

FLORIDA'S IV-E WAIVER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

TOPICAL Prevention and Diversion Services: PAPER 3 Expenditures, Practice Expansion and Innovations

C. Sowell and N. Jordan

July 17, 2012

Background of Florida's Title IV-E Waiver

The Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project was implemented statewide October 1, 2006. The five-year Waiver under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act was authorized by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and included all children under the age of 18 who were receiving services at the start of project implementation, and all families who entered the child welfare system with an allegation of maltreatment after October 1, 2006. The project was designed to determine whether increased flexibility of Title IV-E funding would support changes in the state's service delivery system, maintain cost neutrality to the federal government, and most importantly, maintain child safety as well as improving permanency and well-being outcomes for children and their families being served within the state's child welfare system.

Purpose and Specific Aims of the IV-E Waiver Evaluation

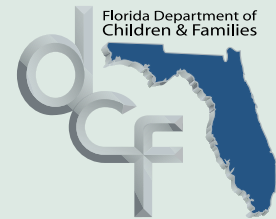
The Florida Department of Children and Families (the Department; DCF) contracted with the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI) at the University of South Florida (USF) to evaluate Florida's statewide IV-E Waiver demonstration project¹. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine whether an expanded array of community-based services available via the flexible use of Title IV-E funds would reduce the number of children in out-of-home care, expedite permanency through reunification, adoption or permanent guardianship, maintain child safety, increase child well-being, and reduce administrative costs associated with providing child welfare services.

Purpose of this Topical Paper

In Florida, child welfare services were privatized in 1996 by legislative mandate through use of a community-based care (CBC) lead agency design. Divided by specific geographic regions (see Figure 1), lead agencies are responsible for the provision of all child welfare services except for child protective investigations, which are performed either by Department staff or by the Sheriff's Office.

One hypothesis from the Waiver evaluation was that the flexibility afforded by the Waiver would enable CBC lead agencies to devote a greater proportion of their budgets to prevention, diversion, and in-home initiatives, services, and supports, which will be referred to in this paper as front-end services, and relatively fewer dollars on out-of-home care. The Waiver was highly successful in this regard, as statewide expenditures for front-end services increased from \$15 million in federal fiscal year (FFY) 04-05 (two years prior to Waiver implementation) to nearly \$46 million in FFY 10-11. The ratio of out-of-home care dollars spent per dollar for front-end services also declined dramatically statewide during Waiver implementation, from \$10.93 in FFY 04-05 to \$2.93 in FFY 10-11 (Vargo et al., 2012).

¹ Florida's IV-E Waiver Evaluation Reports are available online at <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/FIPerformance/Forms/AllItems.aspx#CWRpts>



This publication produced by:

