



Communities
Connected
for Kids

Annual 2019 Report

Who We Are

Communities Connected for Kids is the Lead Agency for child-welfare services in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. Our services are offered through a wide variety of programs that deliver support to families in crisis, including:

- Skills training
- Residential care
- Extended foster care
- Licensed foster care
- Case management
- Post-adoption supports
- Independent living
- Adoptions

Our mission is to enhance the safety, permanency and well-being of all children in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast through a community network of family support services. Our vision is to eliminate abuse, neglect and abandonment so all children grow to their full potential.

2019 Board of Directors

Kathryn Hensley, Chair

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Indian River State College

Robert Dunne

Devereux

Lisa Kroger

Devereux

Kristy Conway

Indian River State College

Pam Carithers

Lincoln Park Main Street

1 Organization
Coordinating

35 Contracted Providers
serving

1,134 Children
And their families



Communities
Connected
for Kids

167

children

adopted

Our adoption-services provider, Children's Home Society exceeded its adoption goal for the year, finding permanent homes for 167 children and continuing a three-year trend of increasing adoptions.

More over, 78 percent of children still available for adoption have identified pre-adoptive placements — another record for our community.

This incredible success is due to the recruitment efforts of Children's Home Society as well as several new recruitment tools, such as the Forever Family program, which leverages the power of the media, and the Selfless Love Foundation, which uses and cutting-edge technologies, to identify potential adoptive matches.

Ensuring permanency



During the summer of 2018, A sibling group of six told their stories through the Forever Family program, which airs adoption features on News Channel 12. In 2019, they were adopted together by Ashley Erickson, becoming part of an even larger family of 12.



Forever Family Program features 25 local children, finds home for sibling group of six brothers and sisters

Bowling balls thundered down wooden lanes of maple and pine. Arcade games shouted their presence like carnival barkers. Pizza pies and pitchers of soft drinks appeared on tables.

And one by one, children there for a morning of Forever Family interviews took a turn in the bright light of a production lamp and told their stories to news cameras.

It was all part of the Forever Family program, which leverages the power of the media to help get children adopted. Communities Connected for Kids has been a partner in the program since 2018 and had 25 children, including several large sibling groups, featured.

Most of the children featured have been adopted, including a sibling group of six

boys and girls, a group of four girls and a group of three boys.

Many people called in about those children after seeing them featured in the News Channel 12 Forever Family segment, which runs every Tuesday during the 5 p.m. newscast.

But ultimately the children found homes through other means, said Rebecca Pope, adoptions specialist for Children's Home Society, which provides adoption services for CCKids.

"Most people who call after seeing them on TV haven't completed the required home study," Pope said. "By the time they complete the process, those children might no longer be available."

"So what we end up with is a pool of potential adoptive parents when the next children are featured," she said.

Ensuring Safety

22%

Fewer children
were removed
from home.

Without the proper tools, parents and caregivers experiencing stress often revert to how they were treated as a child, which in some cases can lead to abuse or neglect.

The CCKids system of care is interventive by nature. We become involved with families after abuse, neglect or abandonment has occurred.

However, there are degrees of mistreatment and many children can remain at home while their families receive services that both protect the child and teach the parent.

We know these services are working when fewer children are removed from home for services.

Ensuring Safety



We know our services at CCKids are working when fewer children are removed from home.



The Safety Support Team was established in 2019 to reduce the number of children removed from home.

Teams of child-welfare professionals—including Guardians ad Litem, case managers, clinical staff and attorneys from the state’s Childrens Legal Services — meet for a 2 p.m. call daily as needed to review various cases. They brainstorm ideas and resources for keeping children safe without removing them from home.

Teams met 59 times in 2019, keeping more than half the children reviewed out of foster care.

12%

More children were placed with relatives. And fewer were placed in group care than the previous year.

It has been long established, and supported by research, that children who are removed from home do best when placed in the least restrictive, most home-like environment possible.

In most cases, that means placement with a relative—a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or an adult sibling.

A renewed statewide focus on identifying relatives willing to care for children resulted in a 12 percent increase in children entering relative care, from an average 383 in 2018 to 429 in 2019.

