome great odds and reunite safely with their children; and the children who show remarkable resilience in the face of profound and often prolonged difficulty.

Family Support Services is dedicated to improving the system through privatization and specialized agencies to ensure that the children of our community find love, happiness and care within their own families or foster families.

progress

In 1997, the Florida Legislature passed House Bill 3217 requiring the Department of Children & Families to begin privatization of Child Protective Services.

Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc. was selected as the 501(c)(3) non-profit agency to act in the capacity of Lead Agency for Child Protective Services in Duval County. The agency's purpose is to administer competent, culturally sensitive, casework services for children under the supervision of the court.

These services include:

- Preventive services for children at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Family preservation and reunification services when abuse is verified.
- Child protective services after investigation (intake, family assessment, and case management).
- In-home and out-of-home support services.
- Out-of-home placements and residential services.
- Adoption services.
- Independent Living Services for teens.

care

Although FSS is the lead agency, children receive care and support from a neighborhood network consisting of all the people in a community that support families and keep them together: schools, churches, property owners, business associations, home owner associations, police, firemen, families, trusted friends, and the state and private agencies operating within the neighborhood boundaries.

The vision of our network is that services are immediately available when needed. The neighborhood response is designed to be quicker than government. Neighborhood network members can serve as the neighborhood's eyes and ears — prepared to ensure the safety and well being of their children.

Child protective services for children and their families are delivered through non-profit neighborhood service centers — some of which have been serving children and families in Jacksonville for over 50 years. These centers, operating under contract with FSS, directly provide or contract for all necessary services within a designated neighborhood area.

These Jacksonville agencies currently provide approximately 140 caseworkers and over 350 foster homes to service our community.





events & activities

As part of its initiatives, Family Support Services hosts and participates in several events throughout the year to help create awareness and support for children in need of foster care.

National Adoption Day™

Nationwide, the number of children in foster care has reached staggering proportions. Yet, only 20 to 25 percent of foster children waiting for adoption will ever leave foster care and join an adoptive family before aging out of governmental care at age 18.

On November 22, 2003, Family Support Services hosted the largest single-day adoption event at the Duval County courthouse where more than 50 children were placed in loving homes.

Annual Foster Children Academic Awards Luncheon

Over 50 foster children received trophies and recognition for their academic success in spite of the trauma in their lives. They were honored at the Annual Foster Children Academic Awards Luncheon where Corrine Brown, Florida's 3rd District Congresswoman, was the featured speaker.

Operation Backpack

Five years ago, *Good Morning Jacksonville* anchor Charlene Shirk, launched Operation Suitcase, in an effort to address the dire need for foster children to transport their belongings when they are abruptly removed from their homes.

In order to smooth the transition into the foster care system, the Junior League of Jacksonville Inc., prepares age-appropriate Foster Bundles—backpacks filled with overnight necessities.

This year, First Coast News, the Junior League, and Landstar teamed up with FSS to support the 2003 drive to benefit the Foster Bundles program. The campaign, aptly re-named Operation Backpack, provided new backpacks, gift certificates and gift cards for foster children of all age groups. The gift cards allow foster kids the opportunity to purchase personal items of their own choosing.

Sheriff's Youth Ranches Summer Camp

The Sheriff's Youth Ranches Summer Camp is a mobile camping program that combines two highly successful programs of the Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranches (Summer Camp and Project Harmony) and brings this unique service directly into local communities that may be socially and economically challenged. This year a special camp was held at St. Pauls AME Church dedicated to children in foster care.

The goals of the program are for children to develop and retain a high level of self-esteem, learn how to utilize free time in a positive manner, and teach and lead others by role modeling positive leadership skills.

Christmas in January

Christmas in January was developed to assist children who enter care during the holiday. Hosted by the Jacksonville Bar Association Young Lawyers Section, Christmas in January allows the children who missed out on the traditional festivities a chance to enjoy them at this special party.

Foster Parent Appreciation Day

Family Support Services and other community members hosted a special Riverboat cruise and luncheon aboard the "Lady of the St. Johns" to thank foster parents for all they do year round.

Advisory Board Grants

Schools and community organizations received funding to provide services to children and families at risk of entering the child protection system. These grants were distributed by neighborhood advisory boards to service providers in their neighborhoods.



