

Risk Pool Peer Review Committee Report
Eckerd Youth Alternatives dba Eckerd Connects
Circuit 6 (Pasco and Pinellas counties)
Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Executive Summary:

Eckerd Youth Alternatives (previously known as Eckerd Community Alternatives) dba Eckerd Connects submitted an application for risk pool funding on December 16, 2020 for their Pasco/Pinellas contract (DCF contract # QJ511). The application was subsequently reviewed by the Suncoast Region and submitted to the Office of Revenue Management and Partner Compliance.

The department established a Risk Pool Peer Review Committee pursuant to section 409.990 (7)(c), F.S. (2020) for State Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021, the Risk Pool application process was informed by lessons learned from the prior year reviews as well as the availability of extensive additional information from reports developed pursuant to proviso language included in the General Appropriations Act (Specific Appropriation 330) for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. In compliance with this proviso language, the department completed a comprehensive, multi-year review of the revenues, expenditures and financial position of all Community-Based Care lead agencies including a comprehensive system of care analysis. This submission also included a financial viability plan from all lead agencies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this fiscal year, the Risk Pool Peer Review team conducted a review virtually with relevant information available from multiple sources to make recommendations. The documents reviewed are below:

- Risk Pool Funding Application FY 2020-2021
- Financial Viability Plan FY 2020-2021
- Budget Projections provided by the CBC
- [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#)
- [CBC Contract Monitoring Reports](#)
- [The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#)
- Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) Aggregate Payment Data
- Eckerd Circuit 6 Previous Risk Pool Report
- Status Update on CBC Contract Oversight Unit (COU) monitoring
- Status Update on Prior Risk Pool Recommendations (if any)

As a part of the review, the team evaluated all available information from previous on-site visits, current data and monitoring reports. To resolve any outstanding questions, additional information was requested by the team from the CBC which allowed the team to make an enhanced recommendation without an on-site visit being conducted by Risk Pool Review Committee.

The Risk Pool Peer Review Committee for Eckerd Circuit 6 consisted of:

Lee Kaywork, Team Leader

Barney Ray, DCF Director of Revenue Management and Partner Compliance
Eddie Encarnacion, DCF Northeast Region, Regional Managing Director
James Weaver, DCF Director of Protective and Supportive Services
Larry Rein, CEO, ChildNet, Inc.
Lauren Hahn, CFO, Communities Connected for Kids, Inc.
Nadereh Salim, CEO, Children's Network of SW Florida
Raeann Bacchus, DCF Southern Region, Regional Managing Director
Stephanie Hayden, DCF Quality Office Manager

While the specific areas of review and analysis varied based on the unique needs and circumstances of each Region, Circuit and Lead Agency, the following framework provided an outline for organizing the work of the Peer Review Committee.

Application Summary:

Eckerd Circuit 6's application for risk pool funding requested \$8,054,312 to address a projected deficit of \$12M. Funding is requested to address significant changes in the number or composition of clients eligible to receive services in the past four years.

The primary causes Eckerd Circuit 6 attributed to their current financial challenges are outlined below:

- Continued increase in clients served over the past four years.
- Sustained high removal rates since FY 2016-2017 with a continued trend.
- Increase in operational costs.
- Core funding is below the Florida Funding for Children model recommendations.

Eckerd Circuit 6 intends to use Risk Pool funding to cover the out-of-home care costs related to the increase number of children in the system, to cover the current deficit created by increased costs of services and supports to the children in care including client-related services for treatment and support, and to offset expenditures directly associated with continuing service interventions that Eckerd Circuit 6 has implemented to improve performance and reduce costs including foster home recruitment.

Findings:

After review of the information provided the Peer Review Committee was able to reach the following findings:

1. Findings related to the need for services and commitment of resources

- Sources: ([The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), [CBC Contract Monitoring Reports](#))
- Summary below, See CBC Contract Monitoring Report, sections 2, 11, and 12 for more details

- 1.1. **What is the relevant community context within which the child welfare system operates?**
- 1.2. **This may include incidence of calls to the hotline, child poverty in the area, local factors that influence the need for services, etc.**
- 1.3. **Factors may also include community resources available to meet the needs of children and families such as Children's Services Councils, local governmental resources or other unique factors.**

Eckerd operates in Circuit 6, serving Pasco and Pinellas counties. Child Protection Investigations are performed by the Sheriff's Offices in these counties, and the State Attorney's Office handles the Children's Legal Services functions in these counties. Community involvement varies between the counties, as Pasco is historically rural. In Judicial Circuit 6, Eckerd Circuit 6 operates the largest child welfare system in the State of Florida.

Census Facts			
US Census Facts	Florida	Pasco	Pinellas
Median Household Income	\$55,660	\$52,828	\$54,090
Percent of population living in poverty	12.7%	11.3%	11.4%
Percent of population over 25 years old with a college degree	29.9%	24.0%	31.7%
Percent of population over 25 years old with high school diploma	88.2%	89.5%	91.3%
Data Source: census.gov/quickfacts (2015-2019)			

According to the US Census Facts, Pasco and Pinellas Counties have lower poverty rates than the statewide rate of 12.7% and a higher percentage of individuals with a high school diploma. However, both counties have slightly lower median household incomes compared the the state. Pasco County has a lower number (24.0%) and Pinellas County has a higher number (31.7%) of individuals with college degrees.

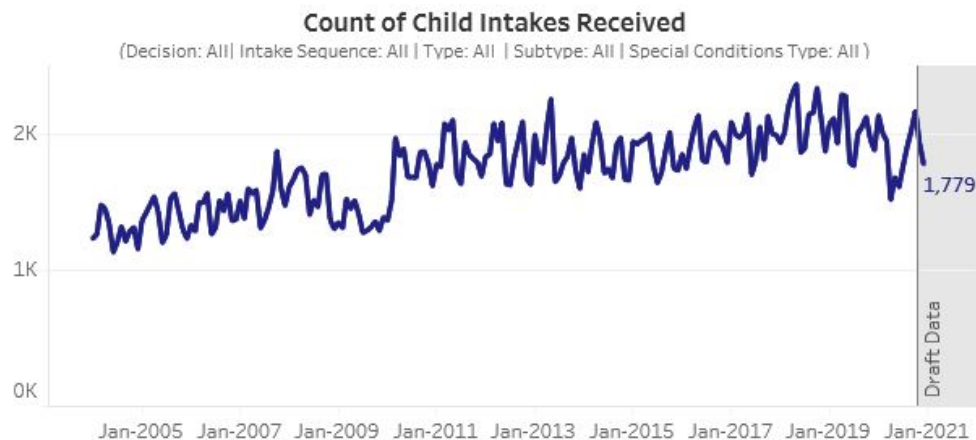
The local Children's Services Council has always focused on delivery of prevention services to non-dependent children. However, this year, Eckerd Circuit 6 has engaged the Children's Services Council (operated locally as the Juvenile Welfare Board) to review their investment in child abuse prevention services with the intent to align services more directly with Eckerd Circuit 6 prevention and diversion efforts. This is a shift for the Board as previously they would measure the success of their programs by how many of the children served did not enter the system. They are now going to measure the success of their services by the reduction of children entering the system to assure the population the Board is serving are truly at risk of removal.

Service availability for both dependent and non-dependent children and their families varies between counties; Pinellas County has a variety of resources available, while Pasco has fewer resources available due to the historically rural nature of the county.

2. Findings related to protective services including removals, referrals for post-investigative services, activities to protect children without removal and use of resources focused on prevention and intervention.

