Welcome to the Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS) 2008-09 Report to the Community. FSS is proud to be the lead non-profit agency serving children and families in Duval and Nassau County through its Community-Based Care agencies.

FSS provides four primary services to families: adoption, foster care, family preservation, and independent living.

The Agency is governed by a Board of Directors representing both counties, whose responsibility it is to develop and oversee the child protection system.

We invite you to find out more about child protective services in our area online at fssjax.org.
CHANGE doesn’t come easily. In fact, people resist and fear change more than anything else. Celebrating our seventh year as Lead Agency for foster care, adoption, family preservation and independent living services, Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS) is embracing change like never before.

We’ve embarked on a new path to change foster care in Florida. Research showed, in many instances, that children in foster care, after being removed from their homes, often experienced more emotional and behavioral difficulties than children who, except when being harmed, remained at home with their family. This key piece of information began what is now an overhaul of the foster care system to significantly reduce the number of children coming into the foster care system by 2012.

At its core, the new foster care model will preserve families and increase positive outcomes for children. This will be achieved by strengthening the family unit, improving parenting skills through education, and providing employment opportunities and other assistance to ensure success.

The redesign of foster care is just one of many in our kaleidoscope of initiatives. We are also pleased to report 328 children were adopted as a result of combined efforts with our Community-Based Care Agencies, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Dependency Judges, our Board of Directors, staff and many others. We expect to maintain this momentum through the coming year as we continue to focus on uniting families.

I would like to extend my thanks to the community who support North Florida’s children through generous donations including back to school supplies, clothing, car seats, holiday gifts, computers and more. We are proud to be a part of this caring community and hope that you will continue to support our efforts to redesign the programs that will positively affect our communities’ youth and their families.

Jim Adams, Chief Executive Officer
2008-2009 Financials

Casework Services & Related Support $16.09 million 38.1%
Adoption Promotion & Support .81 million 1.9%
Prevention Services 1.33 million 3.1%
Staff & Parent Training .55 million 1.3%
Family Support, Preservation, & Reunification 1.61 million 3.8%
Community Facilitation .14 million 0.3%
Mental Health for Child Welfare .42 million 1.0%
Other Services .96 million 2.3%
Subtotal $21.91 million 51.8%

ROOM AND BOARD
Adoptive Care $10.28 million 24.3%
Licensed Care – Foster Home and Shelter 7.35 million 17.4%
Independent Living 2.75 million 6.5%
Subtotal $20.38 million 48.2%

TOTAL BUDGET $44,284,000

Annual Community Donations

Cash $152,500
In-kind $784,100
Subtotal $936,600

CHILDREN IN CARE

June 2008 2,193
June 2009 2,150
2.0% Decrease

CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

June 2008 1,420
June 2009 1,354
4.6% Decrease

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE

BY AGE GROUP
0-4 781
5-9 454
10-14 338
15-18 275
18+ 302

BY RACIAL PROFILE
African American 1,245
Caucasian 771
Hispanic 94
Asian 4
Multi-Racial 36

BY GENDER
Male 1,060
Female 1,090

ACTIVE FOSTER HOMES IN DUVAL COUNTY 293
ACTIVE FOSTER HOMES IN NASSAU COUNTY 22
NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH CLOSED CASES 463
Legislative Success

After participating in Child Welfare League of America’s 2009 National Conference Advocacy Day and visiting their members of Congress on Capitol Hill, Family Support Services staff and Board of Directors President, Philip Mobley, sought to make Florida the first state to officially signal its support for re-establishing the White House Conference on Children & Youth. No such conference has been held since 1970 and President Obama is being requested to use the power of the White House to organize a national conference on the welfare of our children, and establish national goals for improvement in the subsequent 10 years.

By raising their voice and achieving state-level support for the Conference, they signaled to the U.S. Congress and President Obama that children and youth must be made a national priority.

Special Thanks

In December 2008, ending a 5-year term, Judge David Gooding, Family Dependency Court, was reassigned to felony court. He handled over 800 adoptions during his tenure.

We extend our thanks and gratitude for the profound effect he made on finding forever families for children in Duval County.

Applauding Efforts

Family Support Services and CBS47/Dawn Lopez are winners of “Wednesday’s Child”—a national award from the Adoption Exchange Association featuring adoption stories and highlighting child services agencies and media partnerships in action.

Celebrating her efforts in adoption, Lopez also received the “One Person Can Make a Difference” award from the Florida Coalition for Children; the Department of Health and Human Services’ “Adoption Excellence Award”; and the “Northeast Florida Child Advocacy Award” from Florida’s Children First.
BRINGING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO Foster Care THROUGH Family Preservation

Two years ago, it took FSS 20 months to reunite foster children with their parents. Today, those numbers have been cut in half.