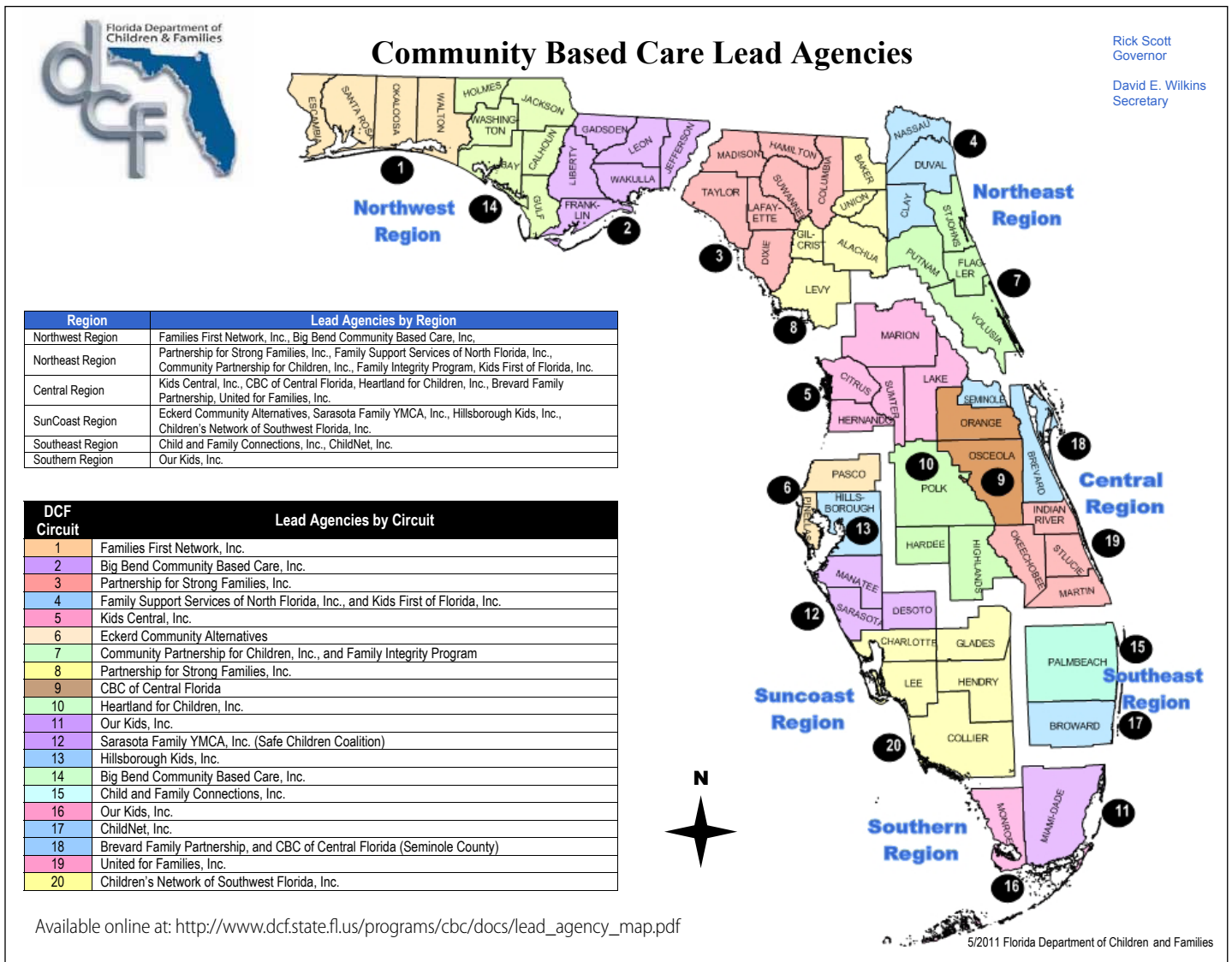
Department of Child & Family Studies

Louis de la Parte Florida
Mental Health Institute
USF College of Behavioral &
Community Sciences
<http://www.cbcs.usf.edu>

Submitted to the
Florida Department of Children
and Families

July 17, 2012

Figure 1. Florida's Community-Based Care Lead Agencies²



The Waiver evaluation also revealed the implementation of numerous prevention and diversion initiatives by CBCs across Florida. Examples of these initiatives include multi-systemic in-home services focused on families with substance abuse and domestic violence issues, crisis response teams, expanded in-home parent education, and enhanced collaboration with child protective investigations to provide resources and interventions with families involved in reports of abuse and neglect as early as possible. What is unclear is how much variation exists across CBCs in terms of the proportion of each CBC's total budget devoted to front-end services, and whether there is a relationship between higher relative front-end services spending and the types and intensity of prevention and diversion practice expansions and innovations.

This topical paper examines the relationship between front-end services expenditures by lead agencies for the final fiscal year of the Waiver and the prevention and diversion practice expansion and innovations reported by CBCs due to the spending flexibility allowed under the Waiver.

