FAITHBRIDGE
FOSTER CARE

# Central Florida Foster Care:

A community landscape study of Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties

**November 17, 2014**

Commissioned by

...connecting heart and home
GRACE LANDING

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In July 2014, Grace Landing asked FaithBridge leadership to take a look at the needs of Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties' foster children. To better understand the socio-demographics of these counties and the current state of the foster care system, we agreed to make a series of visits to the area and to conduct a comprehensive landscape study of the current foster care system. We also committed to a time of intensive prayer to discern how FaithBridge might serve the area.

Over the last several months, the FaithBridge team conducted in-person and telephone interviews with 65 individuals who represent 32 organizations that serve and understand at-risk families, child welfare, church ministry and related fields. Each interviewee answered a standard set of questions, and each was afforded anonymity to elicit candid responses. Although some questions could be answered with a simple yes or no, most were open-ended and were intended to stimulate expansive remarks. Pastors and ministry leaders were invited to share their insights and experience through in-person or telephone interviews, as well as an online survey, and their viewpoints represent 20 of the 65, or approximately one-third, of the voices contributing to this report.

Our objective was to gain a qualitative understanding of Central Florida's foster care system and supporting services. During the course of this study, we conducted in-depth reviews of child welfare and demographic data for all three counties and conducted select interviews in all areas. At the request of CBC of Central Florida, FaithBridge placed a focus on Osceola County with the intent to launch services there first, then to make a phased progression into Orange and Seminole Counties.

We are grateful to the knowledgeable, motivated and caring men and women who shared their views with us. Likewise, we appreciate the teams at Grace Landing, CBC of Central Florida and other county and civic leaders for their open communication and willingness to collaborate to find solutions through community-based partnerships.

We humbly and prayerfully share this report with the Orange, Osceola and Seminole communities at large. FaithBridge applauds the system improvements over the last few years and hopes to partner with county and regional officials to create solutions for the challenges at hand. In all things, we continue to pray for the community's readiness for a Christ-centered, church-led foster care movement and our place as a catalyst and part of its leadership.

Standing in the gap for children and families,

Bill R. Hancock
Co-Founder and CEO
On behalf of the entire FaithBridge team

For centuries, families and communities cared for abandoned, abused and neglected children. Strangers have cared for the "orphans" of their communities for thousands of years. Think all the way back to Moses and Joseph and then fast forward to the formation of our own country when religious institutions and believers cared for children in need.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, numerous nonprofits were formed and cared for U.S. children in need, generating their own capital and operational funding and responding flexibly to community problems according to their values and missions. However, in recent decades, the intervention of government, the increasing numbers of foster children and the vast amounts of money at stake today have transformed what was once a community-based, "cottage industry" into a large, anonymous marketplace.

Children coming into the child welfare system today are very different from the "orphans" of years gone by. Orphans and abandoned children generally needed a place to live and a nurturing environment. Because of their traumatic experiences, many children in today's foster care system have needs beyond just shelter. Many have severe emotional or behavioral problems that require active treatment.

Over the last 50 years, the U.S. has developed a complex system of laws, government institutions and programs to protect and provide welfare services to children and their families. Their mission is to keep children safe. And together, this system has mushroomed into a large, complex industry.

Nationally, child welfare is estimated to be a $23 billion industry—and the fiscal impact extends into a number of related services and budgets such as Medicaid, food stamps and other family programs in the $70 billion child and family services sector, according to Bridgespan Group (2009). In Florida, The General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 allocates a total of $2.9 billion to the Department of Children and Families to provide child welfare services.

Although the problem is large and complex, the solution is local and simple—local churches and families responding to the needs of hurting children and their families in their local communities. One at a time. Family to family. Neighborhood to neighborhood.

Small acts of competent compassion can make a world of difference not only in the lives of individuals but also transforming entire communities, regions and states. When organized, well-resourced, disciplined and guided by prayer, these same small acts can forever change a child's life and at the same time, the way foster care is delivered in the U.S.

In the pages that follow, you will find an assessment of the child welfare landscape in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties and recommendations that have the potential to forever change the lives of children and families. The report is grouped into five key findings. Each finding is supported by local child welfare data, interview and survey responses as well as the experience and expertise of the FaithBridge team.
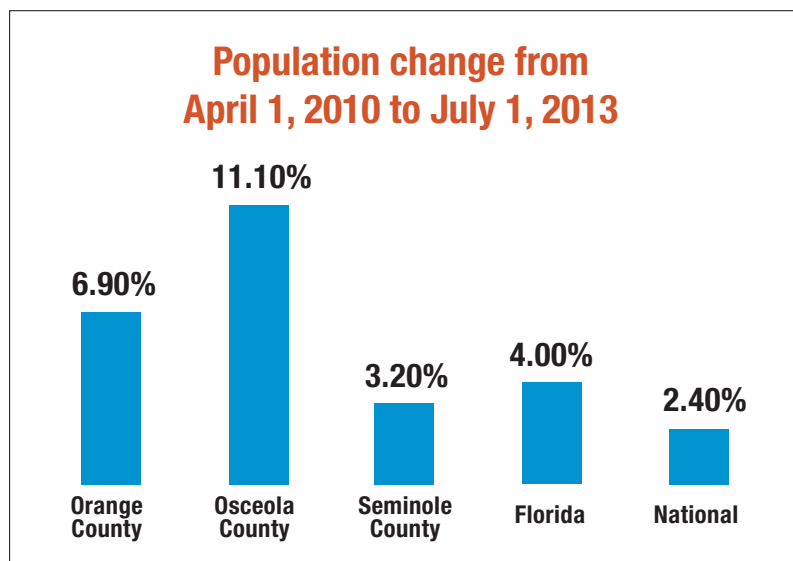
**1.**

Osceola County's growing and multicultural population drives its higher per capita foster care census.

Nationally, there are more than 400,000 children in foster care on any given day. In Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties combined, there are more than 1,000 foster children on any given day. The tri-county total is trending up. Why is that? Understanding this begins with an understanding of the general population.

Osceola and Orange counties have a growing and multicultural population. First, the counties' general population growth rates—Osceola in particular—are significantly higher than that of the state of Florida or nationally. With a population that is growing at more than four times the rate of the national average, interviewees commented specifically on how Osceola County has a more transient nature than most.

- "[This] community is like a garden where the gardening is done in pots and not in the ground because you can take the pots with you when you move. This is a very transient mindset in that people move around often. Such a change in demographics in a very short time. People don't view this as home. They still view where they come from as home."

- "A lot of transients coming into town…people moving into town without planning ahead."

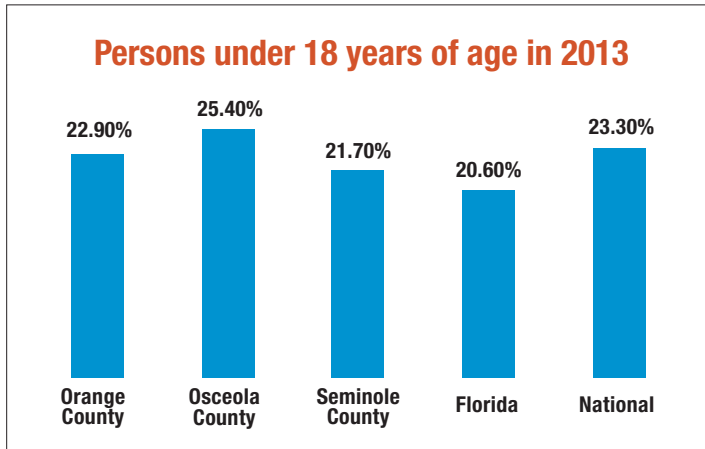The impact when so many people have moved from somewhere else not only affects those on the financial margin but also the community's ability to provide stable, nurturing homes to children.

**Population change from April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013**

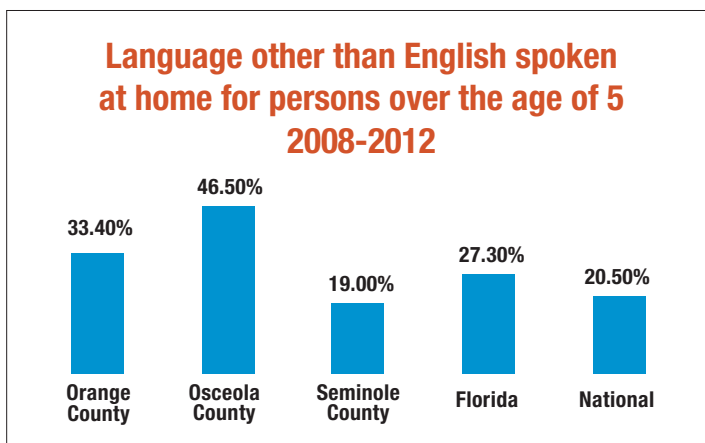| | |
|---|---|
| Orange County | 6.90% |
| Osceola County | 11.10% |
| Seminole County | 3.20% |
| Florida | 4.00% |
| National | 2.40% |

Source: US Census, 2010

Second, Osceola County's general population has a higher percent of children than the general population of its two neighboring counties, of Florida or of the U.S.

**Children as % of General Population**

**Persons under 18 years of age in 2013**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22.90% | 25.40% | 21.70% | 20.60% | 23.30% |
| Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | Florida | National |

Source:  US Census, 2010

Third, Osceola County appears to have a notably more multicultural general population, as shown below. Over 46% of the general population over age five in Osceola County does not speak English at home, a figure more than twice the national average. While not conclusive, this data point indicates a potential economic "risk factor" regarding the ability to capitalize on income earning potential. It simply raises the question as to whether or not the English fluency of the heads of household may be a limiting factor regarding earning potential.

**Language other than English spoken at home for persons over the age of 5 2008-2012**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33.40% | 46.50% | 19.00% | 27.30% | 20.50% |
| Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | Florida | National |

Source:  US Census, 2010

**Osceola Co. has higher unemployment & "under-employment" vs. the other two counties**

Local figures indicate that Osceola County is also experiencing higher unemployment rates than Orange or Seminole counties–a full percentage point over Seminole County.

## Unemployment Rate in September 2014

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5.60%** | **6.30%** | **5.10%** | **6.10%** | **5.70%** |
| **Orange County** | **Osceola County** | **Seminole County** | **Florida** | **United States** |
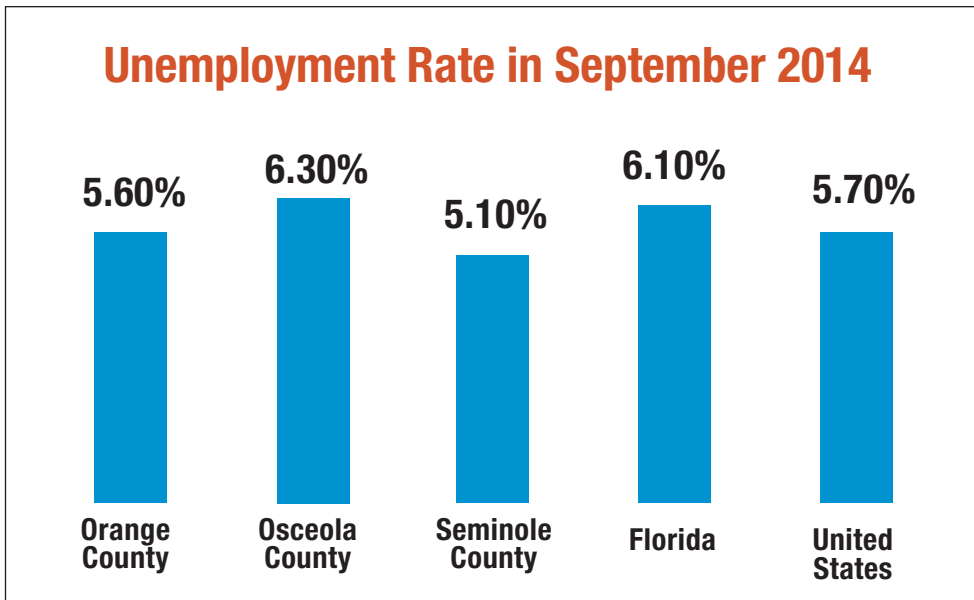
Note:  all numbers not seasonally adjusted for comparable data across geographies. Source: www.floridajobs.org/labor-market-information/labor-market-information-press-releases/monthly-press-releases

Our interviewees voiced the same concern regarding recent county-wide unemployment figures. One said that job seekers in Osceola County need to ensure they have the current skills applicable to the job openings which are there:  the new job market.

