

Editorial – Florida Times-Union

Four cheers: Foster care leaders

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One of the proudest achievements in Northeast Florida is the fact that this area leads the state in adoptions from foster care.

The success in the Jacksonville area has been a major reason why Florida leads the nation in this statistic.

The Florida Department of Children and Families set a goal of reducing the children in foster care by 50 percent by 2012.

In Northeast Florida, the region is close to reaching this goal, two years early, the department said in its annual report.

Also, Northeast Florida also led all regions of the Department of Children and Families in receiving Prudential Davis Productivity awards. These represent productivity and innovation in serving the public.

The department as a whole has done an excellent job of using public reports, on "dashboards," to report progress.

This illustrates that government can use performance measures, much like private industry, by documenting its service to its customers.

A big part of the success is the partnership with Family Support Services of North Florida, which provides child-protection services in Duval and Nassau counties.

"This year, 99.9 percent of children in care were seen every 30 days by their caseworker. The average caseload went from 35 children per caseworker to 18," reports Jim Adams, the group's chief executive officer, in an e-mail.

"Currently FSS has no children available for adoption under the age of 8."

Adams went on to thank volunteers and donors who helped with FSS Thanksgiving and Christmas programs.

FSS plays a very important role in North Florida, thanks to the hard work and expertise of its employees.