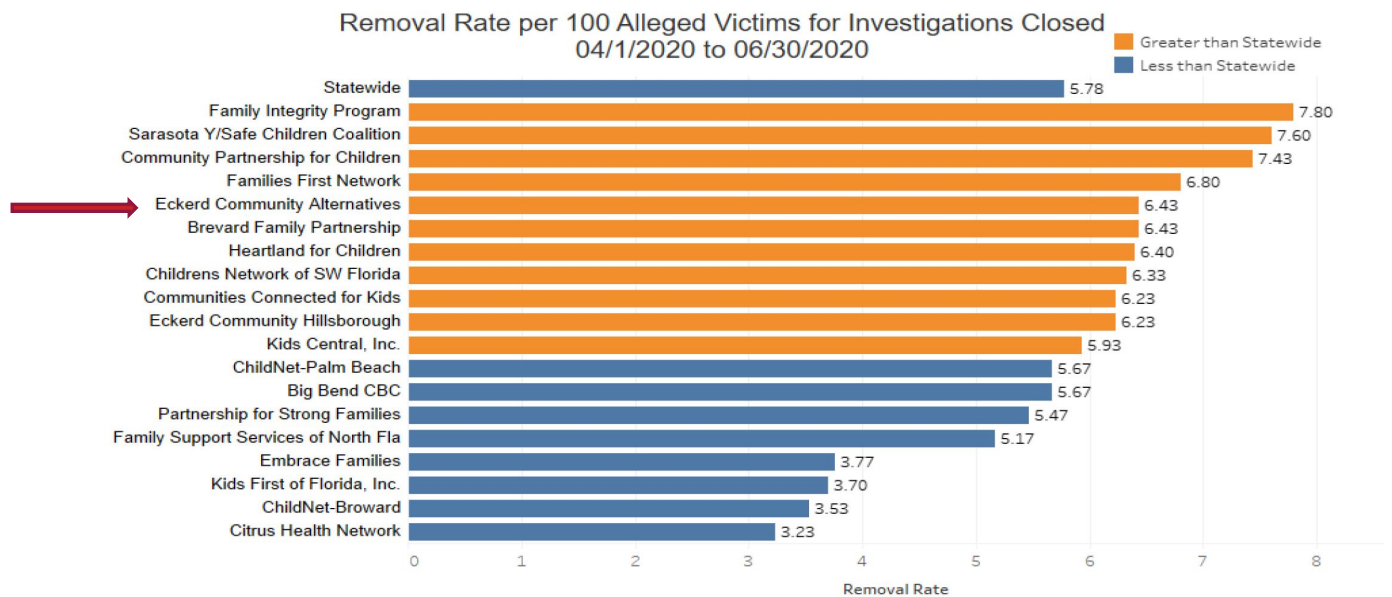
- Sources: ([The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#))
- Summary below, See CBC Contract Monitoring Report, sections 5, 9, and 11 for more details

- 2.1. ***What are the rates of removal, rates of verification and other measures from protective investigations that affect the need for child welfare services? How have these measures changed over time and how do they compare with other areas of the state?***
- 2.2. ***What activities are in place to provide support to protective investigators and families to permit children to remain safe in their homes? What services are provided with funds used for prevention and intervention?***
- 2.3. ***What services are provided with funds used for prevention and intervention?***
- 2.4. ***How well integrated are the CPI, safety management and intervention services components? Are there case transfer issues that affect performance?***

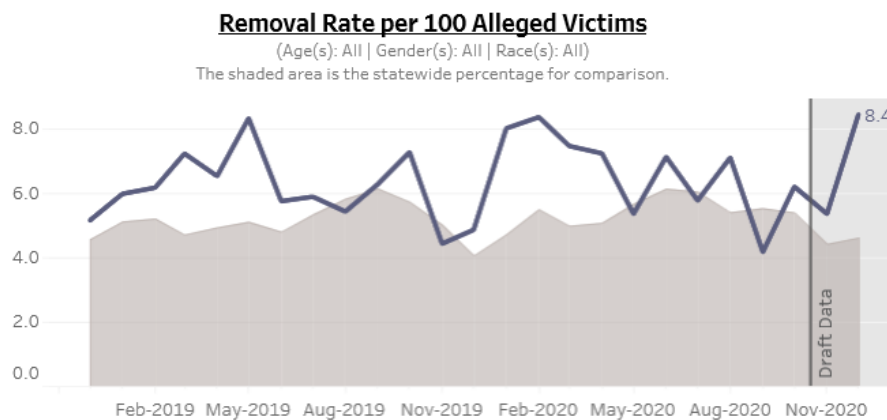


Intakes in Pasco and Pinellas County have increased significantly over the past fifteen years. Over the past ten years, intakes across the two counties are typically around 1,750 a month.

As indicated in the risk pool application, Pasco and Pinellas Sheriff's Offices maintain a higher rate of removal per 100 alleged victims than the statewide average. From April 2020 through June 2020, Eckerd Circuit 6 experienced a removal rate of 6.43 children per 100 victims, higher than the statewide average of 5.78 per 100 alleged victims.



Over the most recent 12 months the state has averaged a 5.3 rate of removal while Eckerd Circuit 6 has averaged a 6.3 rate of removal.

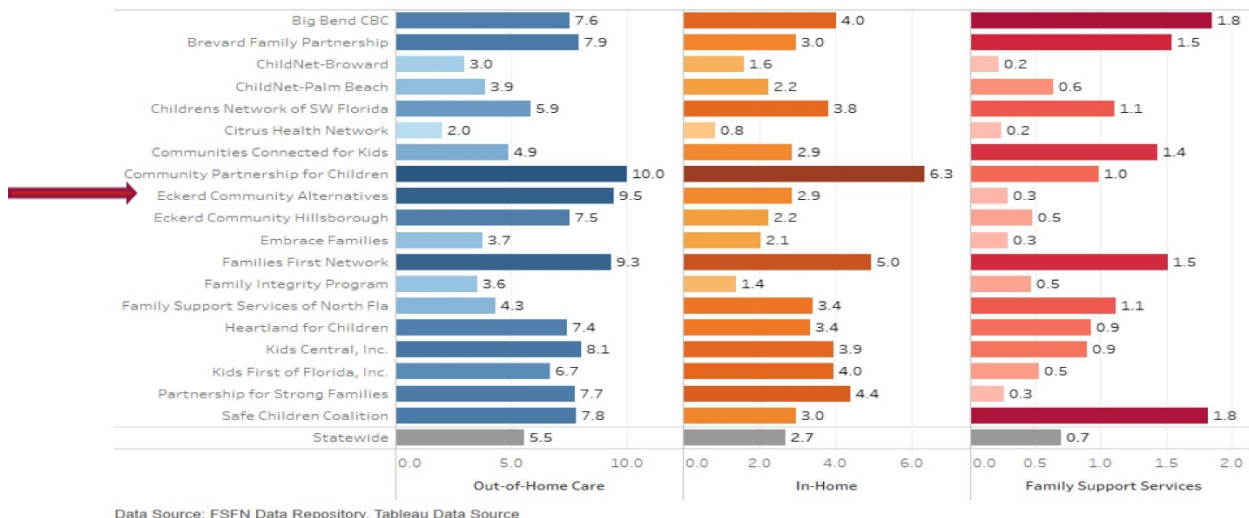


Annual average removal rates have exceeded the statewide average removal rate every year. Data supports Eckerd Circuit 6's application stating that the lead agency has had continued increase in clients served over the past four years. There have been sustained high removal rates.

There was a significant drop in the number of new entries into out-of-home care from November 2018 - October 2019 vs. November 2019 - October 2020. A total of 203 fewer children entered care during the most recent year. It should be noted that while the total number of new entries into out-of-home care slowed significantly in Circuit 6, this is still the most entries into out-of-home care as compared to any circuit in the state.

The disproportionate rate of removal in Circuit 6 has continued. From November 2019 to October 2020, there were more children (1,195) entering out-of-home care than leaving (1,161). The 1,161 children exiting out-of-home care is the highest of any circuit in the state. There is a significant trend of entries into care outpacing exits from care over the past three years with a net increase of 437 additional children.