- "Joblessness – unemployment rate is high"

- "[A major issue is] under employment. They need to take part in the new job market."

Other indicators also underscore Osceola County's economic challenges. Per capita income is significantly less for Osceola County than the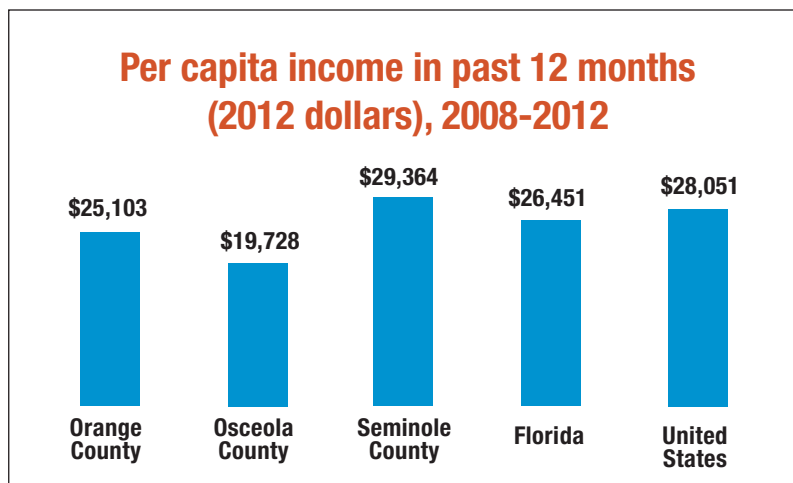 other two counties, the state of Florida or the nation as a whole. The previous interviewee's observation may hint partly as to why: only 17.5% of Osceola's general population age 25+ holds a bachelor's degree or higher.  That's almost half of Seminole County's 33.6% and far below the Florida and national numbers. People living in Osceola County without a degree may struggle to gain employment, given the credentials local employers are seeking. Further, the lack of bachelor's degrees may translate into lower wages, even for those who are employed.

**% of Population with Bachelor's Degree & Per Capita Income**

### Persons 25 and over with a Bachelor's degree or higher, 2008-2012

| Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | Florida | United States |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29.70% | 17.50% | 33.60% | 26.20% | 28.50% |

Source:  US Census

### Per capita income in past 12 months (2012 dollars), 2008-2012

| Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | Florida | United States |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $25,103 | $19,728 | $29,364 | $26,451 | $28,051 |
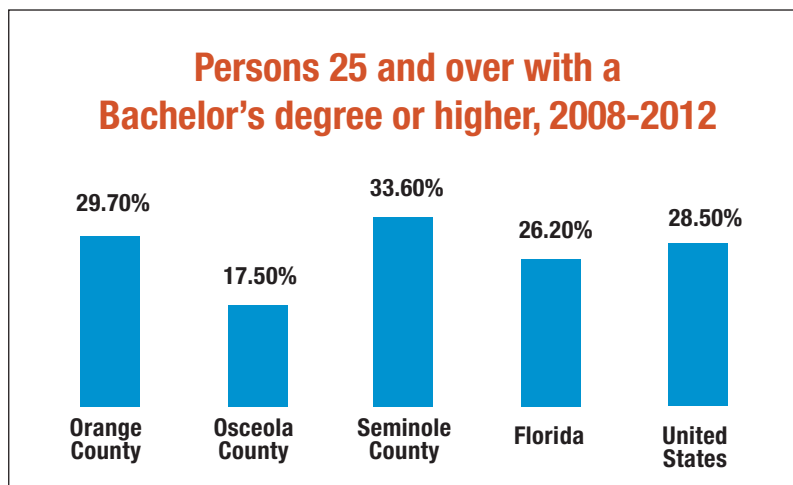
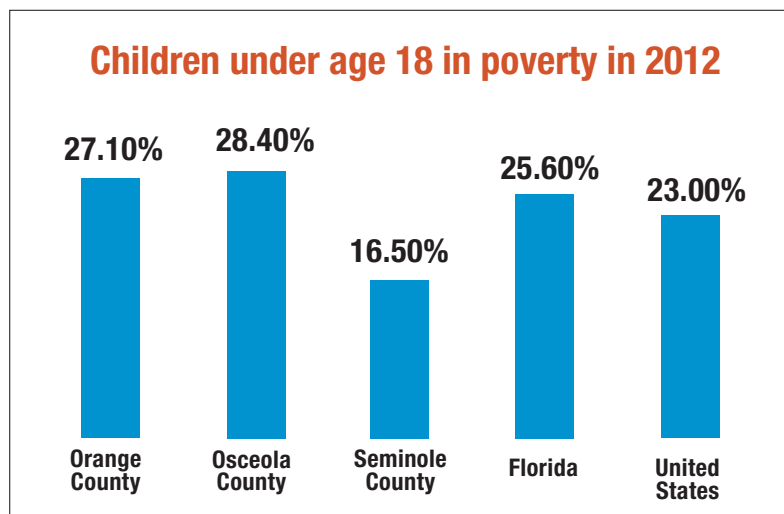Note: Per capita income is the mean money income received in the past 12 months computed for every man, woman and child in a geographic area. It is derived by dividing the total income of all people 15 years old and over in a geographic area by the total population in that area. Income is not collected for people under 15 years old, even though those people are included in the denominator of per capita income.
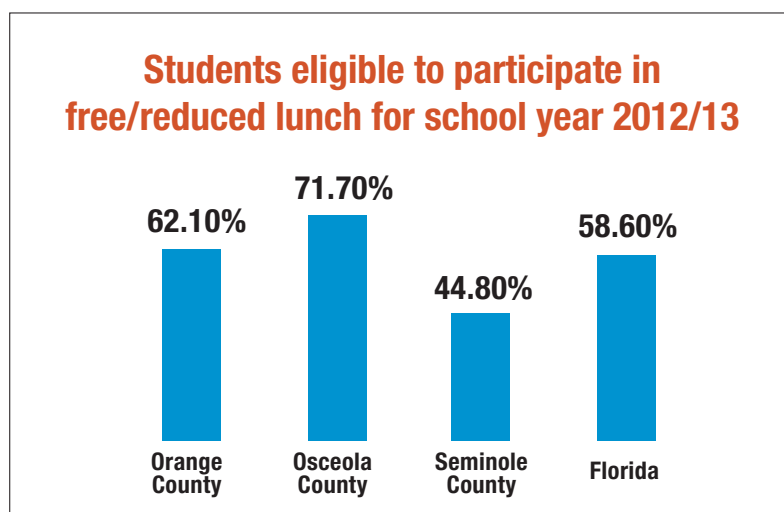
Source:  US Census

The per capita income figures also likely impact local "children in poverty" measures. Growing up in poverty is one of the most relevant factors influencing the foster care census and the most relevant factors influencing the foster care census and the greatest threats to healthy child development. Osceola and Orange counties have a higher percent of their children in poverty than Seminole County, the state of Florida or the U.S.

"Osceola County is lower income. Those struggling to live paycheck to paycheck don't typically think about taking on additional burdens."

## Children under age 18 in poverty in 2012

| County | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Orange County | 27.10% |
| Osceola County | 28.40% |
| Seminole County | 16.50% |
| Florida | 25.60% |
| United States | 23.00% |

Source: US Census

A particularly telling comparison is the percent of students who are eligible to receive a free or reduced lunch in public school. Almost three-quarters of the children in Osceola County's public schools were eligible for a free or reduced lunch in 2012-13. Orange County is in line with the state average, while Seminole County's percentage is lower.

## Students eligible to participate in free/reduced lunch for school year 2012/13

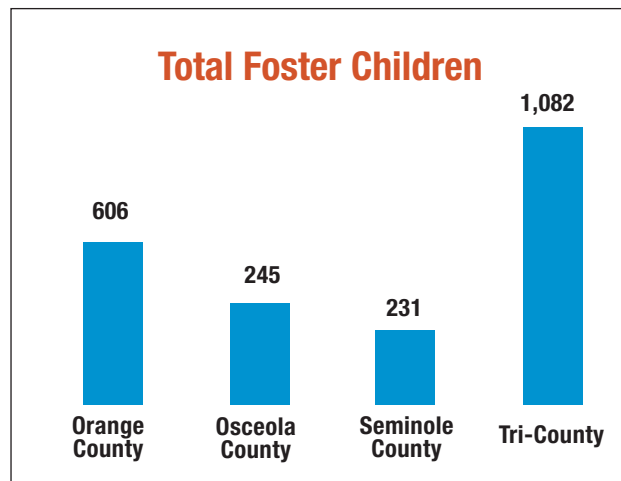| County | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Orange County | 62.10% |
| Osceola County | 71.70% |
| Seminole County | 44.80% |
| Florida | 58.60% |

Source: US Census

These financial statistics play out at the family level, particularly in Osceola. Interviewees referenced a shortage of resources to assist or fill gaps, families' limited personal support network and the pressures on families to just survive. Even children apparently must contribute to the family income.

- "Lack of resources that is compounded by the needs occurring in Osceola County. Osceola County offers different kinds of cases… people move to the county to get a minimum wage job and have no support network. This really compounds the issues affecting families."

- "People get stuck, money is tight, [there are drugs] and poverty is huge. There is some risk due to the location of where they live. Osceola has a shortage of resources. The resources haven't kept up with the need. Parents show up to social workers without money, about to be kicked out of their homes; the social workers pay out of pocket. Politicians don't understand how the poverty issues affect the children on the ground. They don't understand how homelessness affects the children, and, if they did, then there would be more shelters."

- "Kids are expected to take a job and to contribute to the household, and they have to grow up so fast."

- "Mentality in St. Cloud kids go to school and work… both parents work and the kids do too.
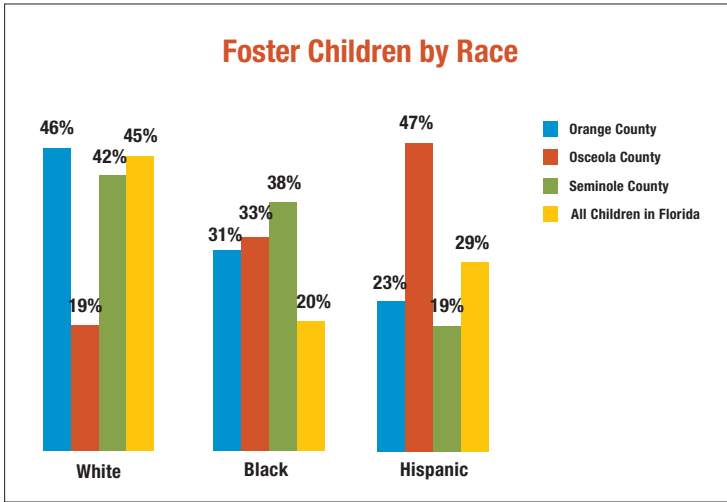
Our qualitative research with the interviewees corroborates the multicultural nature of Osceola County. Osceola County pastors note the multicultural nature of their congregations.

- "The county is changing. A lot of minorities, very minority driven. People are embracing the minorities and need to continue to embrace it. "

- "Diverse variety of languages and backgrounds of people in Osceola County."

Foster children come from a wide variety of backgrounds and situations. They are children of all ages and races. Central Florida's foster child population generally reflects that of the community at large with one exception: a higher percentage of Osceola County's foster children are Hispanic than are all of Florida's children under 18.

## Total Foster Children

| County | Total |
|---|---|
| Orange County | 606 |
| Osceola County | 245 |
| Seminole County | 231 |
| Tri-County | 1,082 |

Source: FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region

## Foster Children by Race



Note: Asian and other races were excluded from this graph as the percentage was minimal.  Total numbers may not equal 100% due to this.