Children living with relatives experience a smoother transition into and out of the system and have an easier time maintaining relationships with their families and communities.

Ensuring Well-Being



Children living with relatives, such as grandparents or with adult siblings, experience a smoother transition into and out of the system and have an easier time maintaining relationships with their families.

Due to the cyclical nature of child abuse, it's not always possible to place children with local relatives. In those cases, children who are removed from home are placed in licensed foster homes or, when foster homes are not available, in group care.

Sadly, our area ranks high among those with high numbers of children—particularly young children—in group care. We have made these placement choices in order to keep large sibling groups together and because we have a shortage of foster homes available for teenagers.

In 2019, we saw a slight decrease in the number of children placed in group care, and we are hopeful this is the beginning of a downward trend.

Annual Highlights



The year started with the unveiling of an interagency Vehicle Scholarship Program. In total, two cars were awarded to youth served in the Road to Success program to help them meet their educational goals.



Road to Success staff chaperoned young adults on college exploratory trips during the year. The educational goals of youth exiting foster care is a major focus at CCKids. In fact, 16 young adults—a record high—entered the program to attend college in 2019.

In the spring, staff and foster families headed up to Tallahassee to attend Children's Week and advocate on behalf of the local system of care and the needs of children and families statewide. We met our local Legislators there, who championed many of our causes.



We also began a wonderful new relationship with our neighbors, the PGA Knit Wits, a knitting group that hosted a dinner and collected donations on our behalf.



48 Events

attended or hosted, sharing information about our system of care with residents and business leaders



The MANicure Movement kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. Local first responders got involved, painting a nail blue to represent the 1 in 5 children who experience abuse. In total, we celebrated 12 campaigns, including the Myth of the Month, a community initiative designed to knock down negative stereotypes about foster care, as well as those that celebrated foster, reunified and adoptive families.



For the second year, CCKids hosted the Behavioral Health Fair of Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast, a partnership with Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network designed to mark National Mental Health Awareness Month and to create awareness of local resources. Attendance grew by 50 percent in 2019.

Annual Highlights



Road to Success staff member Litty Summers received the Case Manager of the Year award during the summer at a statewide conference of the Florida Coalition for Children.



Following a summer tradition and company culture of partnership,

CCKids staff and volunteers participated in the Stuff the Bus school supplies collection—a partnership with the United Way of St. Lucie County that ensures children in foster care return to school with the supplies they need. We received 300 backpacks full of supplies for our participation while raising awareness for our system of care and the children and families it serves.



There was no summer slow-down for us in 2019! In July, we moved our headquarters of 17 years to St. Lucie West to accommodate a growing workforce and to make ourselves more accessible to our community partners.



CCKids Caregiver Support staff— together with the local Quality Parenting Initiative Committee — hosted the area’s first Co-Parenting Thanksgiving Dinner in 2019 to help keep families who are recovering from crisis together during the holiday. More than 25 people, including children, attended the dinner. The Albert Wilson Foundation supplied the turkeys, which were prepared by Fit Fixins, a local business that also donated sides and other goodies.

We finished out the year with the 20th Anniversary of Making Christmas Bright, a toy collection hosted in our community since 1999. More than 50 local businesses and community groups coordinated toy drives and collected more than 3,400 gifts for children in foster care, making the 20th anniversary of Making Christmas Bright one of the most prolific years for toy collection.



2019 Achievements



CCKids reunified 252 families, including 12 in June, during our first celebration of Reunification Month.

Our Child Placing Agencies licensed 55 foster homes during FY19 and another 29 from July to December.

Caregiver Support staff expanded support services and licensing to relatives.



30 youth were enrolled in college—a record for our area.

14 teens in foster care graduated high school in 2019—an increase from 2018.



We expanded training opportunities for child-welfare professionals and hosted four trainings on social-work tactics.

Our organization received expedited reaccreditation through the Council of Accreditation.



The previous year, CCKids developed a Volunteer Time Off policy, encouraging staff to volunteer in the community.

In 2019, staff teams participated in more than 20 local service events, such as the Treasure Coast Food Bank's Pack the House.