Children Receiving Service by Type on 11/30/2020-- Rates per 1,000 Child Population



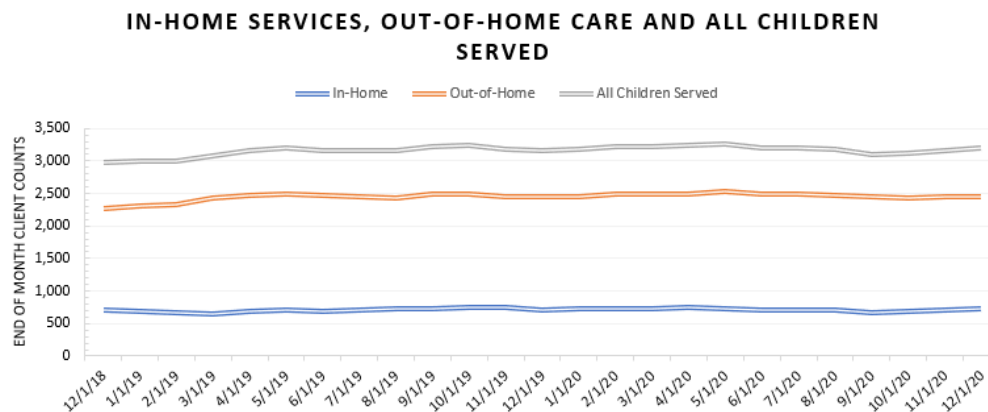
Eckerd Circuit 6 has the second highest number of children receiving services in out-of-home care at 9.5 children per 1,000 child population. This is almost double the statewide average of 5.5 and is a heavy financial burden on the system of care. The rate of children being served in-home is 2.9 per 1,000 children and in line with the statewide average of 2.7. Eckerd Circuit 6 serves 0.3 children per 1,000 child population with family support services, approximately half of the statewide average of 0.7.

3. Findings related to provision of services for children in care (both in-home and out-of-home)

- Sources: ([The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#), CBC Financial Viability Report, CBC Financial Viability Integrated Data Report, CBC Budget Projections, and Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) Aggregate Payment Data)
- Summary below, See CBC Financial Viability Integrated Data Report, CBC Budget Projections, CBC Financial Viability Report, and [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#) for additional details.

- 3.1. **What is the composition of the children in care including age cohorts, placement types, use of specialized higher costs settings, use of congregate care, etc.**
- 3.2. **What is the cost of various placement types? To what extent are the rates paid for foster care (including care with various rates of intensity), congregate care consistent with statewide norms (considering community context)? Have these rates remained relatively consistent over the past few fiscal years?**

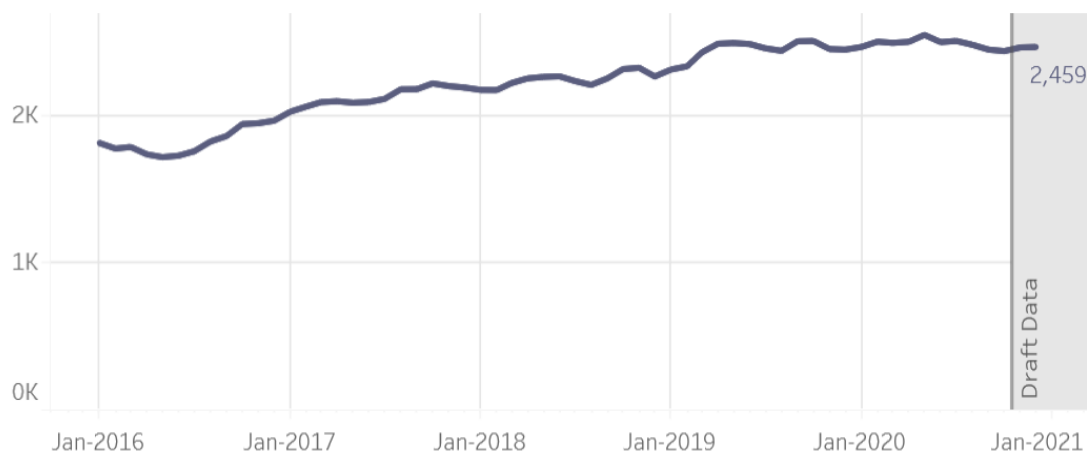
- 3.3. **What is the cost for dependency case management? Is this consistent with norms for such services? Have these rates remained relatively consistent over the past few fiscal years?**
- 3.4. **To what extent is the Lead Agency appropriately utilizing non-child welfare funding for services (such as DCF SAMH Funds, Medicaid, and other non-DCF funding sources).**
- 3.5. **What evidence exists that case management services are well-managed by the Lead Agency? (see overall management section for response)**
- 3.6. **To what extent is the CBC meeting its obligation to the Family First Prevention goals? Have they reduced reliance on Residential Group care? How much? If not, what is the action plan going forward? Has the CBC met the 40% goal for all relative/non-relative placements licensed as Level I Foster Homes?**



The number of clients being served in-home and out-of-home has been relatively stable but high. The chart above shows there are between 600 and 700 clients served in-home and between 2,200 and 2,500 clients served out-of- home.

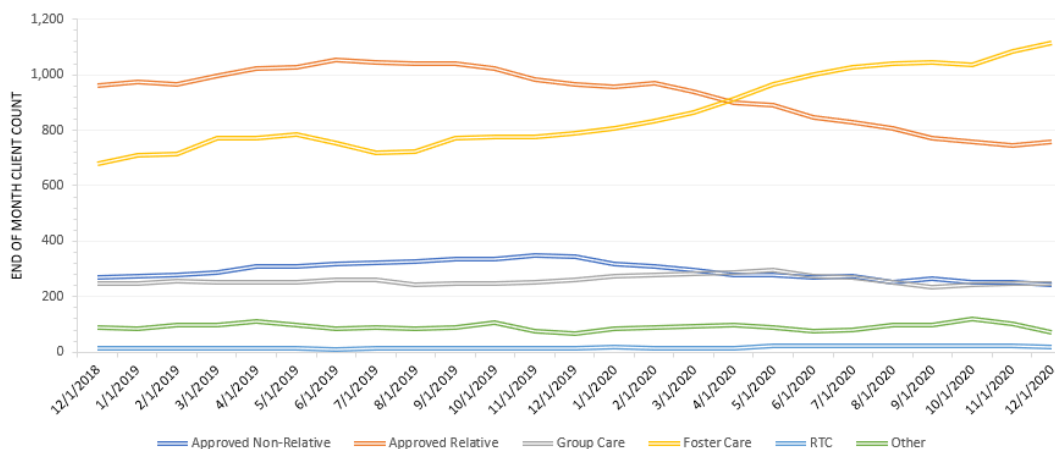
Children In Out-of-Home Care (as of the end of each month)

(Age(s): All | Gender(s): All | Race(s): All | Placement Type(s): All)

