2020 Bill Highlights

As of 3/13/2020

SB 1326- Department of Children and Families by Senator Simpson (R - Spring Hill)

Companion Bill: HB 7063- Representative Ponder (R- Fort Walton Beach)

Target Population: Children, The Department of Children and Families (DCF), Child Protective Investigators (CPIs), case managers, Community Based Care (CBC) lead-agencies, law enforcement agencies, attorney services, The Florida Institute for Child Welfare, the Florida State University College of Social Work and its students.

Summary: Also referred to as the “State of Hope Act”; Revises the responsibilities, functions, and goals of DCF to ensure accountability and quality of internal and external services provided by the Department by requiring DCF to establish an Office of Quality, a statewide accountability system for child welfare, and performance metrics and goals to measure the performance of CPIs, CBCs, and children’s legal services. Establishes a tiered intervention penalty system for lead agencies that fail to comply with standards or have deficient performances. Encourages the involvement of community- and faith-based organizations within CBC lead agencies. Revises the CBC funding formula for the allocation of new funding for core services. Requires sheriffs providing CPI services to adopt the Florida Child Welfare Practice Model Principles, as well as state and federal performance metric standards used by CPIs. Requires DCF to
implement two 2-year pilot projects to improve child welfare services in the Sixth and Thirteenth judicial circuits. Adds responsibilities to the DCF’s Department of Contracts regarding care for children in the child welfare system. Requires DCF to implement policies and procedures to mitigate CPI burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Expands the responsibilities of The Florida Institute for Child Welfare to inform, train, and engage social work students for a successful career in child welfare; Directs the FCWI and the Florida State University College of Social Work to come together to design and implement a specified curriculum for social work students.

**Impact:** SB 1326 provides a system of checks and balances and heightened accountability within the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF describes their current state of service as an “emergency room,” mostly responding to reports, investigations, and hotline calls once they have reached a state of crisis. The agency wants to transition to providing more preventative services with an increase in quality and efficiency.

The bill details how DCF will be holding their community-based care (CBC) providers accountable for their performance. This will hopefully improve the overall function of the Department and continue to ensure that Florida’s vulnerable children are receiving the best care and support possible. The goal of this bill is to bring accountability back into the hands of DCF and help provide effective services.

The Children’s Campaign has vocally advocated for an office of quality assurance within the Department of Children and Families for years, understanding the need to have common performance measures and accountability. The Children’s Campaign supports the implementation of accountability measures within the Department of Children and Families.

**Effective Date:** Upon becoming a law.