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1100 Cesery Blvd. Ste 100 • Jacksonville, FL 32211
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3027 San Diego Rd. • Jacksonville, FL 32207
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390 Park Street • Jacksonville, FL 32204
Phone: 389-5231



6261 Dupont Station Ct. • Jacksonville, FL 32217
Phone: 394-5757



900 University Blvd. #700 • Jacksonville, FL 32211
Phone: 642-9100



4819 Soutel Drive • Jacksonville, FL 32208
Phone: 723-6049



action

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES strives to:

- Develop a network of family foster care that is neighborhood-based and makes every attempt to place children in their own neighborhoods or communities.
- Reduce the number of children served in institutional and group care—shifting to family foster care and family centered services.
- Lessen the number of children coming into foster care.
- Decrease the length of stay of children in out-of-home care.
- Reunite families quickly by implementing preventative measures.
- Streamline the adoption process and provide on-going support to adoptive families.

Each month, six neighborhood advisory boards, from across Duval County, meet to determine where funds will be spent and what services can be delivered/improved for children in foster care.

statistics

support

Board of Directors:

Children in Care

(Duval County)

# of Children	Month
2,575	July, 2003
2,625	October, 2003
2,485	January, 2004
2,697	June, 2004

Children in Out-of-Home Care

(Duval County)

# of Children	Month
2,300	July, 2003
2,325	October, 2003
2,175	January, 2004
2,058	June, 2004

BY AGE GROUP

0-4	35%
5-9	24%
10-14	24%
15-18	15%
18+	2%

BY RACIAL PROFILE

African American	59%
Caucasian	37%
Asian	1%
Hispanic	1%
Other	2%

BY GENDER

Boys	52%
Girls	48%

Year-End Statistics

327 Active foster homes in Duval County
224 Adoptions finalized
719 Cases closed (adopted, reunited with family member, long-term permanent placement)
Caseworkers manage (on average) 21 children and 12 families

financials

TOTAL BUDGET\$28,840,000

Casework Services and Related Support	13,315,000	46%
Prevention and Preservation	420,000	2%
Adoption Promotion and Support	220,000	.8%
Community Development	200,000	.7%
Coordination of Health Care	75,000	.3%
Family Support	870,000	3%
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment	840,000	3%
	\$15,940,000	56%*

Room and Board

Adoptive Care	\$ 3,000,000	10%
Foster Care	7,000,000	24%
Shelter Care	2,000,000	7%
Independent Living	900,000	3%
	\$12,900,000	44%*

Annual Community Donations \$ 290,000

Bill Beitz
CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Charles Brazil
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE,
STATE OF FLORIDA

Christine Carr
DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Dr. Joan Carver
JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

Connie Crandall
FOSTER PARENT REPRESENTATIVE

Nancy Edwards
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

Virginia Greiner
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mary Holley
CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

Michelle Knoff
NORTH FLORIDA ALLIANCE
REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Dennis Lafer
PEDIATRICIAN

Joanne Lipp
CHAIR, NW NEIGHBORHOOD
ADVISORY BOARD

Karel Moerings
NICOLAAS ALEXANDER JEWELERS

Lisa Moore
DUVAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Linda Rubens
CLIENT ADVOCACY COUNCIL,
STATE BOARD

John Rutherford
JACKSONVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dr. Juanita Trice
CHAIR, NORTHSIDE BOARD

Stephen J. Weinbaum
ATTORNEY AT LAW

*Percentages rounded to the nearest hundredth.



A LOOK AT FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE CENTERS

Once children are in foster care, they need more than food, a warm bed, and a caring adult. Children who enter care often have multiple and complex needs: for doctors to address neglected health concerns, therapists to help them cope with the trauma of abuse or neglect, and tutors or special education services to help remedy learning gaps. They may need specialized play therapy, speech or physical therapy; they may require medication to treat anxiety, depression, attention-deficit or attachment disorders.

Within Duval County, eight neighborhood zones have been established based on the level of abuse and neglect reports. With approximately 3,000 children and 1,800 birth families in the county's protective service system, each zone exists to manage approximately 300 cases and 100 foster homes.

Family Support Service Centers accept all cases referred by the State and furnish all services which families require. The service centers engage in community development activities so there are traditional and non-traditional resources available to meet both the family's and children's needs.

The service centers develop foster family homes that partner with birth parents in their reunification efforts. Additionally, a 24 hour on-call system has been implemented to ensure support for families, children and foster parents. The centers are required to address concerns posed by their neighborhood advisory councils and register a high level of satisfaction from their participating neighborhood networks.

If you would like to help support FSS in its efforts, please send your donations to:

4613 Philips Highway, Suite 205
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Donations may be tax deductible. Please consult your tax advisor.



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