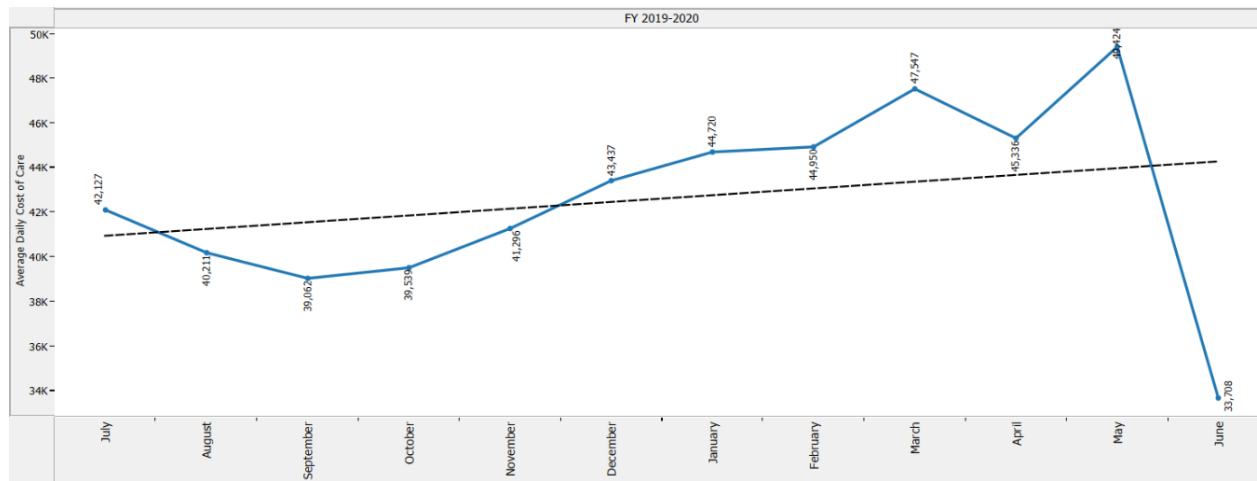


Children in out-of-home care has increased steadily since January 2016 from 1,800 to a high of 2,541 in May 2020

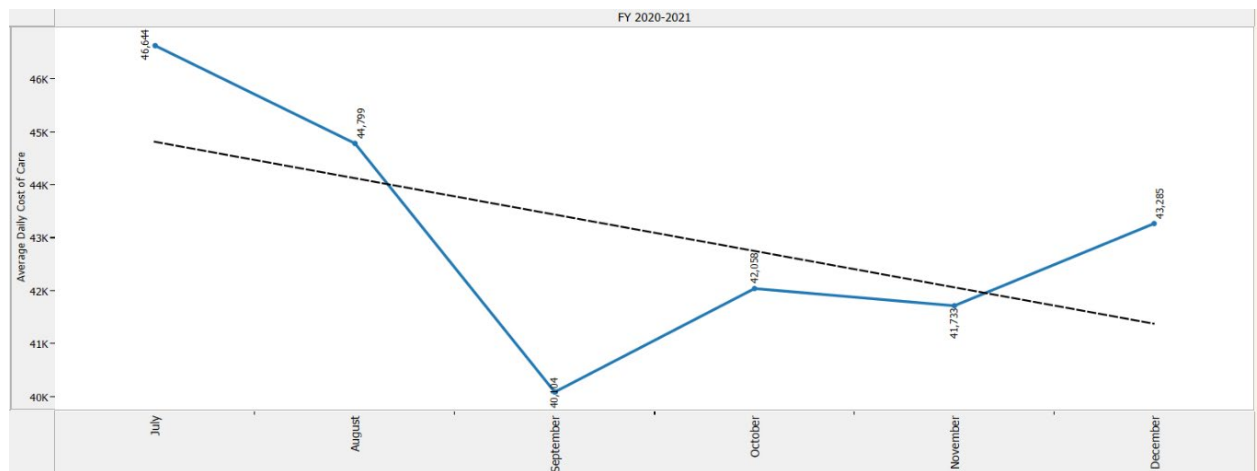
CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME CARE BY PLACEMENT TYPE



The number of children in group care has remained consistent the last two years. In December 2018, a total of 246 youth were in group care. As of December 2020, a total of 249 youth (1% increase) were in a congregate care setting. This equates to 10.1% of ECA-P/P's out-of-home care population compared to the statewide average of 6.7%. The lead agency will not be able to achieve financial viability with a high percentage of children in group care under the current funding model. Much work remains to move these children to more appropriate and sustainable settings. To compare, in December 2018, a total of 1922 youth were in a group care setting statewide. As of December 2020, a total of 1,486 youth were in group care. This reduction of the use of group care statewide is approximately 23%.



Eckerd Circuit 6 saw a steady increase in the average daily cost of group care for most of FY 2019-2020. Group Care averaged \$42,613/day.

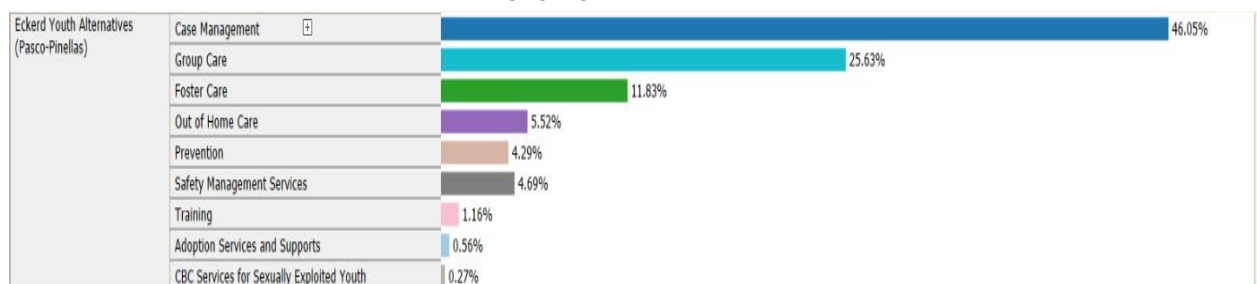


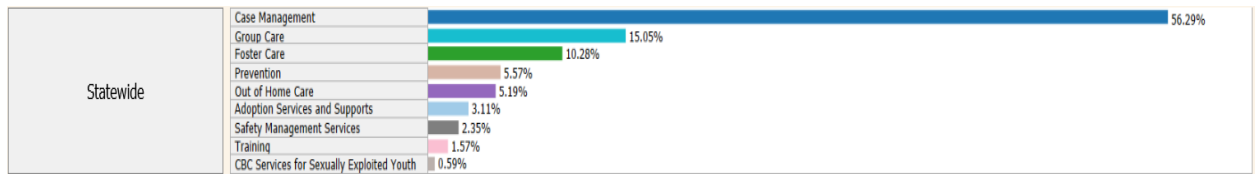
Eckerd Circuit 6 to date in FY 2020-2021, the average cost of group care is \$43,067/day but has shown a downward trend since July 2020. Continued efforts to move children and youth from congregate care should be a priority. It should be noted that moving children from Group Care is part of Eckerd Circuit 6's Financial Viability Plan goals.

Total \$ of FSN Payments to Licensed Residential Group Care (OCA LCRGE, LCGHE & LCGHI)						
Ages	FY2018-2019	FY2019-2020	\$ Increase/ (Decrease)	% Increase/ (Decrease)	FY2020-2021 (Thru Nov. Service Mths- 42% of the year)	FY 2020-21 as a % of FY 2019-20
0-5	\$373,527	\$215,401	(\$158,126)	(42.3%)	\$36,664	17%
6-12	\$4,590,261	\$5,543,510	953,249	20.8%	\$2,322,218	42%
13-17	\$8,991,719	\$10,011,437	\$1,019,718	11.3%	\$4,381,096	44%
Total Number of Unique Clients in Licensed Residential Group Care (OCA LCRGE, LCGHE & LCGHI)						
Ages	FY2018-2019	FY2019-2020	Increase/ (Decrease)	% Increase/ (Decrease)	FY2020-2021 (Thru Nov. Service Mths)	
0-5	15	14	(1)	(6.7%)	13	
6-12	219	235	16	7.3%	160	
13-17	358	355	(3)	(.8%)	276	
Median Daily Rate \$ in Licensed Residential Group Care (OCA LCRGE, LCGHE & LCGHI)						
Ages	FY2018-2019	FY2019-2020	\$ Increase/ (Decrease)	% Increase/ (Decrease)	FY2020-2021 (Thru Nov. Service Mths)	
0-5	115.00	113.80	(\$1.20)	(1%)	300.00	
6-12	115.00	125.00	\$10.00	8.7%	149.60	
13-17	140.00	150.00	\$10.00	7.1%	150.00	

Between FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020 Eckerd Circuit 6 experienced a 20.8% increase and 16 more clients in group care ages 6-12. There was an 11.3% increase in the amount paid for ages 13-17 despite a decrease in the number of unique clients in this category. Overall, there has been a 13% increase in group care expenditures from FY 2018-2019 to FY 2019-2020. Both the 6-12 age group and the 13-17 age group experienced a \$10 daily rate increase, representing an 8.7% and 7.1% increase respectively.

