Legislation Highlights – Florida Institute for Child Welfare

The purpose of the Institute is to advance the well-being of children and families by improving the performance of child protection and child welfare services through research, policy, analysis, evaluation, and leadership development. The institute shall work with state-wide partners including DCF, the criminal justice system, community-based care organizations, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, among others. By statute, the Institute is required to:

• Maintain a program of research contributing to scientific knowledge related to child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being (child welfare practice);
• Advise DCF and other organizations about the scientific evidence regarding child welfare practice;
• Provide advice regarding management practices and administrative processes
  o Recommend improvement to reduce burden to front line staff in order to enhance their ability to effectively engage in child welfare practice;
• Assess the performance of child welfare services based on specified outcome measures;
• Evaluate the effectiveness of training:
  o Evaluate pre-service and in-service training and advise DCF on improvement
  o Assess the readiness of social work graduates to assume job responsibilities in the child welfare system
    ▪ Identify gaps in education which can be addressed by modifying curriculum or developing certifications
• Develop a program of training/consulting to assist organizations with employee retention (phrased in the legislation as “adaptive and resilient responses to workplace stress”).
• Identify and communicate effective policies and promising practices with regard to:
  o innovations in coordination between stakeholders;
  o data analytics;
  o management of human service organizations;
• Develop a definition of a child or family at high risk of abuse or neglect
• Submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature outlining activities, significant research findings, and recommendations for improving child welfare practice;
• Evaluate the educational/training requirements for the child welfare workforce provided for in the bill (due 10/1/17);
• Evaluate the provisions of the bill and make recommendations for improvements (due 10/1/18)
• Recommend improvements in the state’s child welfare system. Interim report due 2/1/15. Final report due 10/1/15. Topics for improvement include:
  o enhancing relationships between the entities involved in the child welfare system;
  o identification of and replication of best practices;
  o reducing paperwork;
  o increasing retention of the child welfare workforce;
  o caring for medically complex children within the child welfare system.
Other Responsibilities Found in the Legislation

- (Section 39.2015: Line 806) May be invited to participate in the multiagency investigation of certain child deaths or other serious incidents (DCF accountable for investigation);
  - (Line 841) DCF Secretary and Institute will develop guidelines for investigations;
  - (Line 853) DCF Secretary will appoint an advisory committee (includes a representative from the Institute) to conduct an independent review of investigative reports from the rapid response teams and make recommendations.

- DCF is responsible for creating teams of stakeholders for different purposes that includes Institute participation:
  - (Section 402.402: Line 2205) Develop a protocol for screening candidates for CPI positions.
  - (Section 409.996 [9]: Line 3416) Develop a standardized competency-based curriculum for certification training for child protection staff.
  - (Section 409.997 [3]: Line 3623) Technical advisory panel re: the accountability system.