Methods

Calculating Front-End Services Expenditures

To assess CBC lead agency expenditures by type of service, statewide expenditures were extracted from the Florida Accounting Information Resource (FLAIR) for FFY 10-11, the final year of the Waiver demonstration project. FLAIR data were combined with expenditure data from the DCF Office

²As of July 1, 2012, Eckerd Community Alternatives is the lead agency for DCF Circuit 13.

of Revenue Management in order to capture expenditure adjustments that were not recorded in FLAIR. Expenditures were categorized by type of service using appropriate Other Cost Accumulator codes in consultation with the DCF Office of Revenue Management. Analysis of front-end services includes prevention, diversion, family preservation, and other in-home services that can be reported in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), Florida's statewide automated child welfare information system. Total expenditures captured in this analysis include all lead agency expenditures associated with service provision for youth receiving services from lead agencies, including licensed out-of-home care, dependency case management, and front-end services as described above. This analysis excludes expenditures incurred by DCF or lead agencies for maintenance adoption subsidies and protective investigation training.

Measuring Prevention and Diversion Practice Expansion and Innovations

To assess what changes in the type and capacity of child welfare services occurred across the state over the duration of the Waiver, an email-based survey was administered to all CBC lead agencies on approximately an annual basis. The analysis conducted for this paper incorporates accumulated annual survey data from baseline FFY 06-07 to the final survey completed in FFY 11-12. The surveys requested information concerning the types of service or practice, availability, eligibility, intended outcomes, staff resources, training, and implementation successes and challenges. Agencies were also asked to provide information about the use of innovative or best practices that had been implemented or expanded as a result of the Waiver. Interviews with agency leadership and service providers were conducted to gain more detailed information when needed. In addition, case studies were completed with four lead agencies to provide in-depth descriptions and analysis of the Waiver's impact on service provision and practices in specific geographic regions. Practice findings are based on lead agency self-report and are further limited by varying levels of detail available related to utilization and expenditures for specific programs and services.

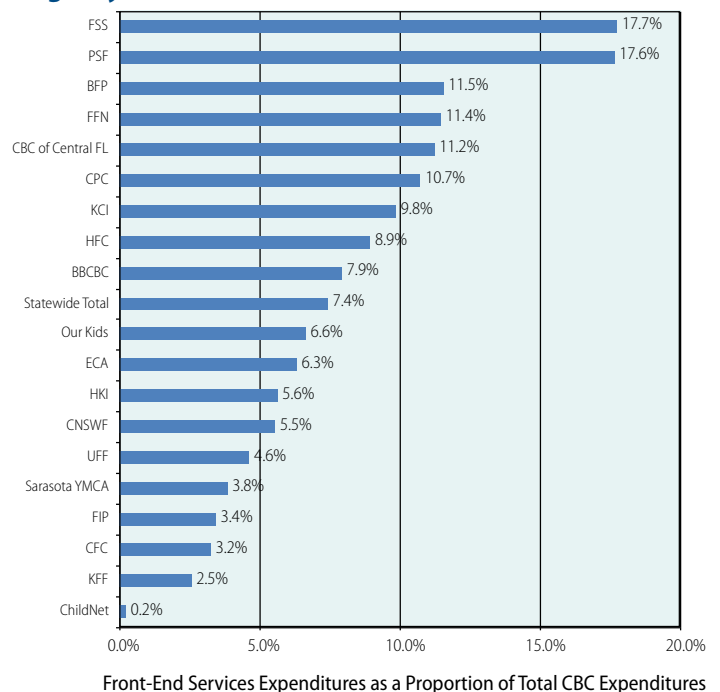
The results of the practice analysis have been examined in relation to the expenditure data to describe how the service expansion and innovation of agencies that maximized the spending flexibility allowed by the Waiver compare to or contrast with the service array of those with a lower percentage of front-end services expenditures.

Findings

Child Welfare Service Expenditures

In the final year of the Waiver demonstration project, CBC lead agencies statewide devoted 7.4% of their budget to spending for prevention, diversion, in-home and other front-end services (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this analysis, we have divided the CBCs into three groups to reflect their relative proportion of front-end services expenditures. The "high" group (CBCs with front-end services expenditures that were 10% or more of total expenditures) includes Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS), Partnership for Strong Families, Inc. (PSF), Brevard Family Partnership (BFP), Families First Network (FFN), CBC of Central Florida³, and Community Partnership for Children (CPC). The "medium" group (CBCs with front-end services expenditures that were between 5% and 10% of total expenditures) includes Kids Central, Inc. (KCI), Heartland for Children (HFC), Big Bend Community Based Care (BBCBC), Our Kids, Eckerd Community Alternatives (ECA), Hillsborough Kids, Inc. (HKI), and Children's Network of Southwest Florida (CNSWF). The "low" group (CBCs with front-end services expenditures that were lower than 5% of total expenditures) includes United for Families (UFF), Sarasota Family YMCA, Family Integrity Program (FIP), Child and Family Connections (CFC), Kids First of Florida (KFF), and ChildNet.