Source:  FSFN data as of October 15, 2014 from FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region.  http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-data-repository/cits/2014/2014-florida-children-in-the-states.pdf

Thinking ahead toward adequate social services and possible roles the church and community might play, it's helpful to look at the age composition of these counties' foster children.  Seven out of 10 children in out-of-home care are under the age of 12, while the number grows to 74% and 79% in Seminole and Orange counties, respectively.

| County | Current Active FC | Age 0-5 | Age 6-11 | Age 12-17 |
|--------|------|------|------|------|
| **Foster Children by Age** | | | | |
| Orange | 606 | 54% | 25% | 21% |
| Osceola | 245 | 43% | 28% | 29% |
| Seminole | 231 | 42% | 32% | 26% |

Source:  FSFN data as of October 15, 2014 from FSFN Ad hoc report, DCF Central Region

## Reasons for Removal

| Reasons for Removal | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | FL (State) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neglect | 45% | 33% | 44% | 43% |
| Caretaker Drugs or Alcohol Abuse | 41% | 36% | 37% | 43% |
| Physical Abuse | 20% | 17% | 26% | 15% |
| Caretaker Inability to Cope | 19% | 26% | 4% | 13% |
| Inadequate Housing | 7% | 2% | 8% | 11% |
| Incarceration | 13% | 11% | 16% | 12% |
| Child Behavior | 1% | 1% | 4% | 3% |
| Abandonment | 14% | 4% | 5% | 11% |
| Sexual Abuse | 4% | 8% | 1% | 4% |

Source: www.fosteringcourtapproval.com, April 2013 thru March 2014. Note: percentages exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

The top two reasons why Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties' children are placed in foster care are neglect and substance abuse (both alcohol and illicit drug use). On top of that, however, Osceola County has inordinately high incidences of caretakers being unable to cope and sexual abuse. *Both are double the state average.* Seminole County has a higher incidence of physical abuse than the other two counties and the state average. All three counties are experiencing a higher incidence of physical abuse than the state average. In summary, local families are hurting.

Osceola County has a lower than average incidence of children entering care due to inadequate housing at a rate of less than 20% of the state overall. This might be surprising because the county has been struggling with a growing homeless population, and family homelessness is of grave concern. There's a general consensus and knowledge that the Highway 192 corridor is an area where homelessness has spiked, that thousands of children are living in hotels and "dozens school buses now stop for the children who call the tourist corridor home," according to a news article in the *Osceola News-Gazette*. Some allege that there are close to 5,000 homeless children.

## HOMESLESSNESS IN OSCEOLA COUNTY

**Select key findings from the January 2014 research report funded by the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners and the Osceola County Council on Aging include the following:**

1. The data indicate that at any given moment 1,700 Osceola families are homeless and need housing.

2. Currently, Osceola County has funding to assist approximately 160 families per year get back into housing of their own.

3. The vast majority of Osceola County's homeless are not from Florida.

4. The data suggest that these families have been homeless for a long time and, statistically, have very little chance of getting out of homelessness on their own.

   - 42% of those living in permanent housing with a subsidy have been there at least one year.

   - 30.5% of those living in motels and hotels have been there for 7-12 months; 39% for more than 1 year.

   - 42.9% of those in transitional housing have lived there more than a year.

   - 39% of those living with families have lived there more than a year.

5. The report states that there is a lack of affordable housing options for these families.

   - 86% of the families living doubled-up or in motels live on $19,999 or less annually ($9.07/hour, working full-time).

   - If they spend $983 for an average two-bedroom home (local average), that means 63% of their income is going toward housing

   - That 63% is far above the conventional standard of 30%.

6. A family staying in a hotel in Osceola County spends a considerable amount of their total resources to reside there.

Source: The State of Homelessness in Osceola County "An Insider's Briefing on Family Homelessness in Osceola County" January 22, 2014

Likewise, an article on October 24, 2014 in the *Osceola News-Gazette* (Highway 192 Statistics) indicates that local advocates are trying to understand any link between homelessness and domestic violence in their community, which is an indicator of child abuse.

- Victor Stefanici, program administrator for the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Kissimmee Service Center, said, "The transient population contributes significantly to Osceola's high rate of domestic violence compared to surrounding counties, Stefanici said. Ranked No. 5 in the state, there were with 2,316 reported cases of domestic violence in 2012, according to the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Four of those cases ended in murder. "Our focus is on safety first," Stefanici said. "Domestic violence is a totally different situation when you have a perpetrator literally in the same room with victims all the time." The close living quarters and inherent financial strain on families in hotels exacerbates violence, abuse and neglect, he said.

- Local advocates say the combination of low-wage jobs, high mobility, a huge inventory of cheap motel rooms and a lack of affordable housing fuels the cycle for many.

- DCF does not provide housing for families, but can provide them with basic financial assistance and also works to connect them with social service agencies for help with more permanent housing. But that's not always enough. "**It's a supply and demand issue. There are more families than the community has solutions**," said Glen Casel, CEO of Community Based Care of Central Florida, DCF's lead foster care agency in Osceola. "It's a serious issue, just the fact that we have families in our community living in hotels is a problem," Casel said. "That's not where families plan to be or want to be."

One interviewee framed the magnitude of the challenge: **"All the nonprofits are doing the best they can. Something that is becoming concerning is that so many people are now involved in the issue of the homeless, there is a hyper-focus on it right now… maybe at the detriment of other areas of need for the community. None of us know what the best answer is to the situation of the families."**

In summary, Osceola County appears to have a fairly transient community (minimum wage workers– many of whom are migrant) and has had a growing incidence of homelessness. The bottom line as it relates to foster care that, in Osceola County, the number of foster children is disproportionately high. The number of stable families able and willing to foster appears lower.

According to our qualitative research, some Osceola families are not stable enough themselves, financially or emotionally.

- "Dealing with a lot of people who don't have their family life together. Immature family structure. Maybe 10 couples [in our church] whose family life is together, making good decisions, etc."

- "Breakdown in the faith community, i.e., there has been a drop in attendance to church and if we aren't able to catch them early and instill faith in them, they are going to cost the government more in the long run."

The situation does not necessarily imply that fostering within the county won't work. It just means these challenges must be faced head-on and collaboration strong amongst those called to help. Others must be invited to join the cause.

**2.**

The breakdown of family impacts the number of vulnerable children entering foster care and impacts an increasing trend in out-of-home placements.

## 2. The breakdown of family impacts the number of vulnerable children entering foster care and impacts an increasing trend in out-of-home placements.

As we saw in the prior section, the well-being of our children and families can be monitored and measured through a variety of risk factors: economic, educational, family, health and societal trends. Sadly, one such societal trend both nationally and locally has been the breakdown of the family. That breakdown manifests in a variety of ways, such as divorce, educational risk factors and single–parent pregnancies.

These national statistics were reflected in our qualitative research in the tri-county area. Interviewees spoke to the breakdown of the family:

■ "How healthy are families? What are they struggling with? Acuity is high, blended families are up there, cultural mix within families. High rate of divorce that isn't going away."

■ "I see tons of couples that are going to church, not married…young families who don't make traditional family decisions."

■ "Breakdown of the family… the nuclear family is the exception."

■ "The community hasn't placed a high priority on the needs of the family."

### Florida and the tri-county area have a relatively higher divorce rate

One salient statistic that reflects the breakdown of the family is the divorce rate. That statistic has increased over the last four decades. The divorce rate is the 7th highest in the country *(Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2012. Last Updated January 31, 2014)*

Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties rank negatively—in the bottom quarter—among Florida's 67 counties in terms of the percent of children affected by divorce. Orange County is ranked lowest—the sixth worst in Florida.

| Children affected by divorce | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Risk Factor | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County |
| **Minor children affected by dissolution of marriage in 2012** (Rank out of 67 reporting counties) | 62 | 52 | 55 |

Source: http://datacenter.kidscount.org

## OTHER AT-HOME AND COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS FAMILIES FACE

In addition to the general breakdown of the family, interviewees mentioned other challenges faced by families. While most, if not all of these difficulties surface throughout the U.S., interviewees indicated, at times, that these seem to be of higher incidence and/or severity in this tri-county area.

### Distractions/ Misguided Priorities
- "[There are] outside distractions—TV stations, music. Kids have nobody to talk to. Parents need skills now, to learn responsibility and they don't need play stations and iPods."

- "People don't know how to establish appropriate priorities for themselves… i.e. – food stamps and expensive cell phones (faith-based people have less patience for people who have disarranged priorities)."

### Domestic Violence
- "In Hispanic demographic [there] is domestic violence and physical abuse."

- "A lot of domestic violence [cases], but those go to relatives."

### Substance Abuse
- "This is a poor county with lots of drug abuse."

- "Drugs–meth, marijuana, prescription drugs, oxycodone"

### Sexual Abuse
- "The severity of the cases is severe. Sex abuse, drug case out of Osceola seem more severe."

### Mental Health Disorders
- "In my experience it is mental health issues (of the parents) that are undiagnosed and untreated which leads to substance abuse by the parents."

- "Mental health issues with the parents–depression, bipolar."

### Crime
- "Combating crime. You can't fight it unless you change the heart."

### Tough Family Situations
- "Major behavioral 'DJJ [ Department of Juvenile Justice] lockouts'. Parents refuse to pick up their kids when they are released from DJJ so they get placed in group homes…most of these children have been previously touched by DCF in some way…(The CPI [Child Protective Investigator] has been out on an investigation and did nothing)."

- "All kinds of tough situations, mother of child who killed first child and then got pregnant again."

- "Hunger and nutrition issues, lack of sleep, educational needs."

## Educational risk factors

High school graduation rates in the tri-county area were on par or exceeded the statewide average. However, "non-promotions"—children not being promoted to the next grade level—are a problem, especially in Orange County, presenting a risk factor for those children. Orange County also ranks very low amongst Florida's counties in terms of births to mothers with no high school diploma or GED. Birth rates are high among those who are not graduating high school.

| Educational Risk Factors - Local County | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Risk Factor | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County |
| Births to mothers with no high school diploma or GED.  2012* | 63 | 50 | 47 |
| Non-promotions* | 62 | 47 | 53 |
| In-school suspensions* | 62 | 57 | 51 |
| Out-of-school suspensions* | 66 | 57 | 50 |
| Delinquency cases received.  2012/13* | 67 | 53 | 52 |

\* = Rank out of 67 counties reporting

Definitions: The percentage of public school students who have graduated within four years of entering ninth grade for the first time

Orange County struggles with school disciplinary measures in public school. The county ranks very low compared to other Florida counties:  in-school suspensions (62nd out of 67 counties), out-of-school suspensions (66th) and delinquency cases (67th out of 67 counties—last place). Orange County also ranks quite low regarding number of child and teen deaths, 63rd out of 67 Florida counties.

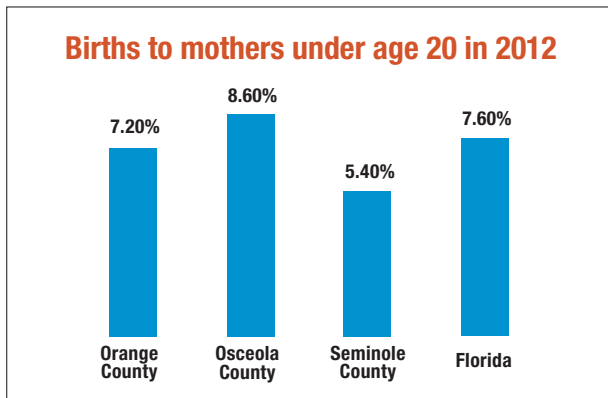| Child & Teenage Deaths – Local County | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Risk Factor | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County |
| Child deaths age 1 to 14 in 2012* | 63 | 51 | 43 |
| Teen deaths age 15 to 19 in 2012* | 63 | 48 | 56 |

\* = Rank out of 67 counties reporting

Data Source: Division of Accountability Research & Measurement, Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida; http://datacenter.kidscount.org

"[There are] overcrowded schools already. New subdivision of 5,000 homes coming. Multi-generation families living in a single house. Where are all these kids going to go to school? Influx of kids who become pregnant, not cared for."

## Teen Pregnancy

Osceola County has a high percentage of teenage pregnancy—higher than Orange County, Seminole County, and the state of Florida. Pregnancy as a teenager brings tremendous responsibilities to the individual—financially and emotionally. Oftentimes, this responsibility is passed to the grandparents and the community at large.

**Births to mothers under age 20 in 2012**



| | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County | Florida |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7.20% | 8.60% | 5.40% | 7.60% |

Orange County's teenage pregnancy statistics are in line with the state average. However, this county also has a relatively high incidence of births to unwed mothers—the fourth lowest county in Florida. Single parents, especially those struggling with financial hardship, are more prone to stress, anxiety and depression.

On the economic front, Orange County has a high incidence of mothers receiving federal assistance compared to other counties in Florida, ranking 64th out of 67 counties.

| Pregnancy | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Risk Factor | Orange County | Osceola County | Seminole County |
| Births to unwed mothers age 15 to 19. Year(s): 2012 * | 64 | 54 | 48 |
| Births to mothers with prenatal WIC participation. 2012 * | 64 | 56 | 51 |
| Births with Medicaid as delivery payment source. 2012 * | 64 | 54 | 52 |

\* = Rank out of 67 counties reporting

Data Source: Division of Accountability Research & Measurement, Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida; http://datacenter.kidscount.org

"High teen pregnancy rate. Community is burdened in some way – typically parents or grandparents, then the system. Two 16/17 year olds that had a child. Don't have capability to parent, drugs involved, no longer together romantically… Paternal grandmother receives custody from state, grandmother is 48 and works full-time…."