The strategy to safely keep families together is in its infancy, but the results are already beginning to show. Families like Sylvia Kimble’s (featured right) are indicative of the changes made over the past two years resulting in a 54.1% reduction in the number of children in care.

Together with the Department of Children and Families, Family Support Services (FSS) is working to improve the system for child welfare by adhering to a formal improvement process encompassing change management as the framework for the Redesign of Foster Care.

FSS focuses on service programs such as parenting, finance, substance abuse and anger management classes. The goal is to educate parents on their behaviors, allowing them to stay with their child(ren) and develop healthy family relationships long-term.

Sylvia Kimble, a 29-year-old single mother of two, was struggling to keep her 6-year-old son from acting up.

When the case went to Family Support Services, Kimble was enrolled in parenting classes. After proving that she could be a more effective parent, she was allowed to keep her children.

Delivering Hope Where It’s Needed Most

Families in crisis need immediate help with in-home intervention focused on stabilizing the family unit and preventing children from entering the foster care system. Prevention specialists quickly assess a family situation and establish immediate, appropriate support services:

- Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (STEPS)
- Voluntary Protective Services (VPS)
STEPS helps empower, strengthen and promote healthy families by offering direct services and community resources to help prevent abuse and neglect. The services are available to all families in Duval and Nassau Counties and include family assessment, referrals, family support workers, intensive case management, in-home parenting, money management and behavior management strategies.

Additionally, Cassat House is the first family-friendly center operated by FSS to provide services for families in their own neighborhood. Here, families can get help, in a comfortable setting, making it a more effective and positive experience.

For now, the mission is clear. Taking a more holistic approach to keeping children with their families is proving to change the way communities care for families facing challenge. Please visit fssjax.org/prevention or call 904.421.5800 for more information on our progress.
Independent Living

Unfortunately, some children are never adopted. This harsh reality is why Family Support Services (FSS) offers Independent Living services to foster care youth transitioning into adulthood. To improve their opportunity for success, these programs can help these young adults adjust and be prepared for their life outside of care.

Road-To-Independence
Financial assistance is provided for full-time students who attend an accredited high school or college.

Educational Training
Vouchers for financial assistance for books, school supplies and tutoring, are provided for qualifying students.
These youth, through no fault of their own, live outside of their birth families in foster families, group homes and institutions, and are among those at greatest risk. Both research and their personal stories make it clear that they face numerous barriers to a successful transition to adulthood—educational attainment, health care services, lack of stability in foster care placements and school, an inability to participate in age appropriate normal activities, unavailable housing, lack of economic stability and the lack of connections with permanent supportive adults or “family”.

Independent Living services are designed to prepare our youth to become proficient in daily living activities such as managing money, getting a job, cooking, and all other vital skills that will enable them to become self-sufficient adults.

Upon reaching their 18th birthday, these young adults become eligible to participate in one of five programs: Road-to-Independence Scholarship, Educational Training Vouchers, Transitional Support Services, Aftercare Support or Subsidized Independent Living.

How many teenagers have a five-year plan that includes culinary school to become a chef? Matthew matches his future goals with a bright outlook and engaging personality. He’s personable, does extremely well in school and exudes positive energy.

What Matthew is missing is a family. After several disappointments over the years, he could be skeptical of adoption. But he still has time before he transitions from foster care into independent living. He continues making plans to grow as a person as he patiently waits for a Mom and Dad, who are a big part of the success of his five-year plan.

Matthew had the opportunity to get a “taste” of a chef’s life during his photo shoot for the Heart Gallery of Jacksonville (heartgalleryjax.org) at Roy’s Hawaiian Fusion® Cuisine in Jacksonville Beach.
DAVIS PRODUCTIVITY AWARD presented to the Foster Care Redesign Team of DCF and FSS staff that resulted in a decrease of children in care.

An award was also presented to the RUNAWAY REDUCTION TEAM for designing a best practices model.

Awards & Recognition

U.S. Health and Human Services EXCELLENCE IN ADOPTION

Jim Adams named CONGRESSIONAL ANGEL IN ADOPTIONS and recipient of the PRESIDENT’S ADVOCACY AWARD from the Florida Coalition for Children

Judy Ellis (2008) and Jessica McMullen (2009) awarded GOVERNOR’S POINT OF LIGHT
Your donations are always welcome. If you would like to support our community’s children and families in need, please visit fssjax.org/donate or mail your donation in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you.