News Channel 12, through our partnership with the Forever Family program, featured the adoption needs of 16 children.

We continued our awareness efforts with #TCRings, a social-media campaign that featured community leaders sharing the adoption wishes of local children.

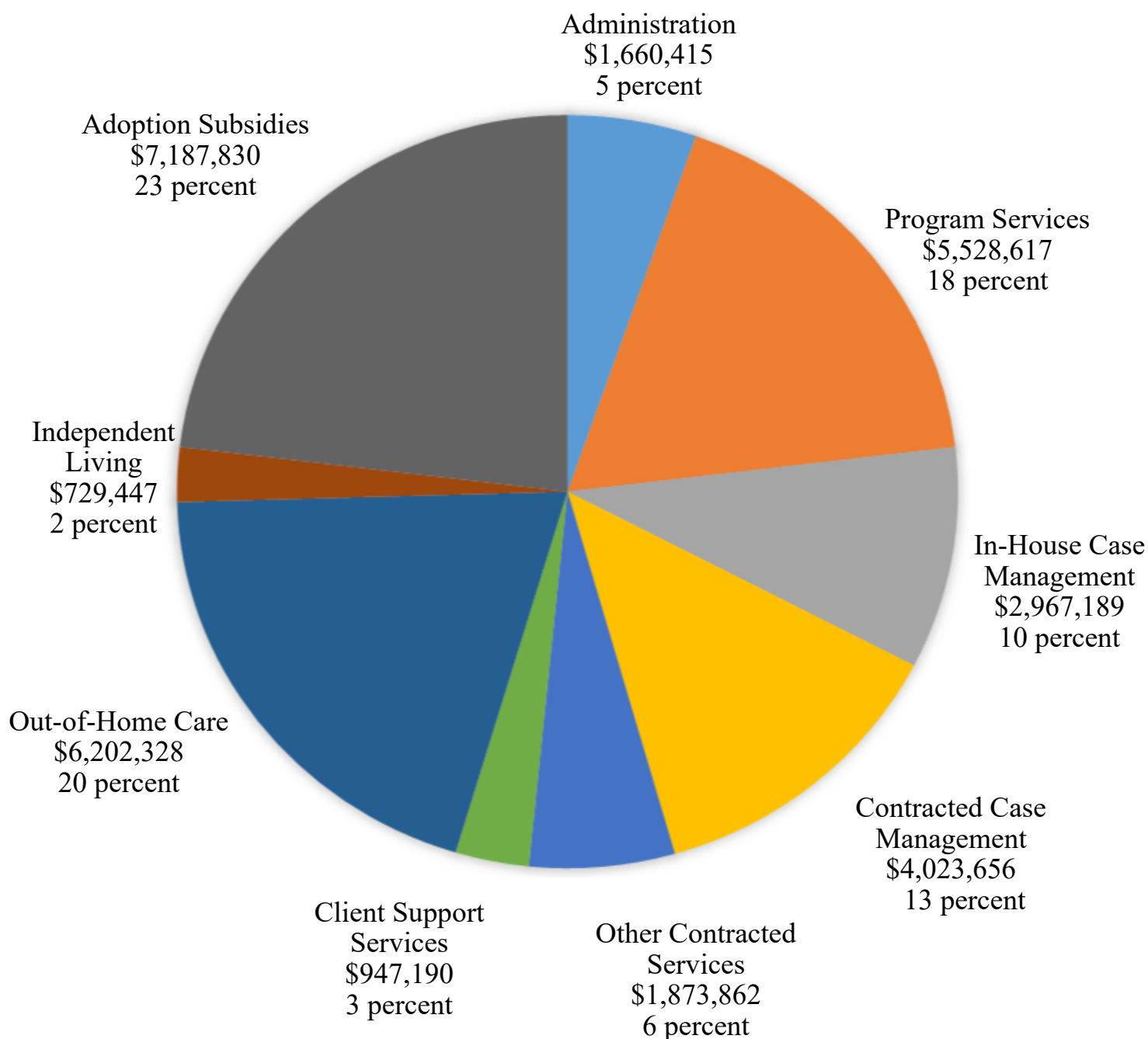


Our clinical team experienced an increase in referrals, resulting in more children in care receiving mental and behavioral health care.