Percent of Core Services Expenditures FY 2020-2021





As of November 30, 2020, Eckerd Circuit 6 was spending significantly less than the statewide average for case management but 10% more than the statewide average for group care.

Overall, case manager and supervisor turnover rates are improving, as indicated in the following charts provided by Eckerd Circuit 6:

as of: 11/30/2019

CMO	Average # of Children per Worker	Case Load	Case Manager Turnover Rate Last 12 months	Case Manager Supervisor Turnover Rate Last 12 months
ECK	21.3	11.9	-	-
LSF	24.7	14.8	112%	22%
YFA	22.8	13.6	87%	11%
All	22.9	13.4	102%	58%

as of: 11/30/2020

CMO	Average # of Children per Worker	Case Load	Case Manager Turnover Rate Last 12 months	Case Manager Supervisor Turnover Rate Last 12 months
ECK	20.5	12.3	81%	38%
LSF	23.4	13.8	80%	44%
YFA	15.4	8.9	53%	33%
All	19.1	11.2	70%	38%

From November 2019 to November 2020, caseloads declined from 13.4 cases to 11.2 cases per Case Manager. The average number of children per worker dropped from 22.9 to 19.1. Turnover during this same time period decreased from 102% to 70%.

Average Caseload (By Case and Child)*		
	ECA-P/P	Statewide
December 2019	25.11	18.83
December 2020	22.48	18.23

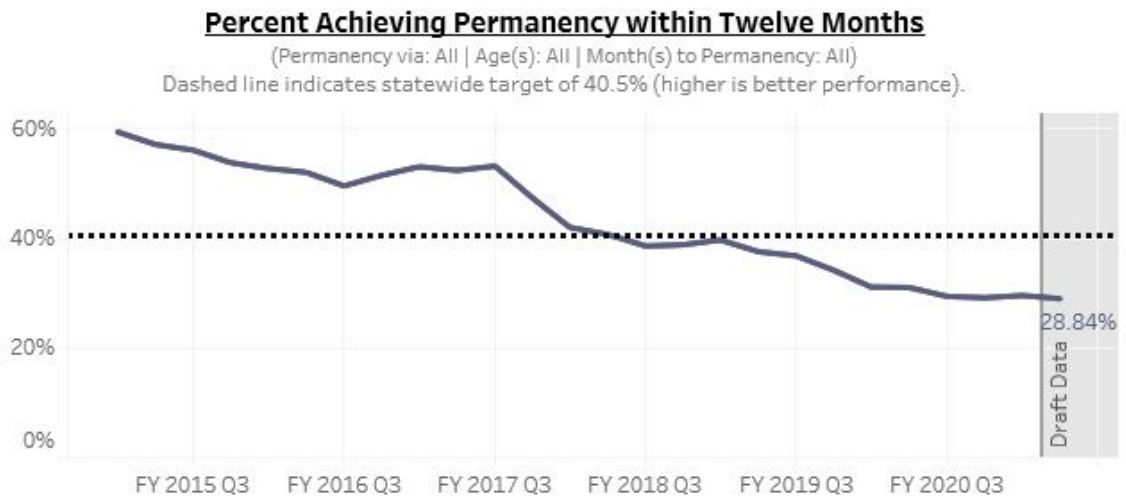
From December 2019 to December 2020, average caseloads improved, showing a 10% decrease, compared to the statewide decrease of 3%. However, ECA-P/P's caseloads are still high.

There has been a shift in children from relative/non-relative care to Level 1 licensed care beginning in July 2019. As of January 27, 2021, Eckerd Circuit 6 has not met the goal of achieving 40% relative/non-relative placements licenses as Level 1 foster homes. Eckerd has 22.08% homes licensed, well below the statewide average of 28.73%. They are currently the third lowest performing CBC in implementing and maintaining the Guardianship Assistance Program. This is an area deserving of increased attention and focus and was not mentioned in the Risk Pool Funding Application or the 2020-2021 Financial Viability Plan.

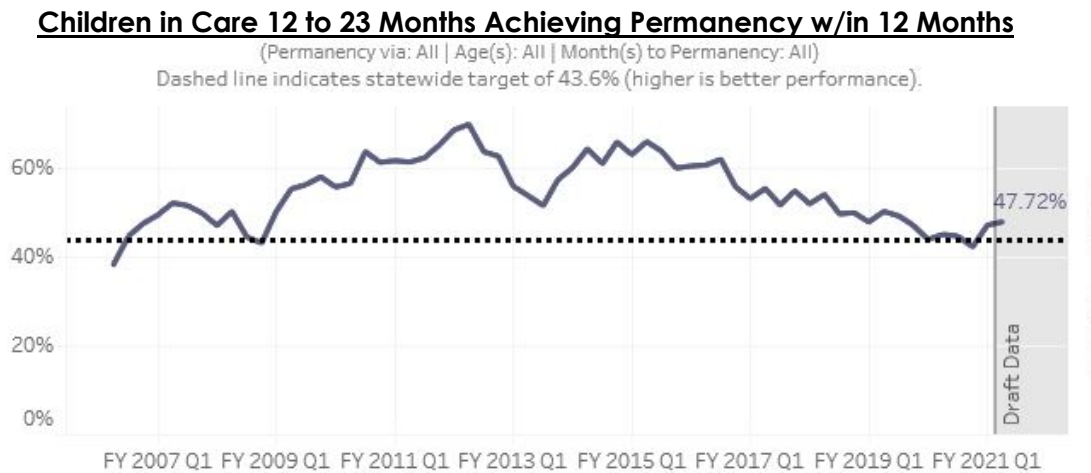
4. Findings related to exits from care including exits to permanence.

- Sources: ([The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#), Financial Viability Integrated Data Report)
- Summary below, see [The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), Financial Viability Integrated Data Report, [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#) – Sections 4 and 11, for more details.

- 4.1. What is the performance of the Lead Agency in the recognized measures of children achieving permanence? Do these findings indicate that children are not remaining in care for longer than necessary? Are these permanency achievement rates consistent across placement settings?**
- 4.2. What contextual factors (such as Children's Legal services, dependency court dynamics, etc.) influence time to permanence for children served by the Lead Agency?**
- 4.3. Has there been a change in number of exits or time to exit that is materially influencing the cost of out-of-home care?**



Children achieving permanency is a foundational measure for the health of the system. The statewide target is for 40% to achieve permanency within 12 months of removal. The lead agency has seen a steady trend downward from a high 59.29% of children achieving permanency in 12 months during FY 2014/15. Eckerd Circuit 6 last met the statewide target of 40.5% in FY 2017-2018, Q2. Historically, the lead agency was able to maintain a high level of success with this target for more than ten years. Since falling below the 40.5% target, Eckerd Circuit 6 has seen a steady downward trend over the most recent eleven quarters. Most recently, Eckerd Circuit 6 achieved permanency for 422 of 1,434 children in FY 2020-2021, Quarter 1 (29.43%). Currently, Eckerd Circuit 6 is the second lowest performing lead agency on this metric.