Figure 2. CBC Expenditures for Front-End Services as a Proportion of Total CBC Expenditures, by CBC Lead Agency, FFY 10-11



³ Due to changes in lead agency contracts during FFY 10-11, the analyses for CBC of Central Florida were conducted using data from Seminole County only and excluded data from Orange and Osceola Counties (i.e., the area formerly served by Family Services of Metro Orlando).

Child Welfare Service Expansion and Innovation

Findings from the Waiver evaluation confirmed the hypothesis that implementation of the Waiver would lead to changes in and expansion of the child welfare service array for the lead agencies in Florida. Furthermore, the findings upheld the CBC philosophy that the flexibility of funds would be used differently by each lead agency, based on the unique needs of the communities they serve. Although expansion occurred across the service array continuum, the greatest amount of change was experienced for practices intended to safely prevent the need for out-of-home placement and divert children and families to family-focused community and in-home services. Furthermore, while the central focus of expansion was on tertiary prevention efforts aimed at preventing the recurrence of abuse or neglect and diverting families from deeper involvement in the system, over the course of the Waiver the scope of prevention was broadened to include greater use of primary and secondary prevention strategies intended to stop the occurrence of child abuse and neglect across the general population and within families considered to be at high risk.

High Front-End Expenditure Agencies

Findings from the expenditure data that revealed FSS and PSF were the two lead agencies with the highest percentage of prevention and diversion services spending compared to total agency expenditures are consistent with findings from the child welfare practice analysis. FSS and PSF reported rich family preservation practices at baseline and Year 1 of the Waiver that included family team conferencing targeted for families receiving prevention services, and intensive in-home services that utilize the Nurturing Parenting Program. Both agencies continued to expand their early intervention and prevention continuum to include resource coordinators to support child protective investigators and neighborhood service centers located in areas of their communities with the highest rates of child abuse and neglect reports. In addition, PSF implemented and expanded mobile crisis response services, a domestic violence prevention program for teens at risk, and solution-based casework, a family-centered model focused on partnership, skill development, and competency. A case study completed for the Waiver evaluation (Vargo et al., 2011) illustrates FSS's emphasis on prevention, diversion, and early intervention. Furthermore, in Year 1 of the Waiver FSS began a Foster Care Redesign Project in partnership with DCF to safely reduce the number of children in foster care through intensive support to strengthen the family unit. In addition to FSS and PSF, three other lead agencies in the high front-end services expenditures group (CBC of Central Florida, BFP, and

FFN) were early implementers of family team conferencing as a prevention/diversion strategy to support families at risk for requiring out-of-home care. In addition, all six lead agencies in the high front-end expenditures group implemented intensive in-home service programs available across their entire service area in the early stages of the Waiver with increased capacity during the latter years of the Waiver.

Medium Front-End Expenditure Agencies

Interestingly, the majority of agencies within the medium group of prevention expenditures were early implementers of practices aimed at supporting families already in out-of-home care such as relative caregiver and family reunification services. These agencies (specifically Our Kids, KCI, HKI, CNSW, and later ECA and HFC) were also the first implementers of the family finding strategy, intended to find family connections for children in and at-risk of entering out-of-home care (BFP in the high group was also an early implementer of family finding). Similar to the high group, KCI was also an early implementer of family team conferencing with families at risk and uses diversionary multi-disciplinary staffings to link these families with in-home and community-based services to prevent out-of-home placement. Also consistent with the high group, the majority of the medium group agencies use co-located resource coordinators to support families involved in an allegation of abuse or neglect with child protective investigations. Notably, three agencies in the medium group were the only agencies to contract with Youth Villages Intercept Program, a multi-systemic family therapy program focused on providing intensive reunification support primarily for youth transitioning home from an out-of-home placement.

