



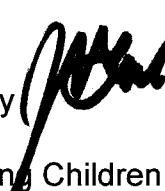
**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Charlie Crist
Governor

George H. Sheldon
Secretary

DATE: June 30, 2009

TO: Community-Based Care CEO's
Alliance Chairs
CBC Board Chairs

FROM: George H. Sheldon, Secretary 

SUBJECT: Reducing Shift Care* for Young Children

In December 2008, the Department invited Charles Zeanah, M.D., a researcher and expert on institutional care of children from the Institute of Infant Childhood Mental Health at Tulane University School of Medicine, to present evidence on how children age five and under have better outcomes when placed in a foster home rather than in a group care setting, where staff work in shifts. At this training, participants learned that young children raised in such settings, no matter the length of time, are at risk for a variety of social and behavioral problems, including disturbances of attachment, inattention, and other developmental problems that result from the deprivation inherent in shift care. (View at: <http://cbcta.fmhi.usf.edu/flcwp/confvids/fostcareorlando/fs.html><<http://cbcta.fmhi.usf.edu/flcwp/confvids/fostcareorlando/fs.html>>)

Subsequent to this training, we engaged your support in significantly reducing the use of shift care for short or long-term placement of young children ages five and under. On March 13, 2009, a memorandum was sent to you, by Alan Abramowitz, announcing the availability of Dr. Zeanah's training and requesting that each lead agency designate someone responsible for validating the monthly report that identifies all children five years of age and younger in shift care.

The Family Safety Program Office has been monitoring progress and, based on these results, we are very pleased with your commitment to this reduction.

Young Children Five years and Under in Shift Care

Month	Number
February	81
March	68
April	51
May	39

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

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In addition, you will be interested to learn that 14 community-based care lead agencies report having no young children in shift care at the time of this memorandum.

Young children who are removed from traumatic home environments require immediate and consistent nurturing from a single primary caregiver who is committed to the child. Our protective responsibilities in removing children from danger extend beyond providing regular meals, clean clothing, and a bed in which to sleep. The most well-managed, well-funded, and cheerful shift care facility cannot substitute for a single primary caregiver who will be the substitute parent and protector for a newborn, infant, or toddler. Foster parents must be the primary caregivers and attachment figures for our very young children who cannot stay with parents or family members.

On behalf of the children we serve, thank you for your advocacy and efforts to provide for the needs of young children. We look forward to monitoring your continued progress on this essential practice change.

cc: David Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs
John Cooper, Acting Assistant Secretary for Operations
Alan Abramowitz, State Director, Office of Family Safety
Mary Cagle, Director, Children's Legal Services
Regional Directors
Circuit Administrators
Sheriff's Offices

*** Note: The following placements are not considered shift care: children residing in group care that utilizes a house parent model; children living in a maternity home with parent; children in nursing homes; children in developmental services/group care and children residing in substance abuse settings with parent.**