Eckerd Circuit 6 exceeded the statewide target for percent of children in care 12 to 23 months achieving permanency from 2007 until FY 2019-2020, Q4 when the lead agency fell just below the target of 43.6% to 42.13%

Percent of Children Under Supervision Seen Every Thirty Days

Dashed line indicates statewide target of 99.5% (higher is better performance).

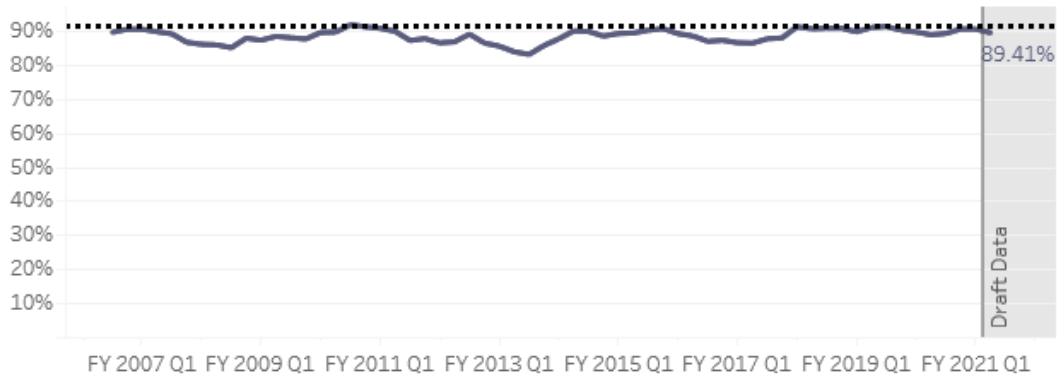


ECA-P/P consistently surpasses the target of seeing 99.5% of children under supervision every thirty days and has since 2009.

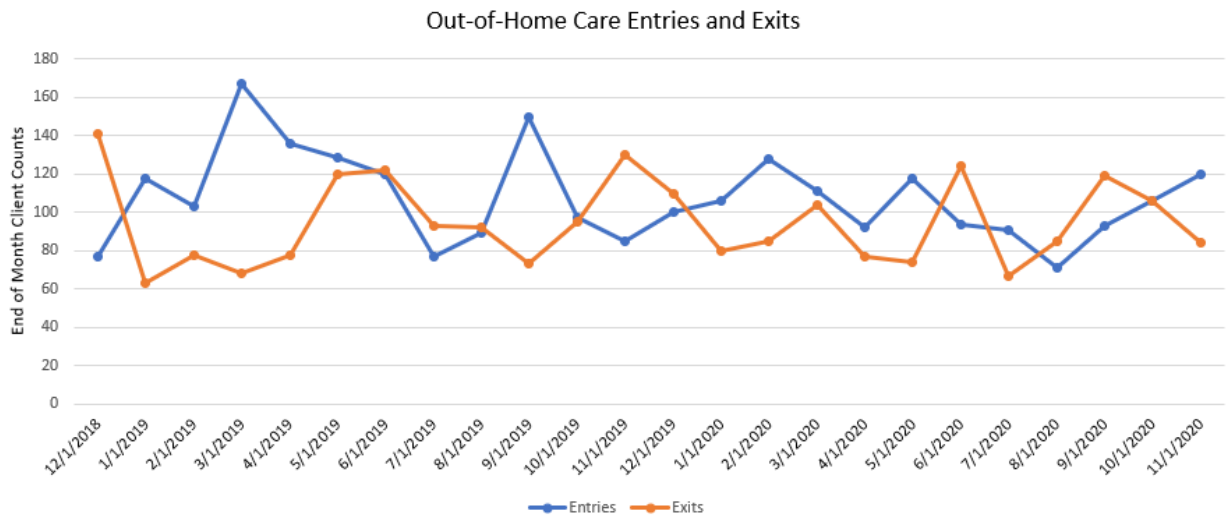
Percent NOT Re-Entering Care within Twelve Months

(Age(s): All | Month(s) to Re-Entry: n/a)

Dashed line indicates statewide target of 91.7% (higher is better performance).



The statewide target for children not re-entering care within twelve months is 91.7%. Eckerd Circuit 6 has struggled with this measure, only once meeting the target in FY 2009-2010, Q3.



Entries into out of home care demonstrate a consistent influx of children into out-of-home care and those entries often out-pace the exits.

5. Findings related to funding, fiscal trends and fiscal management.

- Sources: ([The Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report](#), [The Child Welfare Dashboard](#), CBC Financial Viability Report, CBC Financial Viability Integrated Data Report and CBC Budget Projections)
- Summary below, See CBC Financial Viability Integrated Data Report, CBC Budget Projections and CBC Financial Viability Report for additional details.

5.1. How has core services funding changed over time? (Financial) How has the Lead Agency managed these changes? What adjustments to the available array of services have been made? (For service array response see section1)

- 5.2. *How have any changes to core services funding contributed to any projected deficits for FY 2020-2021?*
- 5.3. *What is the ratio of core funding as a Percent of the Allocation formula?*
- 5.4. *In what ways are funding dynamics in the Lead Agency unique or atypical of funding in other Lead Agencies?*
- 5.5. *What is the amount of the anticipated deficit for the current year? How reliable and valid are these projections?*
- 5.6. *Are their options other than Risk Pool funding available to reduce the deficit?*
- 5.7. *If the Lead Agency meets the criteria for Risk Pool funding, but the amount of funding available is insufficient to cover the projected deficit, what other options are available?*
- 5.8. *Are there fiscal practices that could be completed with greater efficiency in order to reduce the projected deficit?*
- 5.9. *Has the most recent CPA audit indicated any issues that would affect the financial health of the organization?*

Total Funding

DCF Contract Funds Available at Year End (by Fiscal Year)	FY15-16	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21
Core Services Funding	\$44,550,216	\$44,759,756	\$45,555,137	\$45,888,895	\$47,882,028	\$53,350,477
Risk Pool Funding	\$0	\$0	\$866,570	\$4,970,419	\$3,887,237	\$0
CBC Operations "Back of the Bill" Funding	\$0	\$0	\$2,837,214	\$2,263,802	\$7,279,784	\$0
Other Amendments to Initial Allocations	\$740,821	\$119,700	\$34,899	\$657,605	\$208,536	\$0
Amended Core Services Funding	\$45,291,037	\$44,879,456	\$49,293,820	\$53,780,721	\$59,257,585	\$53,350,477
Funding not defined as Core Services Funding						
Independent Living (IL and Extended Foster Care)	\$1,386,293	\$1,386,293	\$1,630,662	\$2,224,750	\$2,552,253	\$2,552,253
Children's Mental Health Services (Cat 100800/100806)	\$647,125	\$647,125	\$647,125	\$647,125	\$647,125	\$647,125
PI Training, Casey Foundation or other non-core svcs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Safety Management Services (Nonrecurring)	\$0	\$604,942	\$0	\$604,942	\$604,942	\$0
Total at Year End	\$47,324,455	\$47,517,816	\$51,571,607	\$57,257,538	\$63,061,905	\$56,549,855
Maintenance Adoption Subsidy (MAS)	\$19,028,560	\$19,666,457	\$20,572,633	\$22,196,558	\$23,114,740	\$24,293,480
Guardianship Assistance Payments (GAP)					\$89,654	\$89,654
MAS Prior Year Deficit	-\$642,471					
Carry Forward Balance from Previous Years	\$2,717,806	\$1,125,711	-\$195,642	-\$508,998	-\$52,009	-\$650,086
Total Funds Available	\$68,428,350	\$68,309,984	\$71,948,598	\$78,945,098	\$86,214,290	\$80,282,903

Eckerd Circuit 6 received a total of \$11.1M in Risk Pool and "Back of the Bill" funding in FY 2019-2020. Even with the additional funds, the lead agency finished the year with a \$650,086 deficit. If the risk pool and "Back of the Bill" funding were excluded, the entire deficit for FY 2019-2020 would have been \$11,232,107.