These risk factors and the lack of family health throughout the community indicate a need for local community involvement with struggling families and foster children. Many of our communities struggle with the value of family. However, the issues appear to be particularly acute in Osceola—not only for struggling families but also for families overall, making the improvement of the foster care system and increased foster family capacity particularly challenging. If families are not healthy, delivering excellent foster care in Christian homes may be difficult without extraordinary effort.

**3.**

CBC of Central Florida has shown improvement from its predecessor.

# 3. CBC of Central Florida has shown improvement from its predecessor.

In 1998, the Florida Legislature mandated that foster care and all related services be privatized throughout the state between January 2000 and December 2002. This legislation required that Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) contract with lead agencies as community-based providers who, in turn, serve as master contractors responsible for subcontracting services in their areas. Currently, there are 20 contracts in the state of Florida with 17 Community-Based Care Lead Agencies holding these contracts.

Community Based Care of Central Florida (CBCCF) holds two DCF lead agency contracts; their original contract (GJ501) was awarded in 2004 to cover Seminole County, and the second (GJL57) was

awarded in 2011 to cover Orange and Osceola Counties, replacing Family Services of Metro Orlando. Last year, CCBCF spent over $66 million on prevention, foster care and related services, and the combined contracted amount for FY 2014/15 exceeds for $68 million.

As part of its state contract, all community-based agencies are evaluated monthly by the Community-Based Care Lead Agency Scorecard in eight key performance factors. During calendar year 2014, CBCCF improved in six of eight measures in Orange and Osceola counties and two in Seminole County in the first eight months of the year (January – August 2014).

| Calendar Year 2014: Improvement or Declining and Current Evaluation of Performance Measures | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Orange and Osceola (Circuit 9) | Seminole County |
| 1. No verified maltreatment during in-home services | ⬆ (green) | ⬇ (yellow) |
| 2. No verified maltreatment within 6 months termination of in-home and out-of-home services | ⬆ (green) | ⬇ (yellow) |
| 3. Children in care 8 days to 12 months with no more than two placements | ⬇ (green) | ⬇ (green) |
| 4. Children achieving permanency within 12 months of entering care | ⬆ (yellow) | ⬆ (yellow) |
| 5. Children achieving permanency after 12 or more months in care | ⬆ (yellow) | ⬇ (red) |
| 6. Children not re-entering out-of-home care within 12 months of achieving permanency | ⬆ (green) | ⬇ (green) |
| 7. Children in licensed out-of-home care age 12 and under in DCF licensed family foster homes | ⬇ (yellow) | ⬇ (yellow) |
| 8. Former foster youth ages 19-22 with diploma or GED | ⬆ (green) | ⬆ (green) |

Source: CBC Lead Agency Scorecards from January 2014 until August 2014.
The arrows indicate if the performance measure has improved or declined from January 2014 to August 2014.

🟢 Green indicates above the standard, 🟡 yellow indicates slightly below the standard and 🔴 red indicates significantly below the standard

## CBCCF is perceived as improving

The consensus across interviewees is that CBCCF is doing a better job than its predecessor. Some acknowledged that the lead agency transition several years back was "rough," but they are on the right track. Specific areas of improvement mentioned were CBCCF's engagement in the community and better communication than the previous CBC. A cross-section of comments acknowledged the progress:

- "Good people who want to fix the problems."

- "They have the right mindset, and so they are moving in the right direction."

- "It is light years better than three years ago."

Accordingly to the CBCCF website, they are changing the lives of thousands of local children by:

- Providing foster and adoptive homes

- Developing and supporting a network of case management and service providers

- Getting essential school supplies to students in need

- Mentoring and teaching basic life skills to teens

- Providing job-search assistance and an employer network to older kids "aging out" of foster care

- Redirecting children at risk for homelessness or crime to a positive future

The CBC further states that since 2004, CBC of Central Florida has:

- Served approximately 3,000 children on a daily basis

- Facilitated over 1,000 adoptions

- Reduced the child removal rate by 25%

- Reunited 69% of the children and families that come into care

- Doubled the number of foster homes available

- Redirected children at risk for homelessness or crime to a positive future

Some interviewees were candid in sharing that while CBCCF has notably improved, there is still more to do. Some wondered if CBCCF staff shared the same vision: *were they motivated and committed to working under current guiding principles?* For example, while performance measurement has many merits, the question was raised: *is everyone working for what's in the best interest of the child on a daily basis?*

- "What has made it hard is the system has turned to be more data driven. There is a real concern for doing what is right for the kids, but there is an emphasis on the numbers."

- "A lot of them are covering their rear end. The staff thinks, 'Let's not get the agency in the news' and work back from there."

Select foster parent interviewees clearly gave CBCCF kudos for improving. But, they still felt that they were too often left out of the loop, unheard or saddled with unnecessarily inefficient processes:

- "It is a difficult, frustrating experience."

- "We need people to care very strongly about foster parents, who will go to bat for the foster parents. The children deserve better than they are getting."

- "CBC is not helping [us] do what [we] need to do."

CBC of Central Florida has made significant improvements in the lives of foster children, as shown by the outcomes above; however, there is still room for continued growth.

**4.**

Central Florida's child welfare system is fragmented by growing service and communication gaps.

# 4. Central Florida's child welfare system is fragmented by growing service and communication gaps.

As the lead agency over foster care in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, CBCCF does not undertake all of the work itself. Rather, there are an estimated 10-15 subcontracted organizations which provide foster care services; they are specialized by functions (e.g., one entity provides case management, another entity provides placement services). Because discrete functions are contracted out to specific organizations, inefficiencies, communication gaps and a lack of cooperation have arisen.

Unless there is strong collaboration, all those involved cannot realistically provide optimal foster care.

### Interviewees rate the child welfare system's effectiveness as slightly above average.

When asked to rate the current child welfare system's effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), interviewees rated the foster care system approximately 5.5 out of a possible 10. The numeric responses varied widely, ranging from 2 to 9. This approximate "rating" should be heeded as directional, as it was qualitative, not quantitative research.

The interviewees were professionals from the child welfare system itself, nonprofits, ministries, government, churches and community.

As mentioned prior, many remarked about the good intentions of the people working in the system. But they had criticisms or reservations about the "system" itself and/or its efficiency. When asked exactly what the problems may be, interviewees indicated that the system is overwhelmed: the number of children needing care, high case loads, turnover and communication gaps can lead to inconsistent service delivery.

The foster care system's ability to function effectively is strained by the number of children in care:

- "Be more consistent in sticking to the commitments CBC has made, for example If we ask for a placement for 30 days, then come get the kid after 30 days. CBC often extends past the 30 days due to no other options."

- "Court system is really backed up… trials are being dragged out to 6 months at times."

- "The case workers are traveling in all counties."

Another theme heard was the high turnover rates of child welfare workers. The general belief is that case managers are overloaded and overworked. With high turnover comes a need for new worker training and increased supervision, but in a system that is so stressed, there's often little time to properly on-board new workers.

- "Case managers constantly revolving is a real problem."

- "The child goes from one case worker to another and gets lost in the system."

High caseloads and high case manager turnover can result in communication gaps with foster parents:

- "You can email someone, and it goes into the infinite void."

- "Disconnect between the paperwork and what is said in upper levels and what actually happens on the ground for foster parents."

- "Communication with the child's case management team was bad. 'They weren't working as a team.'"

These systemic stressors compromise the consistency of service delivery to foster parents and foster children. Turnover and inexperienced workers impact the quality of investigations and casework. Timely permanency, protective custody and placement decisions are needed for foster children. All of which also yield unmet needs for the children in care, longer lengths of stay, incomplete case documentation and worker burnout.

*Questionable case management and investigations:*

■ "Kids are being sent back into family situations that are still not good."

■ "Placements–the safety of children are 'iffy.' They don't always take the kids when people think they should."

■ "Inconsistent follow up when there are abuse reports."

■ "Some CPIs aren't diligent in following up in a timely manner. Some are good, some aren't. It feels like something is being missed when [mandated reporters] have called numerous times and nothing is done."

*Delay of referral services:*

■ "Referral times for the parents are elongated… meaning it takes a long time for the services to get put in place and the parents are beginning to give up or disengage before services can be in place."

■ "Services are not provided quickly. Foster parents get frustrated when they can't get help for the kids."

■ "Delay in services leads to longer reunification times, which leads to lack of cooperation on everyone's part, which also impacts the stability of the placement."

*Blanketed case planning:*

Some interviewees spoke to a boilerplate-type approach to child welfare versus a carefully designed individualized case plan for each child. The reason for this approach is not known, but the belief is it's due to limited placement options and the high caseloads among case managers.

■ "Case planning is blanketed and not individualized. The needs of the community (generational issues, education, employment) are complex with real issues leading to maltreatment that are in need of being resolved. The need for [foster homes] is high, and kids are just stuck in a placement that may not be best for them; therefore, leading to disruptions because the placement wasn't the best."

■ "Our mediations are useless. Everyone has the same case plan, and attorneys for the parents are pointing it out."

*More trauma-informed mental health services are needed, as well as better communication in general.* With local CBCCF workers suffering from high caseloads and workloads, the problem may partly be the lack of time to vet providers, transport children to and from area providers or make the right connections.

*Need trauma-informed mental and pediatric health providers/services*

Local mental health providers and wraparound services was a common theme. The need for pediatric health services and counseling were also mentioned: family, couples, and individual counseling.

- "Is there a lot of trauma-based care for foster kids in the area? There are a lot that would say they do, but [they don't] really understand the needs of the foster kids. They… don't have much knowledge of the front end of foster care because they're mostly used for post-adoption therapy."

- "Not enough psychiatric services for the children, especially trauma-informed providers. Not enough Medicaid providers that don't… fall back in just getting kids in quickly at Park Place to solve the immediate problem, which leads to a lack of continuity of care."

- "[There are] nine social workers for 46 schools. Biggest issues? Mental health, counseling, usually because of stuff going on at home."

*Need better communication between and amongst all parties*

- "[What's needed is] getting information disseminated outside the social service agencies. Communicating the needs across the diverse community."

- "[We should] survey the kids as they are leaving care… this isn't being done, and it needs to be done."

*Need access to more training, to social services and to shelter for "at risk" families*

- "More resources for the families…not enough in-home training of the parents in order to alleviate the need to remove."

- "Childcare and supportive services outside the window of 8 am-6 pm."

- "Locally based services within walking distance in communities to provide the services… to make the CBC diversion program more accessible."

Further, Florida uses a "Guardian ad Litem" (GAL) advocacy program in its foster care system. GALs are appointed by the court. They see the foster children assigned to them every 30 days to oversee their welfare. They are either paid lawyers or unpaid, trained volunteers who speak on behalf of a child. What was indicated by interviewees, however, is that GALs' goals don't always appear to align with goals set forth in the child's case plan. We heard that some GALs aren't focused enough on the reunification of the foster child with the biological parent(s). Also, tensions have arisen over the amount of control GALs have. "GALs [need] to have a little more understanding of the realities of what takes place around them… a greater understanding of how their input either slows or speeds a case."
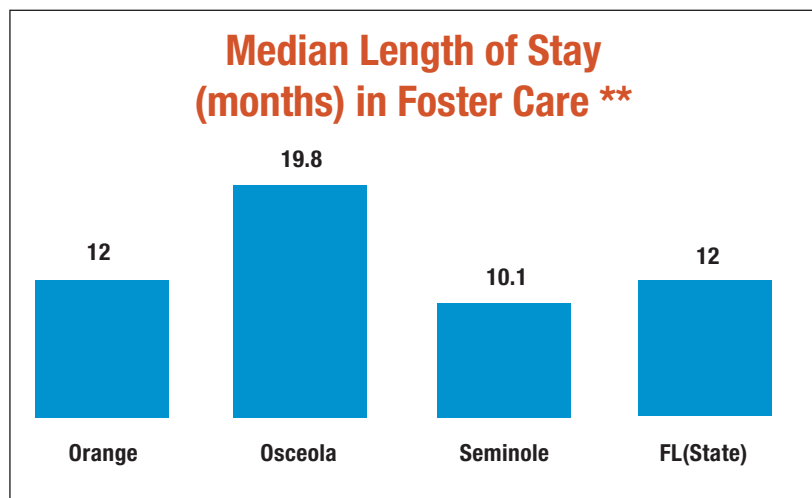
A phrase which surfaced several times during the research was "power struggle." This struggle seems to be between the various parties who each play a different societal role: case manager, judge, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), other county officials, etc. A few interviewees wondered if the GAL had, for some reason, begun to have too much sway over a case, more than was intended.