CCKids staff found placements for 540 children who entered out-of-home care throughout the year.

Financial Report

Communities Connected for Kids—FY 2019



This table and the pie chart on page 22 represent income and expenses for FY19, which ran from July 2018 through June 2019.

INCOME

DCF	\$31,418,382
Other	\$305,590
<i>TOTAL INCOME</i>	<i>\$31,723,973</i>

EXPENSES

Administration	\$1,660,415
Program Services	\$5,528,617
In-House Case Management	\$2,967,189
Contracted Case Management	\$4,023,656
Other Contracted Services	\$1,873,862
Client Support Services	\$947,190
Out-of-Home Care	\$6,202,328
Independent Living	\$729,447
Adoption Subsidies	\$7,187,830
<i>TOTAL EXPENSES</i>	<i>\$31,120,533</i>
Net Income	\$603,439

Our Funded Providers

2 Welcoming Arms

Residential

4Kids of South Florida

Foster Homes

ADAP Counseling Services

Anger Management

Substance Abuse

Domestic Violence

Drug Screens

Behavior Basics

Family Support

Behavior Analysis

Boys Town

Safety Management

Camelot Community Care

Foster Homes

Changing Tree Wellness Center

Psychological Evaluations

Treatment

Children's Home Society

Adoption Support

Case Management

Shelter Services

Exchange Club CASTLE

Family Support

Positive Parenting

Hibiscus Children's Center

Shelter Services

Residential

Safe Care In Home Parenting

LabCorp

Paternity Testing

Martin County BOCC

Drug Testing

Mount Bethal

Foster Homes

Place of Hope

Foster Homes

Real Life Children's Ranch

Residential

Quest Diagnostics

Drug Screens

SAC of IRC

Drug Screens

SLC Drug Screening Lab

Drug Testing

Suncoast Mental Health

Comprehensive Behavioral
Health Assessments

Translations USA

Translation Services

Shanlis

Psychological Assessments

Thank you!

DONATIONS

The following is a record of contributions made during our 2019 fiscal year, from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

\$10,000-\$5,000

Foster a Dream Foundation—*whose generosity funds graduation and college expenses for teens and young adults in the Road to Success Program.*

\$4,999-\$1,000

Grand Senior Arcade
Exchange Club of the
Treasure Coast
Edward C. & Janis J. Albritton

\$999-\$500

Hoskins, Turco, Lloyd & Lloyd
Rosenthal Levy, Simon & Ryles
Caliber Home Loans
Florida Community Bank

Up to \$500

Sen. Gayle Harrell
Seacoast Bank
St. Andrews Episcopal Church
Translations USA
Katelyn Scarlett Urban
Network for Good
Kathryn & Karl Hensley

In kind—

United Way of SLC

Wendy Zuniga Family

Lil' Feet/SLC Fire Rescue

Hair Cuttery

Hometown News

Comfort Cases

Kappa Kappa Iota

TC Builders Association

Guardians for New Futures

Retired Educators SLC

Florida Highway Patrol

Clarke Institute for Learning

Sparemakers Bowling League

Pursuit Boats

Harbor Insurance

St. Andrews Lutheran

St. Andrews Episcopal

St. Lucie Gardens

Ashley Minton Law

La Buona Vita

Solei Salon

The Grove Church

Martin Health System

Lakes of Tradition

Imagine School

PSL High School JROTC

PSL Centennial High School

Berry Fresh Café

St. Andrews Episcopal Academy

Sungrove Montessori

Tropicana

First Presbyterian Church PSL

Olive Garden, Tradition

Bold Image Dentistry

Infiniti of Stuart

The Knit Wits

Dr. Christopher Dermody

Natalie Belisle

Chick Fil A



We are the Lead Agency in Circuit 19 of the state of Florida's child-welfare system of care. We ensure quality services are provided to children and families in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties, focusing on:

Safety. Permanency. Well Being.

To learn more about Communities Connected for Kids and our system of care, please visit us at www.ckkids.net and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