Core services funding increased ~\$1.99M from FY 2018-2019 to FY 2019-2020 and by ~\$5.47M from FY 2019-2020 to FY 2020-2021.

Eckerd Circuit 6 also received a non-recurring allocation for Safety Management Services in FY 2019-2020 for \$604,942 which provided additional financial resources. These funds were included in core services in FY 2020-2021.

Expenditures on Core Services and Administration

Reported Expenditures by Fiscal Year	FY15-16	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20
Administrative Costs	\$2,436,167	\$2,597,942	\$2,628,117	\$2,527,940	\$3,475,315
Admin Cost Rate (Exp as % of Total Allocations)	3.7%	3.9%	3.6%	3.2%	4.0%
Core Services Expenditures					
Dependency Case Management	\$23,312,851	\$23,355,866	\$24,610,073	\$25,569,425	\$28,385,526
Adoption Services Promotion & Support	\$315,279	\$203,597	\$231,381	\$284,237	\$373,752
Prevention/Family Support/Family Preservation	\$4,899,705	\$4,391,775	\$4,139,019	\$4,014,869	\$3,999,154
Client Services	\$4,484,653	\$3,722,944	\$2,510,926	\$2,511,902	\$3,032,554
Training - Staff and Adoptive/Foster Parent	\$1,563,271	\$1,506,928	\$1,579,706	\$1,239,314	\$804,712
Licensed Family Foster Home (Level I Child Specific)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$184,817
Licensed Family Foster Home (Level II-V)	\$4,153,357	\$4,702,184	\$4,737,305	\$5,384,032	\$6,234,299
Licensed Facility Based Care	\$6,610,443	\$7,337,139	\$10,430,853	\$13,946,466	\$15,602,765
Services for Victims of Sexual Exploitation	\$106,624	\$32,018	\$21,698	\$21,641	\$29,352
Safety Management Services	\$0	\$604,942	\$804,541	\$754,083	\$1,504,201
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Core Services Expenditures	\$45,446,183	\$45,857,393	49,065,502	53,725,969	60,151,132

When comparing core service expenditures by category, FY 2019-2020 had an increase in dependency case management from \$25.57M to \$28.39M representing a 9.9% increase. Prevention/Family Support/Family Preservation spending remained unchanged. Safety Management Services nearly doubled from \$754k to \$1.5M. According to the lead agency's application, Client Related Services have increased to provide added wrap-around services and promote permanency.

The Department of Children and Families and the Florida Coalition for Children worked together and developed the Florida Funding For Children model to provide a need based funding strategy and assure each child regardless of where they reside in the state would have equitable resources to provide care and to manage the case to permanency. Eckerd Circuit 6 is funded at 70.9% of the Florida Funding for Children model and remains the lowest funded lead agency in the state following the allocation of new funds appropriated in the 2020 legislative session.

According to their application, Eckerd Circuit 6 continuously seeks local support and other resources to assist in meeting the needs of the children and families they serve. Local resources and/or additional support they have received or pursued include:

- National Youth Foundation has provided \$160,000 to Circuit 6 to improve staff retention this fiscal year, and at the time of the application, current case management capacity was running at 90%. Eckerd Circuit 6 believes that they will be able to continue to receive resources to support their system of care from this foundation.

- Eckerd was awarded an 9-month CAPTA Grant for \$749,840 effective 8/5/2020-6/30/2021. This grant was subcontracted to Healthy Start Pinellas and Ounce of Prevention in Pasco to enhance prevention and diversion programs for substance exposed newborns and families with young children.
- Pinellas County Grant emanating from the federal opioid funding totaled \$691,518. This program supports transportation and supervision as well as client related services for children in Early Childhood Court, assuring the families in this specialty court have access to services and supports unique to their needs.
- Community Based Care Integrated Health provides \$466,000 to Eckerd Circuit 6. These funds are based on enrollment in the Medicaid child welfare specialty plan with a goal to increase enrollment by 15%.
- Healthy Families Pinellas provides diversion services to Eckerd Circuit 6 families in collaboration with the Sheriff's Office CPI unit and the diversion services provider. This is a new service for healthy families nationally with a current capacity for 10 families and is intended to expand next fiscal year.
- Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB, i.e. Children's Services Council) has engaged with Eckerd Circuit 6 to review their current investment in child abuse prevention services with the intent to align services more directly with Eckerd Circuit 6 prevention and diversion efforts.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 is continuously engaging the community for donations and support for the children and families they serve. Donations include clothes, bikes, cars, food, etc. so caregivers are never left without the basic necessities needed. Additionally, Eckerd Circuit 6 organizes a number of Special Events and donor appeals that result in over \$60,000 to be used for client needs throughout the year.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 holds workforce development contracts and has now acquired the Job Corps program in Pinellas County. These service lines aligned under Eckerd Circuit 6 will be leveraged to prioritize child welfare families for employment training and opportunities. Further with Job Corps, Eckerd Circuit 6 will be able to place 16+ teens through young adults that have aged out into this residential program to help them finish their high school education, learn a trade, and secure a good job. Eckerd Circuit 6 anticipates this new program will assist in reducing children in group care, stabilizing young adults and assisting families to achieve stability and reunification.

FY 2020-2021 Financial Viability Plan

In their design and instruction for the Financial Viability Plan (FVP) templates, DCF requested that CBCs identify their actions to address three primary cost drivers:

1. Factors related to entries into care.
2. Factors related to the cost of children while in care.
3. Factors related to exits from care.

Eckerd Circuit 6's FVP contains actions to address the three primary cost drivers affecting their financial position. The actions include:

- Increase the percent of children placed in relative and non-relative placements at the time of shelter.
- Decrease the number of children entering the dependency system.
- Reduce the number of children in residential group care.
- Increase the number of children placed in relative and non-relative caregivers.
- Increase the number of children exiting the dependency system within 12 months.

Progress of the FVP through October 2020:

- Increase the number of children placed with relatives/non-relatives at the time of shelter. The target is 60% or more of children placed with relative/non-relative at time of shelter. In FY 2020-2021, Q1, 56.1% of children placed with a relative at time of removal, a 5.6% increase YTD – made progress.
- Decrease the number of children entering the dependency system. Target is a 5% reduction in the number of children entering the dependency system to 1,184 children or less. In FY 2020-2021, Q1, 242 children entered the dependency system, 54 children below the target of 296 – made progress.
- Reduce the number of children in Residential Group Care (RGC). Target is a net decrease of 66 children in RGC. FY 2020-21 began with 305 children in RGC. End of Q1, 261 children in RGC, decrease of 44 children fiscal year to date – made progress.
- Increase the number of children placed with relatives/non-relatives. Target is 65% of out-of-home placement with relatives/non-relatives. End of 2020-21, Q1, there were 1,259 children placed with a Relative or Non-Relative Caregiver. There was no net change in the number of children, however a percentage improvement of 1.3% to 51.3% - no progress.
- Increase the number of children achieving permanency in 12 months as evidenced by a reduction of 69 children in licensed foster care. At the end of FY 2020-2021, Q1 there was a net decrease of 15 children from foster homes (Level 11 through Level V) from 859 children to 841 – made progress.

The actions in the FVPs contain specific measurable performance numbers and cost savings projections. Based on the FVP October 2020 update, this is a cost savings of \$2.97M in the first fiscal quarter.

There is no unique or atypical funding in this lead agency as compared to other lead agencies. Pinellas County does have a local children's services council (Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County) which funds non-dependent children.

No findings were identified in the most recent CPA audit for June 30, 2020.

6. Findings related to overall management.

- Sources: ([CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#), Financial Viability Plan)
- Summary below, [CBC Contract Monitoring Report](#) – Sections 4 and 11, and the Financial Viability Plan for more details.