- "It is a challenge to get people to volunteer as a GAL… GALs get frustrated with the foster parents who aren't doing what they are asked to do."

**Osceola County children are staying in care longer & finding permanency less often.**
The stressors above have another ramification. Foster children are sometimes slow to return home because overloaded case managers have a hard time managing case bottlenecks efficiently through to reunification. This means that children are staying in care longer and possibly moving too often. One interviewee said there are "too many placements. I adopted a child that had 8 or 9 homes prior to coming to me."

Quantitative data indicate that Osceola foster children are indeed remaining in care longer. Osceola's children's length of stay exacerbates the previously mentioned challenge of too few foster families in-county. Their median length of stay is two-thirds higher than the state average, creating additional burdens on an already stressed system. One interviewee went as far as to say that "kids stay until they age out."

**Median Length of Stay (months) in Foster Care **

| Orange | Osceola | Seminole | FL(State) |
|--------|---------|----------|-----------|
| 12 | 19.8 | 10.1 | 12 |

**Source: fosteringcourtimprovement.org. Foster children discharged April 2013 through March 2014

In CBCCF's three counties, as in other counties, reunification is the most common permanency plan and long-term goal for foster children. However, data indicate that not only are Osceola County foster children remaining in care longer, but also their cases "reunify" less often than the children in Orange and Seminole counties or than the statewide average.
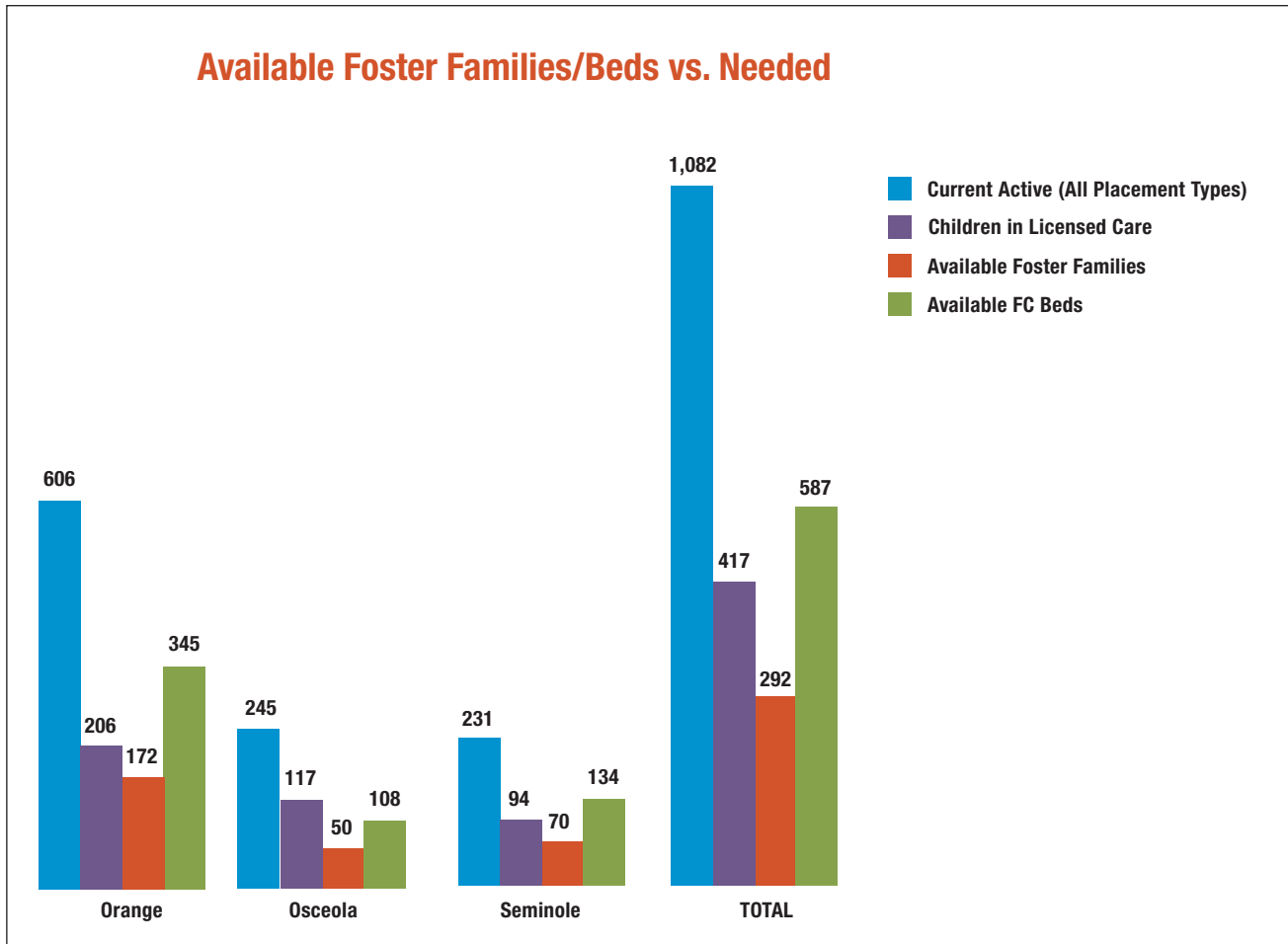
**Children by Permanency Plan**

| Number of Children Exiting Out of Home Care by Discharge Reason | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| From July 2012 to June 2013 (24 Month Trend)  |  By Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties | | | | | | | |
| FSFN data as of October 15, 2014   |  Source: FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region | | | | | | | |
| County | Adoption % of Total | Turning 18 % of Total | Death of Child % of Total | Permanent Guardianship % of Total | Reunification with Parent(s) % of Total | Transfer to Another Agency % of Total | % of Total |
| Orange | 19% | 8% | 0% | 23% | 48% | 1% | 100% |
| Osceola | 34% | 10% | 0% | 17% | 37% | 1% | 100% |
| Seminole | 18% | 13% | 0% | 20% | 47% | 1% | 100% |
| TOTAL | 22% | 10% | 0% | 22% | 46% | 1% | 100% |
| FL TOTAL | 22% | 6% | 0% | 24% | 46% | 1% | 100% |

Source:  www.fosteringcourtimprovement.org/fl/county/Osceola.  Foster Children Discharged April 2013 through March 2014.

As shown below, a recent "snapshot" indicates there are approximately 1,082 foster children placed "out of home" across Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.  This number includes children in the placed in non-licensed placements, who may need to be placed into a foster home in the future.

Our best source of foster care capacity indicates there is a tri-county total of 292 foster families and 587 available beds for foster children. There are 417 children in licensed care.

**Available Foster Families and Beds vs. Needed**



**Available Foster Families/Beds vs. Needed**

Legend:
- Current Active (All Placement Types)
- Children in Licensed Care
- Available Foster Families
- Available FC Beds

Orange: 606, 206, 172, 345
Osceola: 245, 117, 50, 108
Seminole: 231, 94, 70, 134
TOTAL: 1,082, 417, 292, 587

Source: FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region. FSFN data as of October 15, 2014.

## Tri-County Children Entering Care by Month

**Total Number of Children Entering Out-Of-Home Foster Care: 3-County Total (Orange, Osceola, Seminole)**
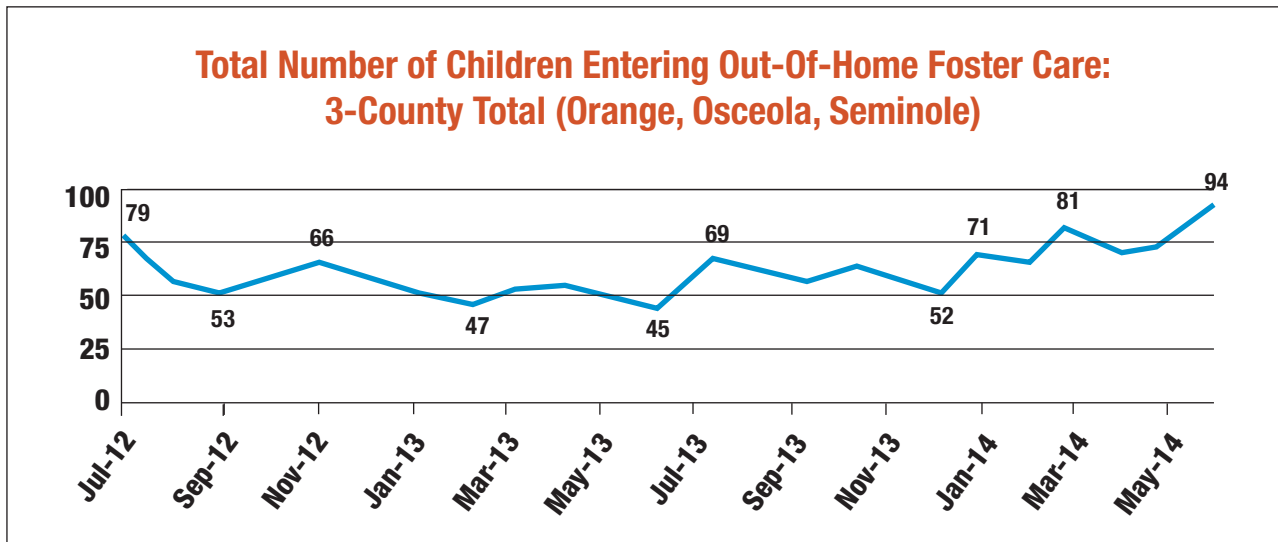


Source: FSFN data as of October 15, 2014. FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region.

The number of children entering out-of-home foster care is trending upwards. In June of 2014, 94 children entered care.

### Osceola County places more children in licensed care.

When most children first come into foster care, the Child Welfare Professional works to locate relatives to support the birth family in reunification efforts and/or who are willing to let the child stay with them while the birth family works with the agency on reunification. If relatives are not an option for placement, other options for permanency are assessed on a case-by-case basis. They are considered based on the safety and best interests of the child. The permanent outcomes for children in care include: (1) reunification with their parents; (2) adoption; (3) guardianship; (4) permanent placement with a fit and willing relative; or (5) another planned permanent living arrangement; e.g., long-term foster care or emancipation.

Until permanency is reached, a child is placed in foster care. The five primary types of foster care placement are licensed residential care, licensed foster care, placement with an unlicensed relative, placement with an unlicensed non-relative and other.  The "out of home" label in the graph below simply means that the child is no longer living at home with their biological parent(s). Rather, the child is placed either in licensed care (a foster home or residential home) or unlicensed care (with a relative, non-relative or other).

## Foster Care Placement Types

| | Children Currently Active in Out of Home Care as of 10-15-14 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Licensed Care | | | | Non-Licensed Care | | | | | | | |
| County | Residential | % of Total | Foster Home | % of Total | Non-relative | % of Total | Relative | % of Total | Other | % of Total | Total Active Children | % of Total |
| Orange | 55 | 9% | 151 | 25% | 73 | 12% | 305 | 50% | 22 | 4% | 606 | 100% |
| Osceola | 34 | 14% | 83 | 34% | 20 | 8% | 97 | 40% | 11 | 4% | 245 | 100% |
| Seminole | 30 | 13% | 64 | 28% | 27 | 12% | 107 | 46% | 3 | 1% | 231 | 100% |
| TOTAL | 119 | 11% | 298 | 28% | 120 | 11% | 509 | 47% | 36 | 3% | 1,082 | 100% |
| FL TOTAL | 2,209 | 11% | 6,341 | 32% | 1,834 | 9% | 8,506 | 43% | 932 | 5% | 19,822 | 100% |

A Snapshot of children currently active as of 10-15-14. FL nos. as of 10-19-2014. By their Removal Zipcode of Orange, Osceola, and Seminole. FSFN data as of October 15, 2014. Source: FSFN Adhoc report, DCF Central Region

Osceola County has a high rate of foster children being placed into foster homes and a lower rate placed with relatives or non-relatives when compared to the other two counties or Florida as a whole. The transient nature of Osceola County's population simply may mean that there are no relatives nearby to place the at-risk children or no relatives able to take them, financially. Osceola foster children are likely being placed in other counties, a practice which is not ideal for reunification or educational continuity but may perhaps be the solution, considering the current economic climate to avoid long-term instability on the developing child.

