



Charlie Crist, Governor
Bob Butterworth, Secretary

Post Adoption Services

**Child Abuse Prevention and
Permanency Advisory Council**

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**Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families,
and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency.**



“The sense of isolation is incredible...I just did not know so many others were experiencing what I have been experiencing.”

Adoptive parent quote from 2004 “Promising Practices in Adoption-Competent Mental Health Services” by Casey Family Services



PREMISE:
Adoption is a life long process.

- Families that adopt children from foster care face significant challenges in coping with abuse and neglect, attachment and residual grief and loss issues.
- The family unit is the most effective vehicle for healing the trauma experienced by these children.
- Post adoption services is an essential component of the permanency planning process.



BENEFITS OF A “HEALTHY” POST ADOPTION SERVICES PROGRAM

- ❖ Recognition of a strong commitment to Florida’s adopted children and their adoptive families
- ❖ Acknowledgment by the state that adoptive families need services after finalization
- ❖ Improved recruitment efforts with adoptive families as recruiters
- ❖ Adoption competent services needed after finalization are also needed during prior to finalization.
- ❖ Families will request services before a crisis occurs



Florida's Adoption Policy Unit developed a comprehensive Post Adoption Services Model based on:

Federal Health and Human Services evaluation of post adoption services programs in five states.

Anne Casey Foundation "White Paper" on the need for adoption competent mental health professionals and the federal funding available for Post Adoption Services.

Other state programs reviewed included Oregon, New Jersey, Vermont, Massachusetts, Iowa, and New York.



Survey Results by Adoptive Families

- ✓ Adoptive parents feel it is a reflection on their parenting skills if they admit they need help.
- ✓ Adoptive families feel isolated
- ✓ Adoptive families want to know respite is available but don't use the services as much as professionals thought they would.
- ✓ Adoptive parents feel misunderstood and don't want someone else to become the decision-maker for the family.



COMPONENTS OF MODEL

SUPPORTIVE ASSISTANCE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE



SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Identified Need 1: Adoptive parents and adopted adolescents, at times, feel isolated.

Identified Need 2: Adoptive parents need access to information and referrals for local resources or temporary emotional support.

Services to Meet Identified Needs:

- . Case Management Services
- . Statewide Post Adoption Services Web Page
- . Support Groups
- . Respite Services
- . Information and Referral Services



Supportive Services (cont.)

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES should include:

Assignment of a temporary case manager:

- Assessments, including assessing family's support network
- Emotional support and advocacy, with empowering parents as decision-makers
- Information and referrals
- Documenting case in FSFN



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- **Identified Need 1:** Research studies reveal adoptive parents and adoption professionals consider most educational and mental health professionals lack knowledge of adoption issues.
- **Identified Need 2:** Adoptive parents require education and training related to adoption issues, with an emphasis on handling grief, loss, relationship building and acting out behaviors



EDUCATION AND TRAINING (cont.)

Services to meet Identified Needs:

- Adoption Awareness Campaign in Mental Health and Educational Communities
- Regional or Local Adoption Education and Training
- Pre-Adoption Education
- National Adoption Parent Conferences
- Post Graduate Certification Programs for Licensed Mental Health Practitioners



MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE

- **Identified Need 1:** Children and families need access to and availability of mental health practitioners who are “adoption competent” and believe in a treatment goal of helping children heal and establish strong family relationships.
- **Identified Need 2:** Community based services may not provide a safe environment for the child or their family and more intensive mental health services are required.



MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE (cont.)

Services to Meet Identified Needs:

- Individual counseling
- Individualized wrap-around services
- Family counseling
- Short term inpatient therapy



Current Post Adoption Services

Supportive Services:

- One position within CBC or a contractor provides post adoption services
- 23 Adoptive Parent Support Groups
- Documentation of post adoption services in FSFN in August 2008

Education and Training:

- No certification program for mental health or educational professionals.
- Limited regional or local education and training opportunities for parents

Mental Health Assistance

- Individual and family counseling available at the community mental health centers with limited mental health “adoption competent professionals
- Parents continue to struggle with residential/inpatient needs for children



EVALUATION COMPONENT

- Surveys completed by adoptive parents after use of post adoption services
- Increase number of mental health professionals from baseline count
- Timeliness of response by counselor/agency to a request for post adoption services from adoptive parents
- Timeliness of documenting FSFN cases for adoptive families receiving post adoption case management
- Number of teen and adoptive parent support groups increase as compared to baseline



Next Steps

- Assessment of each community's post adoption services