

# Accomplishments of Note

## Representation

FCF leads statewide efforts to provide all dependent children with a voice in the courts. Our work includes:

- Implementing a new and improved model of representation for the children's legal services division of the Department of Children and Families in the Dependency Courts.
- Creating the Counsel For Kids Initiative in cooperation with DCF in which DCF attorneys refer children with legal issues to Legal Aid programs or pro bono attorneys.
- Efforts to ensure continuation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit pilot project where public defenders represent children in the dependency system.
- Providing state-wide support for children's legal service programs funded by the Florida Bar Foundation.

## Health, Mental Health & Developmental Services

FCF leads executive branch advocacy efforts to access to needed for services to children. The results:

- DCF now requires child welfare agencies to enroll children placed with relatives in Medicaid, rather than making the caregivers apply. It will also keep children enrolled in Medicaid when their placements change rather than dropping coverage at each move.
- The Agency for Persons With Disabilities assessed and staffed all children on the waiting list for developmental services and worked to locate services for those children.
- DCF and AHCA revised their computer matching system to stop the unintentional disenrollment of hundreds of children from mental health service plans.

## Publications & Technical Assistance

FCF's current publications and technical assistance papers include:

- Hearing Your Voice: A Guide to Your Dependency Court Case (co-author)
- Transition: A Guide for Youth with Disabilities Exiting Foster Care (co-author)
- Recommendations for Inter-Agency Actions to Improve Educational Opportunities for Florida's Foster Youth
- Fostering Success: Strategies to Empower Youth to Succeed as Adults, Report of Proceedings
- FAQ for Foster Youth Transitioning to Adulthood
- Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care (co-author)
- Children's Mental Health Services Recommendations

## Youth Empowerment

FCF organized and supports "Florida Youth SHINE." We:

- Train youth to become their own advocates,
- Arrange for youth to meet with the Governor; the Secretary of DCF; Legislators and members of the Judiciary including the Florida Supreme Court,
- Organize and assist youth in presenting their positions in meetings with policy makers in all branches of government,
- Support youth in designing training for stakeholders in the youths' own voice,
- Have trained over 400 judges, lawyers and child welfare staff on the importance of involving youth in their court proceedings,
- Drafted and support legislation that will give youth easier access to their own personal records.

FCF is the Florida coordinator for the ABA Center on Children and the Law Youth Empowerment Project and co-authored of the upcoming publication "On Your Own But Not Alone."

## Education

As the author and prime supporter of legislation requiring Child Welfare and Education Agencies to work together, FCF continues its cutting edge work to improve education for youth in care. We

- Drafted and supports legislation that will remove barriers to school enrollment, clarify who can make educational decisions for foster children and assures the appointment of surrogate parents for children with disabilities.
- Provide ongoing technical support to the state agencies involved in the Inter-Agency Agreement resulting in enhanced cooperation and elimination of barriers.

## Training

FCF offers trainings to judges, attorneys, GALs and caseworkers on

- Children's Rights to Medicaid
- Youth In Court
- Independent Living Programs & Laws & Transition Planning
- Improving Education Outcomes
- Needs of Disabled Youth in State Care

## Amicus Project

FCF files amicus briefs in Florida courts to educate courts about the potential impact of their decisions on all of Florida's children and to highlight specific policy issues.