Osceola County's rate of residential placements is also slightly higher than that of the other two counties or Florida. The ongoing and long-term lack of foster homes or foster family capacity in Osceola has resulted in children not being placed together–further adding to the trauma of the child and family. Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties are no exception:

- "Siblings not being able to be placed together–five or more siblings always split up, foster parents will at times split up the siblings due to not being equipped to handle behaviors… [Regarding the] visitation center–there's only one in Osceola. For sibling visitations they have to happen elsewhere because there is no space at the visitation center."

- "75% of the kids [I] work with are separated from siblings. Once parents' rights have been terminated and children are legally free, they have a problem adopting the kids together. It is a mess."

## Why the lack of foster family capacity? Fear, misperception, low recruitment, lengthy training process, general population struggling and lack of awareness

We asked each interviewee why more foster families weren't engaged in foster care. Common responses ranged as follows:

- "Fear, finances on the part of the foster families. Mainly fear of what they are bringing into the home. Fear of disruption, fear of unknown, fear of impact on family, fear of lack of resources (which there are tons of resources)."

- "People ask, 'What am I liable for?'"

- "People are afraid and don't want to do it because they think it will cost too much and what happens if the (birth) family shows up? Myths and misperceptions… 'I know someone who…' and then you hear the horror stories."

Several felt that foster parent recruitment efforts are weak and that the current training structure is too cumbersome. "CBC is redoing their website, and foster parent recruitment is not front and center. If we don't have foster parents, we can't do anything. They are not at the top of search engines when someone does a search. We have been [complaining] about it for four years."

Interviewees felt that the foster parent training took too many weeks (11) to complete, and should be more professional and engaging in delivery. The training was viewed by some as "insufficient," yet foster parents felt unprepared for the children they were to receive. Parents need age-appropriate training for their likely placements: babies and toddlers, school-aged, teenagers. In terms of professionalism, profanity used by trainers was presented as a means to help attendees understand foster children's environments; however, some interviewees viewed the practice as unnecessary and extreme. In general, foster parent requested trainings more often, at more convenient times (e.g., not Easter weekend) and closer to home. The length and lack of training opportunities means delays in recruiting much needed foster family capacity.

PRIDE is the training class prospective foster families must take.

- "The process is way too long (PRIDE and the placement). Many families quit the training. 75 showed up for the orientation, 12 started PRIDE, and she was the only one to finish the classes and get licensed."

- "PRIDE class is way too long. We live in a speed era."

- "Process takes way too long. Four months to get licensed… Inflexibility of the PRIDE scheduling."

- "Faith-based people have a hard time with PRIDE due to the swearing… '[they think] this is what it will be like as a foster parent.'"

- "PRIDE was heavily redundant. Trainers still had a lot of bias."

- "[There are] not nearly enough Spanish-speaking foster families. They are trying to get a Spanish-speaking PRIDE class."

*Lack of awareness*

- Some interviewees believed the lack of foster family capacity is due to lack of awareness.

- "99.9% of the county isn't aware of the need. Families who could bear the burden, don't know about that number."

- Perception that "it's a state-level problem, not a local problem."

- "[Church] congregations don't really know or understand the foster care system."

While these beliefs and perceptions are not entirely unique to these three counties, they do point to a tremendous need for improved communication and education about the need and opportunity to serve the community's foster children. One interviewee candidly shared "People are afraid they are going to get too attached and unable to give the kids back."

Another said, "When you're talking about foster care parents, that's not for everyone. Very small pool of people to pull from." But the greatest need is still foster families.

- "We are in a huge need for homes that are able to have sibling groups. Large sibling groups. CBC/DCF are trying to limit the number of kids going to homes.  No churches are involved in helping in any way…Also no homes for teenagers."

- "Teenagers get stuck in group homes, not in families, and this is a detriment to them…they don't get to see a real family.  Extended foster care… a bunch of 18-year-olds who can't stay in foster homes, and there aren't enough transitional housing options."

- "There is a huge lack of respite…if there are respite homes, I'm not aware of where they are."

Clearly, there is a tremendous need for more families who will say "yes" to the community's hurting children and their families—both as foster families and as volunteer support. Thus far, FaithBridge has found the local community to be open, candid and willing to share their insights about the needs of Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties' children and families. We will assist CBC of Central Florida in their efforts and advocate for increased communication and collaboration. We aim to create a collaborative environment that encourages transparency, sharing of information and transference of competencies between agencies so that each can build on their strengths. And together, we can provide better outcomes for children and families.

Thus far, FaithBridge has found the local community to be open, candid and willing to share their insights about the needs of Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties' children and families.

**5.**

The church is
willing to serve
foster children
and their families
but is unclear
how to engage for
maximum impact and
sustainable change.

# 5. The church is willing to serve foster children and their families but is unclear how to engage for maximum impact and sustainable change.

There are approximately 100 churches in Osceola County. We connected in person, by phone or online with a cross-section of pastoral leadership from 20 churches across the area. To holistically assess the local faith community's readiness to embrace foster care as a local mission and ministry, we also asked all 65 interviewees of our qualitative study about their experience working with local churches.

The majority of Osceola County pastors believe that the Church should help regarding fostering. Several indicated their involvement in hosting seminars with a focus on foster care and adoption, as well as funding, education, resources and respite care for both foster and adoption. When asked why churches have a role to play in foster care, pastors shared:

- "Absolutely… My wife and I are currently fostering and even licensed to adopt. We just went through the classes."

- "Because the Bible says we should care for the orphans....and although most of these kids aren't permanent orphans, they are temporary orphans who need a loving home and relentless parenting."

- "I think the main thing the church (particularly pastors) are responsible for is equipping the saints for the work of the ministry-meaning our first role as a church (organization) is to hold out a biblical vision for adoption and caring for orphans and widows."

While not every pastor we spoke with could be termed an "advocate" for foster care, clearly many pastors are expressing conviction that the Church should help in some way. It's a biblical mandate and the local need is apparent. Interviewees from our longer in-person or phone surveys corroborated these views:

- "Churches really need to step in and provide services for the [biological] families in order to prevent removal [of the children into foster care]."

- "The people here have big hearts, but that doesn't extend into the doorway."

- "Sporadic stuff… more of band aid efforts… not consistent efforts that could be referred to."

Likewise, many Osceola County churches are involved in local outreach to vulnerable people. Not all are involved in foster care, but many are serving those in need. "Virtually every church here has been involved in helping those in need." Involvement ranged from reaching out to teens and providing mentors in local schools to helping single mothers transition toward self-sufficiency. In terms of material goods and support, churches are providing backpacks at the beginning of school, having food drives, handing out weekend food bags and collecting Christmas gifts for needy children.

Likewise, many churches sited their efforts to help Osceola's homeless population, including forming a registry through social media and the community; backpack, shoe, clothing and summer food drives; helping with personal care including showers, free haircuts and medical clinics; and Bible schools at apartment complexes. One pastor shared that "We feed at a homeless shelter once a month and actually turn people away (more volunteers than needed)." This helps to demonstrate the Christian community's willingness to engage in tough issues.

Churches in Osceola County indeed appear to be caring for "the least of these," But in reconsideration of the statistics mentioned throughout this report, the needs of the local community right now are great. They specifically asked for help in areas ranging from afterschool programs and inviting teens to youth events to providing space for foster parent trainings and association meetings.

When child welfare professionals were asked about the immediate needs for kids and families in their county, the consistent response was "more foster parents":

- "Lack of good foster families that will provide the nurturing and other support they need."

- "Big issue they are noticing is adult fatigue of the foster parents and people involved with the foster kids."

- "Osceola is the hardest place to recruit volunteers."

- "The CBC program to help homeless families is very small."

- "Sometimes case managers spend a night in a hotel room with a child because there is no placement."

At FaithBridge, we believe the local church is the solution to the foster care crisis in our country. However, the Church can only be the solution if it's willing to act on its biblical mandate to care for widows and orphans (James 1:27) in our local Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). What FaithBridge brings to the table is a foster care ministry model to help churches and local community solve the foster care crisis in a "doable" approach (more details later in the study).

Interviewees shared a common belief that the church was supposed to engage in compassion ministries and the church would be an ideal place to find foster families and volunteer support. Interviewees did not indicate that churches don't get involved because they are unaware of the needs. This belief was substantiated, in part, by our online survey with pastors and ministry leaders.

When asked about the greatest problem facing foster care today, pastors had a wide range of responses. Some simply said not enough foster care families. Others referred to awareness of the problem on the part of the congregation.

- "Lack of knowledge. Also, lack of teaching from the pulpit on the obligation of believers to care for the orphans and widows. Orphans are not just children without parents, but the Bible also calls those without fathers "orphans.' "

- "Knowing a number of families who have entered into the foster care process, I would say (1) hardship and confusion of the legal process involved, (2) support from others through the process, and (3) simply getting the word out about the need for foster families."

In terms of the broader community's perceptions of the church's involvement, interviewees from child welfare, nonprofits and government had mixed views regarding whether or not the local church is interested in child welfare. Some thought the church had no or little interest in child welfare. Others saw the church as the answer, a willing resource. Representative quotes are below:

| Cautionary comments | Positive encouragement |
|---|---|
| ■ "Churches are more concerned with a show at their church… with monuments to themselves."<br><br>■ "I'm shocked by the lack of involvement of the churches in the issues."<br><br>■ "There is little to no generosity in the community. We have sent out letters to churches and have gotten no responses."<br><br>■ "It is very hard to get into the churches… it is a very, very big challenge."<br><br>■ "Philosophically there won't be any problems; practically there may be a struggle. People want to do the right thing but may not be willing to actually do it."<br><br>■ "Churches ask, 'How is this going to benefit the church' and not 'How can we help the community?'" | ■ "[Our church] will offer 100% love to foster kids… but will only take 1-2 at a time."<br><br>■ "It is easy to get into churches, but then I am told 'we want to talk in a year from now.' The churches are great once you are in there."<br><br>■ "There are some churches that would be willing to partner in an endeavor like this."<br><br>■ "Need to find foster families in the churches. I believe targeting recruiting [of foster families] would be highly effective."<br><br>■ "The community would be willing and interested in being foster parents."<br><br>■ "As a Christian, it is our responsibility to take care of orphans and widows." |

## Pastor leaders are unsure how to engage.

Some pastors admitted that they were unsure how to engage for maximum impact and sustainable change.

■ "We thought about foster care but didn't know how to proceed"

■ "We did not know it was possible"

■ "We have considered or tried to do this but found it to be more complicated than we initially thought"

■ "[We are] moving forward while trying to balance energy to other mission areas, as well"

## Supporting foster families

FaithBridge believes an important aspect of retaining foster families and stabilizing foster placements is integrating volunteer support for foster families. In fact, FaithBridge aims to match each foster family with at least three volunteers, making volunteer recruitment equally vital as recruiting foster families. A number of interviewees' and pastors' comments touched on the importance of the church community undertaking a foster care ministry. The church family needs to understand the biblical call to serve at-risk children and biological families (and, in turn, foster families). The hearts of the congregation must be prepared.

- "Then the church (as family) has a role to obey God's Word, whether following the Spirit's leading to be foster families *or to support and encourage those who do.*"

- "Before [we] launch anything, [we] like to plan at least 6 months prior… do about 8 weeks of sermons dealing with the issue prior to launch."

Based on the statistics of the general population in certain areas of these three counties, finding qualified, long-term volunteers who would serve on an ongoing basis admittedly could be a challenge in Osceola County. Some in the general population are struggling even to keep their own family afloat—financially, emotionally, etc.

However, volunteerism in general does appear to either be taking place… or there is at least a spoken interest in learning more or helping. One pastor candidly phrased it this way: "I don't know if I would say that I see a deep willingness at [our church. But] if that if the work is connected to the expression of their faith, then I see a willingness to respond."

The faith community could be an outstanding source of foster parents. Acknowledging cautions about socioeconomic issues of the area, if churches will intentionally collaborate across multicultural differences, a church-led foster care movement will be successful. Many pastors appear willing and Spirit-led.  A key remaining question is how best to equip, help, unify and support these church communities. Five area churches have committed to champion the cause of Christian foster care in Osceola and surrounding counties.

Even though Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties' foster children census and risk factor incidence has been on the rise, we believe the local churches can positive impact vulnerable children and families in this area. Together, it's a "solvable" challenge, and FaithBridge wants to help.