Among the third group of lead agencies with the lowest proportion of front-end expenditures, UFF was the only lead agency to implement the innovative foster parent mentoring program intended to support new foster parents caring for children in out-of-home placements by pairing them with experienced foster parents who are paid contractors of the agency. UFF contracts with one mentor for each of the four counties they serve. Other agencies have foster parent mentor programs, but only UFF pays the mentors for this service.

Low Front-End Expenditure Agencies

In the low front-end expenditure group, FIP, KFF, Sarasota Family YMCA, and UFF use family team conferencing with all of the families they serve, including those receiving in-home and family preservation services, while ChildNet uses a wraparound, family team conferencing approach with families in out-of-home care targeting those preparing for reunification.

Consistent with the expenditure findings, although three of the agencies in this group have resource coordinator positions to help child protective investigators link families with services, two were late implementers of this strategy, reporting initiation of the practice during the final year of the Waiver. While CFC offers resource coordination and diversion services intended to prevent children from requiring court-ordered supervision or out-of-home placement, they are also the only agency to report an expansion of dependency case management capacity. The purpose of this expansion is to reduce caseload size in order to enable more attention towards reunification and permanency support.

The expenditure data showing ChildNet as a clear outlier, utilizing only 0.2% of their total expenditures for front-end services, is consistent with practice analysis findings. During the second year of the Waiver, ChildNet made an agreement with the Children's Service Council of Broward (CSC) to streamline the provision of services that resulted in ChildNet focusing its efforts on out-of-home and reunification services, and CSC focusing on prevention and diversion. ChildNet reported that it has reinvested the prevention funds into family reunification and strengthening services and have contracted with community agencies to provide these services to specific populations including families dealing with issues of domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, and minorities with English as a second language. Therefore, while the practice data are consistent with expenditure data, these data do not reflect a lack of prevention and diversion services available in ChildNet's service area, but rather the use of alternative funding sources to provide for these services.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Clear consistencies were noted between the front-end services expenditure data and prevention and innovative services expansion reported by lead agencies. Commonalities among the high front-end services expenditures group included a focus on primary prevention and early intervention, the use of family-team conferencing with families at-risk of requiring out-of-home placement, and sustained expansion of prevention and diversion services over the duration of the Waiver demonstration project. Lead agencies in the medium group appeared to concentrate service expansion and innovation on support for children in foster care and relative care placements, while also enhancing the level of coordination with child protective investigations to intervene with families early in their involvement with the child welfare system. Lead agencies in the low front-end expenditures group tended to focus service

expansion on dependency case management, foster parent support and reunification services. This group also reported expansion of prevention services, albeit on a smaller scale than the high and medium groups and later in the Waiver implementation process.

The distinctions between relative investment in front-end services and the types of service expansions observed provide an important context for understanding the impact of the Waiver's flexibility on child-level outcomes, which represents a potential evaluation focus if Florida's IV-E Waiver is renewed. Future analyses, which would require the collection of more comprehensive data on the number of youth and families receiving front-end services and the types and number of units of front-end services received, should examine the impact of particular innovations on outcomes.

References

- Vargo, A., C., Armstrong, M. I., Jaacks, M., Jordan, N., Sharrock, P., Sowell, C., & Yampolskaya, S. (2011). *IV-E waiver demonstration evaluation semi-annual progress report 9 SFY 10-11*. Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute.
- Vargo, A., C., Armstrong, M. I., Jordan, N., Sharrock, P., Sowell, C., & Yampolskaya, S. (2012). *IV-E waiver demonstration final evaluation report 7 FFY 2006-07 - 2011-12*. Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute.



This publication produced by:
Department of Child & Family Studies
Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute
USF College of Behavioral & Community Sciences
<http://www.cbcs.usf.edu>