Looking Ahead

In order to fulfill its responsibilities, CBCCF partners with and oversees organizations like FaithBridge Florida to provide foster families and other needed services for children. As a private, child placing agency, FaithBridge Florida could contract with CBCCF to provide services to foster children and their families. If this were to happen, FaithBridge would adhere to numerous licensing, regulatory, performance-based contracting and audit processes to maintain our license and operations as a child placing agency. We are, in short, prayerfully considering an invitation to become a subcontractor to the State of Florida through CBCCF that provides Christian foster care services for children and families in partnership with local churches.

### About FaithBridge Foster Care

FaithBridge Foster Care is a Christ-centered, nonprofit intent on changing the way America does foster care. FaithBridge mobilizes, organizes, and equips churches and communities to solve their foster care crisis. FaithBridge defines the foster care crisis as one of *capacity* (not enough families), *stability* (providing support to those who foster) and *quality* (inconsistent measurements and performance indicators in the system).

We work with local churches to manage all aspects of the ministry including training, certification and ongoing operational support. FaithBridge also acts as an intermediary and partner with government agencies and their contractors such as CBCCF, aiming to reduce the administrative burden on case managers and our foster families. FaithBridge uses a research-based, integrated foster care delivery model, called the FaithBridge Community of Care[SM], which provides unparalleled resources and support to foster families and children.

## The FaithBridge Community of Care[SM]
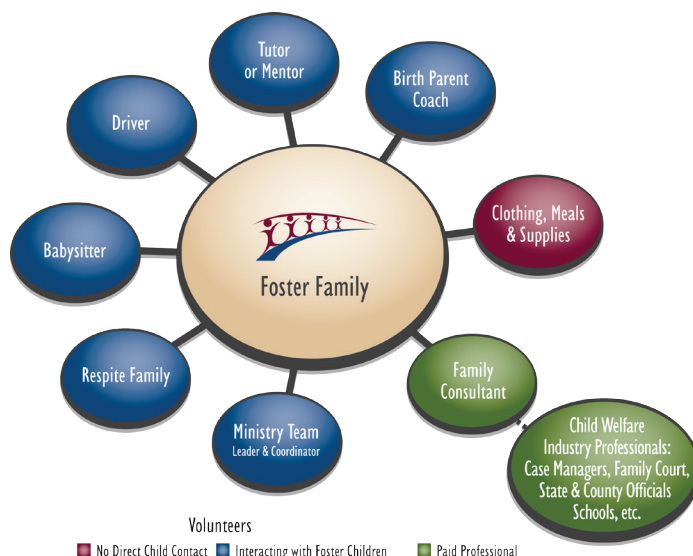
## FaithBridge Community of Care℠

The FaithBridge Community of Care℠ is an integrated service delivery system with two primary distinctions: trained **volunteers** who provide unparalleled support to foster families and a **FaithBridge foster family consultant (FFC)** who provides child welfare and spiritual support to foster families. Volunteers surround foster families and provide a variety of support including babysitting, transportation, weekend respite relief, tutoring or mentoring and material goods. FaithBridge employs a full-time associate for volunteer management and community development.

Providing accessible, 24/7 professional support for foster families, *FaithBridge foster family consultants* offer relational stability to families and children, reducing the number of moves for children in care and attending and advocating for the child's best interest at panel reviews, family team meetings and educators and healthcare providers. In addition, FFCS provide a single point of care coordination for child welfare and juvenile court systems, and their work helps reduce the tactical load of case managers.

Since its inception in 2007 and as part of a contained pilot program, FaithBridge and its local church and community partners have:

- Recruited more than 300 foster families

- Cared for 600 foster children in loving Christian homes

- Managed the adoptions and/or guardianships of 97+ children

- Reunified and restored more than 263 hurting families after a trying time of separation

- Had 0 cases of substantiated maltreatment or abuse.

## Why does the FaithBridge model work?

1. FaithBridge Foster Care (FBFC) understands and operates well in both the professional world of child welfare—with adherence to regulations—and within the unique culture of the local church.
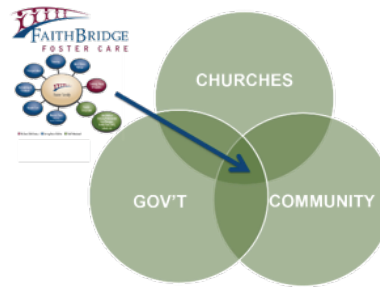
2. FaithBridge connects: the church (includes nonprofits, and ministries), the government (public sector), the community (business leaders and donors). That credibility and unity evolves with a Landscape Study.

3. FBFC tackles the problem holistically. It respects and works symbiotically with all other industry partners in the foster care/adoption field. Its focus includes advocacy, foster family and church recruitment, volunteer management, training, care coordination and quality assurance.

4. FBFC is flexible, partnering with churches either as a strategic partner or community partner. Strategic partners sign Ministry Agreements, agrees to appoint a Foster Ministry Leadership Team and implements a FaithBridge Foster Care Annual Ministry Plan 5:2:15. Community partners provide facilities, funds, and/or pulpit time.

5. FBFC and its church partners manage its foster care ministry model through access to a secure, easy-to-use online center offering individualized content and resources for constituent users. This web-enabled resource enhances the efficiency, quality, mobilization and management of each church's ministry and FaithBridge's operations.

6. FaithBridge marries compassion with the capability to effect change. We say "care enough to be competent." Competence is needed so that more trauma is not inadvertently inflicted on the foster child or on the foster family.

The objective is to shift foster care from primarily a policy and process-driven system to a relationship-enhanced approach driven by principles that guide practice. It's also a shift from a fee-for-services government-contracting environment to a performance-based contracting environment where results matter.

## A look at the first year

Starting a successful foster care ministry based on the FaithBridge Community of Care℠ model involves a host of staff, services and tangible goods which work together to ensure a successful, sustainable ministry. In year one, FaithBridge conducts ten primary start-up activities.

1. Conducts an online survey of church congregations that help to identify current foster care participation and/or interest in foster care within the target community. FaithBridge provides the survey, promotions and analysis.

2. Trains a core team of ministry leaders (pastors, advocates, volunteer coordinators) to guide and sustain the ministry. FaithBridge provides the trainers and ministry development manuals.

3. Provides a FaithBridge Community of Care developer who is responsible for training the leadership team and assisting in getting the ministry up and running. The developer also provides ongoing coaching to leadership teams and volunteer coordinators. In corporate terms, this individual is akin to a FaithBridge account manager.

4. Produces a customized ministry marketing kit to announce the ministry and drive attendance at the ministry launch event. This kit includes a DVD with ministry videos, posters, bulletin inserts and brochures. FaithBridge designs and provides these materials and others, as needed.

5. Hires a FaithBridge foster family consultant who serves as a paid professional for the life of the ministry, assisting foster families in both the on-boarding process and the ongoing day-to-day operations and case management tasks required for a child welfare ministry. FaithBridge will recruit, train and supervise this child welfare expert as a FaithBridge staff member.

6. Trains prospective foster families in a state approved foster parent training—from a biblical worldview. Once foster families are approved, FaithBridge also provides required annual continuing education and training so that they can continue to serve foster children.

7. Manages the foster family application and approval process. The FaithBridge home study team assists prospective families with the completion of necessary paperwork, conducts state-mandated visits in the home and recommends foster families for approval.

8. Manages the volunteer application and approval process. The FaithBridge team monitors and manages all background checks and matching of volunteers with foster families.

9. Maintains all of the licensing, regulatory and audit processes required to sustain the license and operations of a child placing agency from a government viewpoint.

10. Conducts ongoing quality initiatives including a six-month program review of performance and outcomes and an end-of-year impact report, which is delivered to the local leadership team.

After one year, FaithBridge's staff continues to support the ministry with ongoing coaching, awareness and recruitment, training and case management to achieve year-over-year growth that will ultimately serve the demand of the local area.

### Bill R. Hancock – FaithBridge CEO and Co-Founder

Having served more than 30 years in child welfare and church leadership, Bill possesses a unique understanding of foster care, public policy, church culture and social entrepreneurship. Bill co-founded FaithBridge Foster Care and created the FaithBridge Community of Care[SM] delivery system. Bill's passion and vision is to change the way America does foster care–with the local church as the solution.

### Susan L. Crain – Chief Strategy Officer

As the Chief Strategy Officer, Susan leads FaithBridge's marketing communications, development, technology and consulting teams. As such, she is responsible for the strategic implementation of the FaithBridge Community of Care[SM]. She provided project oversight for this study.

### Beth Vinyard – Implementation/Project Manager

As the Implementation/Project Manager, Beth develops FaithBridge's growth in new markets. She has more than 15 years of project management experience ranging from overseeing and evaluating child welfare contracts, serving as a foster care case manager, licensing foster homes and commanding military units. On this project, she interviewed providers and area experts, gathered foster care data, performed analysis and assisted with editorial support for the writing of this study. Beth has lived and worked in Florida for many years and is particularly excited to see how the tri-county churches can help vulnerable children and their families.

**For more information about this study or about FaithBridge Florida, please contact Beth Vinyard at florida@faithbridgefostercare.org.**

# APPENDIX A

The following maps show the concentration of churches in each zip code along with the number of children who were removed from their homes and placed into foster care for the past 24 months. If a zip code is not shaded, then a child was not removed from that zip code in the last 24 months. The source of the removal data is from July 2012 to June 2014 (24 Month Trend) by their Removal Zip Code of Orange, Osceola, and Seminole FSFN data as of October 15, 2014. Source: FSFN Ad hoc report, DCF Central Region.

**Oceola Co Map Oct 2014**



**24 Month Children in Foster Care by ZIP Code**

110
55
0
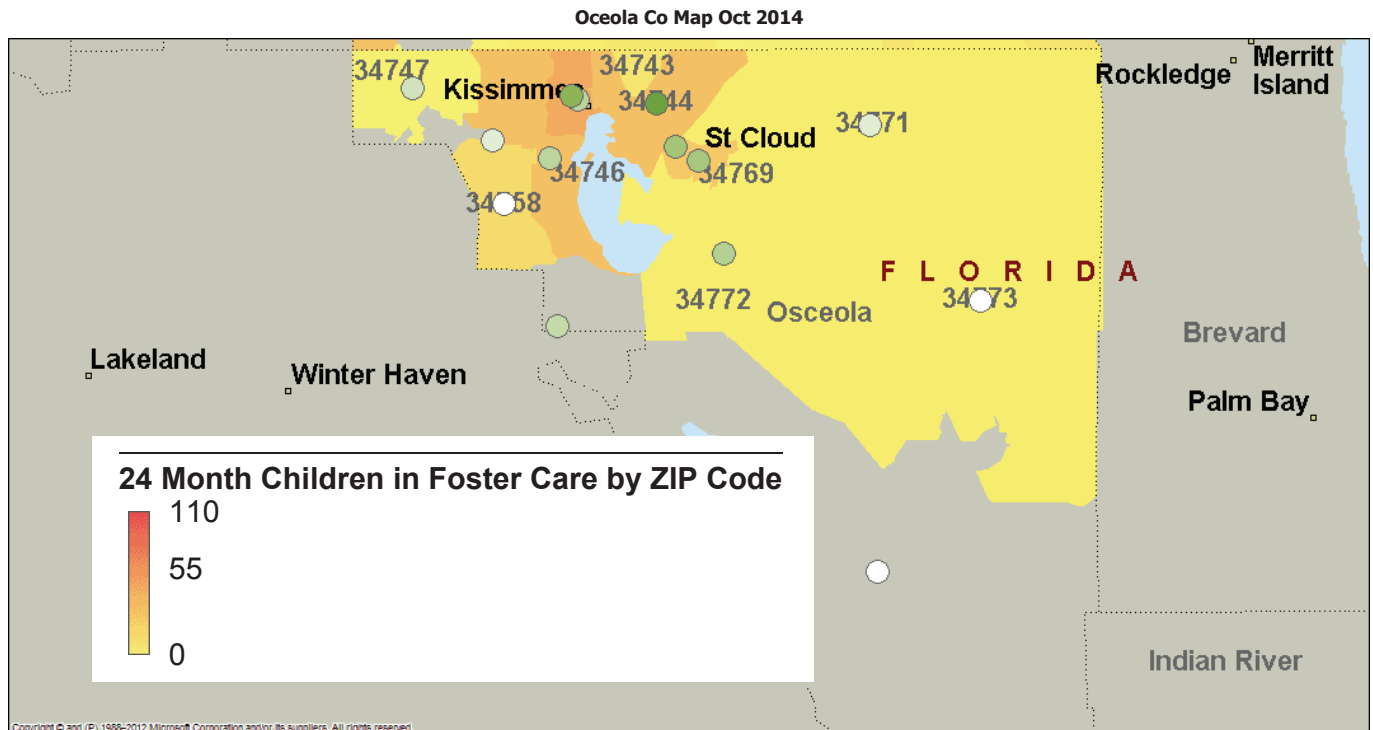
**Churches by ZIP Code**
- 60
- 8
- 1

As we move forward, we will map each county by zip code to determine how many children could be served by the number of churches in each zip code. The following pages are a breakdown of the number of churches in each zip code and the number of children removed from those zip codes from July 2012 to June 2014. The ratio is the number of children per church in each zip code.

## Orange County Data

| Zip Code | Churches | 24 Month Children in Foster Care | Ratio Children to Churches (numeric) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 32703 | 45 | 58 | 1.29 |
| 32704 | 16 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32709 | 3 | 15 | 5.00 |
| 32710 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32712 | 8 | 12 | 1.50 |
| 32715 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32716 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32733 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32751 | 12 | 6 | 0.50 |
| 32768 | 3 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32789 | 20 | 19 | 0.95 |
| 32790 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32792 | 16 | 26 | 1.63 |
| 32793 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32794 | 3 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32798 | 6 | 8 | 1.33 |
| 32801 | 11 | 10 | 0.91 |
| 32802 | 3 | 4 | 1.33 |
| 32803 | 21 | 5 | 0.24 |
| 32804 | 21 | 5 | 0.24 |
| 32805 | 51 | 103 | 2.02 |
| 32806 | 19 | 17 | 0.89 |
| 32807 | 22 | 33 | 1.50 |
| 32808 | 33 | 87 | 2.64 |
| 32809 | 22 | 25 | 1.14 |
| 32810 | 17 | 46 | 2.71 |
| 32811 | 20 | 68 | 3.40 |
| 32812 | 14 | 10 | 0.71 |
| 32814 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32817 | 15 | 14 | 0.93 |
| 32818 | 27 | 26 | 0.96 |
| 32819 | 15 | 18 | 1.20 |
| 32821 | 2 | 4 | 2.00 |
| 32822 | 13 | 40 | 3.08 |
| 32824 | 11 | 11 | 1.00 |
| 32825 | 12 | 29 | 2.42 |
| 32826 | 6 | 16 | 2.67 |

## Orange County Data

| Zip Code | Churches | 24 Month Children in Foster Care | Ratio Children to Churches (numeric) |
|----------|----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 32828 | 8 | 14 | 1.75 |
| 32829 | 4 | 4 | 1.00 |
| 32832 | 4 | 2 | 0.50 |
| 32833 | 2 | 21 | 10.50 |
| 32835 | 8 | 25 | 3.13 |
| 32836 | 2 | 7 | 3.50 |
| 32837 | 11 | 10 | 0.91 |
| 32839 | 5 | 90 | 18.00 |
| 32854 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32855 | 7 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32856 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32857 | 3 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32858 | 7 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32859 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32860 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32861 | 6 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32867 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32868 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32869 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32872 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32877 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 32878 | 3 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 33848 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 34734 | 3 | 2 | 0.67 |
| 34744 | 1 | 38 | 38.00 |
| 34760 | 6 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 34761 | 24 | 23 | 0.96 |
| 34777 | 6 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 34778 | 4 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 34786 | 4 | 4 | 1.00 |
| 34787 | 24 | 36 | 1.50 |

## Osceola County Data

| Zip Code | Churches | 24 Month Children in Foster Care | Ratio Children to Churches (numeric) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 32877 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 33848 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 34739 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 34741 | 16 | 52 | 3.25 |
| 34742 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 34744 | 34 | 38 | 1.12 |
| 34745 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 34746 | 5 | 38 | 7.6 |
| 34747 | 3 | 6 | 2 |
| 34758 | 1 | 20 | 20 |
| 34759 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 34769 | 8 | 31 | 3.88 |
| 34770 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 34771 | 2 | 10 | 5 |
| 34772 | 6 | 8 | 1.33 |
| 34773 | 1 | 8 | 8 |

## Seminole County Data

| Zip Code | Churches | 24 Month Children in Foster Care | Ratio Children to Churches (numeric) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 32701 | 16 | 16 | 1.00 |
| 32707 | 21 | 30 | 1.43 |
| 32708 | 15 | 28 | 1.87 |
| 32714 | 9 | 28 | 3.11 |
| 32730 | 5 | 3 | 0.60 |
| 32732 | 6 | 3 | 0.50 |
| 32746 | 15 | 17 | 1.13 |
| 32750 | 21 | 10 | 0.48 |
| 32765 | 31 | 15 | 0.48 |
| 32766 | 4 | 7 | 1.75 |
| 32771 | 58 | 91 | 1.57 |
| 32773 | 15 | 66 | 4.40 |
| 32779 | 11 | 4 | 0.36 |

APPENDIX B

# APPENDIX B

Below is a matrix of Orange, Osceola and Seminole County service providers and community ministries who serve and/or touch the foster care population--directly or indirectly. Many of these organizations have contributed to our understanding of the local area and indicated a willingness to collaborate with a Christ-centered, foster care ministry.

| Agency | Mission/Objectives/Goals | Services |
|---|---|---|
| children's home society OF FLORIDA. Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives. | The mission is Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives.<br><br>CHS protects and heals children. They build and strengthen families. They rescue and embrace teens struggling to survive on their own. | ■ In-home/school therapy (Individual/Family)<br>■ In-office therapy (Individual/Family/Group)<br>■ Therapy assessment<br>■ Targeted Case Management services<br>■ Independent Living services<br>■ Early Head Start<br>■ Foster Care services<br>■ Adoption services |
| COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA | CBC of Central Florida (CBCCF) is a non-profit agency charged with developing community-based services & supports for children & families served by the child welfare system in Central Florida. | ■ Community-Based Care Lead Agency<br>■ Foster care services<br>■ Adoption services<br>■ Youth transitional services<br>■ Training<br>■ Diversion/prevention services |
| Connecting WELL Counseling Healing Hearts - Strengthening Families | Connecting Well Counseling specializes in healing hearts, strengthening families, marriage counseling, family counseling, individual counseling, adoption and trauma therapy. | ■ Provides Christian counseling<br>■ Focus is on families who have chosen to adopt or provide foster care for children domestically and internationally |

| Agency | Mission/Objectives/Goals | Services |
|---|---|---|
| **CREATED FAMILIES,INC.** A Forever Home. | Created Families' mission is to encourage friendship and cultivating bonds amongst one another, support the interest of each individual's educational aspiration, promote community involvement and to alleviate issues with trust by maintaining consistency and reassurance in a safe and caring forever home. | ■ Provides a group-home for teenagers in foster care<br><br>■ Provides a nurturing environment that helps youth realize their self-worth, learn their goals, and achieve independency. |
| **EMBRACED** by Grace inc. | Embraced by Grace is an adoption and home study agency dedicated to the glory of God and the promotion of family through the adoption process. | ■ Promotes God-Centered Florida Adoptions<br><br>■ 24 Hour Florida Adoption Information<br><br>■ International adoptions through the Columbia Adoption initiative |
| **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH KISSIMMEE** LOVE \| CONNECT \| SERVE | First Baptist Church of Kissimmee is a caring family devoted to teaching the Bible and serving the world for Christ. | ■ Mentoring and tutoring in local schools<br><br>■ Gives presents, backpacks, and haircuts for local children in need<br><br>■ Feeds and provides a medical clinic to the homeless<br><br>■ Works with Shepherd's Heart School of Music, Osceola Pregnancy Center and the Osceola Christian Ministry Center |
| **FIRST KISSIMMEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH** | The mission statement at First Christian Church is "To Know Christ, and to Make Him Known". In order to provide quality ministry to the community and to the membership, every member of the congregation must have a strong understanding of not just who Jesus is but how Jesus directs daily decisions and constructs our worldview. | ■ Celebrate Recovery<br><br>■ Community Outreach<br><br>■ Spanish Classes<br><br>■ Overseas missions<br><br>■ Programs for individuals of all ages |

| Agency | Mission/Objectives/Goals | Services |
|--------|--------------------------|----------|
|  FOUNDATION FOR *Foster Children* | The mission for Foundation for Foster Children is to enrich the lives of children placed in foster care due to abuse and neglect by providing opportunities that nurture their ability to succeed both as individuals and contributing members of our community. | ■ Provides funding to foster children for summer camps, tutoring, sports, and other enriching activities.<br>■ Provides emergency duffel bags to foster children<br>■ Celebrates foster children's birthdays |
|  ...connecting heart and home GRACE LANDING | The Grace Landing vision statement is "A Home For Every Child Providing Continuity of Care." Their mission is to minister to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the child and giving them the tools needed to become well-equipped while providing continuity of care. | ■ Independent Living home to young men<br>■ Independent Living training and support<br>■ Foster care services |
|  GAL Guardian ad Litem A POWERFUL VOICE FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM | The State of Florida Guardian ad Litem Program is a network of professional staff and community advocates, partnering to provide a strong voice in court and positive systemic change on behalf of Florida's abused and neglected children. There are 21 local Guardian ad Litem programs in 20 judicial circuits in Florida. | ■ Investigation: Carries out an objective, systematic examination of the situation.<br>■ Facilitation: Identifies resources and services for the child and facilitates a collaborative relationship between all parties.<br>■ Advocacy: Conveys the best interests of the child to the court and relevant agencies.<br>■ Monitoring: Keeps track of whether the orders of the court, as well as the plans of DCF, are carried out. |
|  HiS KiDS Adoption/Foster Care Ministry of First Baptist Orlando | A ministry of First Baptist Church Orlando, His Kids engages and encourage families and friends with an interest in fostering or adopting to make a positive impact on a child's life. | ■ Shares resources, stories, and/or experiences with families as they walk through the process of adoption of foster care.<br>■ Assists families with domestic or international adoptions |

| Agency | Mission/Objectives/Goals | Services |
|---|---|---|
| IMPOWER — Inspiring Life's Potential. | IMPOWER is a community partner, leader and expert that responds to local needs. They protect and guide individuals and families to recognize their personal potential, gain independence and achieve self-reliance. | ■ Outpatient counseling and psychiatric services<br>■ Foster care and adoption services<br>■ Targeted Case Management services<br>■ Medication Management services<br>■ Transitional Housing services to Independent Living Youth |
| Jerusalem House Of Prayer | Our vision, based on the Scriptures, is to build a community-minded, multicultural and multilingual congregation where every person has an opportunity to develop and maintain a relationship with God, with other believers and the surrounding communities. | ■ Mentors young men<br>■ Provides resources to English and Spanish speaking congregation<br>■ International Missions |
| living water FELLOWSHIP | Living Water Fellowship's mission statement is connecting people to God, each other, ministry, and the world. | ■ KIDZ Inc. Ministries<br>■ Pre-school, Kindergarten, and 1st grade classes<br>■ CrossoverUth<br>■ Connect Groups<br>■ The Point |
| MAMA ROSE'S House of Empowerment | At Mama Rose's House of Empowerment, the goal is to create future leaders by providing the comforts of a stable home along with the encouragement to excel in life. | ■ Provides a safe, structured home environment for foster children<br>■ Provides Independent Living training |

| Agency | Mission/Objectives/Goals | Services |
|---|---|---|
|  | Education which inspires all to their highest potential. Their vision statement is the School District of Osceola County will outperform all other districts in the state of Florida. | ■ Fully accredited school district serving the children of Osceola County.<br><br>■ Provides a complete array of educational services. |
|  | The goal is to be a community that is transformed into the image of Christ for the sake of others.  The vision is to form biblically functioning communities that reach lost people, connect in Christ-centered relationships, teach truth, serve others, and worship God. | ■ Ministries for all ages<br><br>■ niceServe<br><br>■ obServe<br><br>■ Ministry to the inmates of 33rd Street Jail<br><br>■ Community Outreach to many different non-profit agencies |
|  | The Vine Church's dream is to become a unique community, sharing Christ, where everyone can be accepted and empowered to honor God. | ■ Children's ministry<br><br>■ Youth ministry<br><br>■ Works with the Osceola Christian Ministry Center helps the homeless and underemployed<br><br>■ Overseas missions |