- 6.1. To what extent is there clear and effective communication between and among the Region, the Lead Agency, the Sheriff (if applicable), case management organizations and other key community partners?**
- 6.2. How actively and effectively does Lead Agency management track programmatic performance and fiscal performance?**
- 6.3. What actions have been taken by the Region and/or the Lead Agency to resolve the fiscal issues without accessing the Risk Pool? What further actions are planned?**

Overall, the Region, Lead Agency and Sheriff's office have a positive working relationship and are typically able to resolve issues. Eckerd Circuit 6's leadership style is to provide data to the case management organizations (CMOs) or other partners and have them come up with a solution, versus working together as a team to identify solutions. The community expresses this feeling and indicates that they wish Eckerd Circuit 6 would take more of a leadership role in problem solving. Additional concerns from the community were that Eckerd Circuit 6 leads more from crisis resolution than from a strategic, prevention-based perspective.

Eckerd Circuit 6 gathers and utilizes a significant amount of data to try and improve performance and distributes this data through weekly data reports. While there is a large amount of data that could prove beneficial to the system as a whole, Eckerd Circuit 6's delegative leadership approach, evidenced by their preference to provide the CMOs with data and ask them to develop solutions, has proven to not be the most effective or well received. Beginning in FY 2019-2020, Eckerd Circuit 6, completed a year-end report to review the performance of each CMO. All three CMO's are scheduled for formal monitoring in FY 2020-2021. This new monitoring should prove beneficial to the individual CMO's to give them feedback on their performance and expectations.

Follow up to FY2019-2020 Risk Pool Recommendations

Recommendation	Action/Update
<p>Eckerd Circuit 6 should request and accept the Department's assistance in the form of sending experienced employees and/or contractors to help with one or more areas of specific need which could help improve case manager stability, discharges to permanency, the effectiveness of front-end services and reduce the number of children ages 6-12 in RGC.</p>	<p>Eckerd Circuit 6 has worked with DCF for over a year to help improve permanency within 12 months. DCF assigned a team to work with each CMO to work on permanency for children. The team of staff continues to work with Eckerd Connects. Although we are not meeting the DCF Contract Measure for Permanency within 12 months, we are meeting the measure for the CMO Pilot. There has been incremental improvement this fiscal year.</p>
<p>Risk Pool funding provides a stopgap (non-recurring) resource intended to mitigate unanticipated changes in the number of clients and/or services needed for clients; it is not designed to annualize expenses. Eckerd Circuit 6 should develop a plan to meet existing and trending client needs while reducing costs more in-line with their recurring core services funding allocation in anticipation of being financially viable by the end of the fiscal year.</p>	<p>Circuit 6 is the lowest funded circuit in the state. An average of 110 children enter licensed care every month as the removal rate in Circuit 6 is consistently 20-50% over the state average. Eckerd Circuit 6 is doing all they can to accomplish this, and consistently remain open to ideas and areas to reduce efforts; since June 30, 2020 the OHC daily cost has been reduced by \$2,984. Eckerd Circuit 6 is engaging the Juvenile Welfare Board and County Commissions of Pasco and Pinellas Counties in an effort to increase the resources for prevention, diversion and specialized care.</p> <p>During FY 2020-2021 (July through December- <i>FSFN Children Entering and Exiting FC report</i>) C6 had 628 new youth entries into out-of-home care. This rate represented the 2nd highest total entries into OHC (C13 led the State with 640 new entries). Despite new entries outpacing the statewide average, C6 led the state in the total number of youth exiting foster care (622 exits) compared to the next highest jurisdiction- C13 at 555 exits. Circuit</p>

Recommendation	Action/Update
	<p>13 has \$10 million dollars more in core funding than Circuit 6. During FY 2020/21 (July through December) C6 led the State in the total number of new entries into paid placement (242 compared to the 2nd highest jurisdiction C13 at 210). When looking at the % of youth entering OHC, C6 had the 2nd highest rate at 38.5% (242 of 628) compared to Citrus Health who had the highest rate at 38.7% (99 of 256). Both jurisdictions far exceeded the statewide average of 27.7%. Circuit 6 is also ranked 4th in the number of newly licensed foster homes this fiscal year. Despite an equal investment in Diversion services, C6 continues to have a removal rate that exceeds the statewide average with December 2020 marking the highest removal rate of any jurisdiction at 8.4 compared to the statewide average of 4.6. When looking at removal rates YTD, C6 ranks 4th highest with an average of 6.2 compared to the statewide average of 5.2%.</p> <p>When looking at permanency gains, in December, C6's performance for children exiting care within 12 months was 31.1% against a target of 40.5%. C6 has continued to show positive gains improving this metric (SW average: 34.2%).</p>
<p>Eckerd Circuit 6 must continue to follow their financial viability plan and show measurable and substantial progress in meeting their goals.</p>	<p>Eckerd Circuit 6 has made progress on the financial viability plan. They have continued to work toward the targets set in the financial viability plan, with progress made on each strategy and with the most significant progress in the reduction of children in Residential Group</p>

Recommendation	Action/Update
	Care (reduction of 36 children as of December 2020) in spite of the removal rate continuing to double the rate of the statewide average.
Eckerd Circuit 6 must reduce the cost of out-of-home care as identified in their FVP by reducing the number of children in residential group care in total but especially those ages 6-12.	Eckerd Circuit 6 has reduced daily out of care by \$2,984 since June 30, 2020. This fiscal year there has been a net reduction of 36 children in RGC.
Eckerd Circuit 6 should develop an action plan in conjunction with the Sheriff's Offices to improve the utilization of diversion services as a safe alternative to removals.	A new Diversion provider was selected through competitive procurement in Pinellas County to start the current fiscal year. Eckerd Circuit 6 has continuously worked with the Sheriff's Offices in both counties to ensure necessary resources are being provided in order to prevent children from coming into care. In addition to the 3 service types under Safety Methodology (Safety Management Services, Family Support Services, and In-Home Non-Judicial Services), each county provides assessments to CPID to be used as collateral information for families who do not necessarily meet the criteria for services based on Safety Methodology. While the current utilization target identified in Circuit 6 is 858 families for FY 2020-2021, the two current providers have served 761 unduplicated families through December 2020, or 89% of their annual contractual target, and are projected to serve 1,522 unduplicated families by June 2021.
Eckerd Circuit 6 must increase efforts toward timely and safe permanency in order to reduce the total number of children in care.	Eckerd Circuit 6 funded a Reunification Program using CMO Pilot dollars. The Reunification Program started serving families in November 2020. CMO Pilot dollars

Recommendation	Action/Update
	were used to hire a Permanency Specialist for each CMO to hire staff to staff cases once every 90 days, to move children through the system of care. Circuit 6 lead the state in adoptions last year and are on a course to adopt well over 400 children this year as well.
Eckerd Circuit 6 should continue to focus on addressing case manager turnover to improve retention.	This fiscal year retention of case managers has improved and consistently 85%-90% of case management positions filled with certified case carrying staff.

The FY 2018-2019 Financial Viability Plan addresses the appropriate findings identified in the FY 2017-2018 Risk Pool Report.

7. Other factors or considerations noted on the application or determined relevant by the Peer Review Committee.

A six-year history shows Eckerd Circuit 6 has received \$22.1M for deficits the previous three years through secondary funding (Risk Pool, Back of the Bill and LBC amendments). The allocation for deficits in FY 2019-2020 was \$11,167,021. According to the Florida Funding for Families model Eckerd Circuit 6 is funded at 70.9% of the optimum funding level; which contributes to its ongoing deficits.

8. Provide a detailed analysis of the projected Return on Investment (ROI) in terms of future cost avoidance, reduction in Out of Home Care, increase in prevention in home services, reduction in removals or other related factors.

Eckerd Circuit 6 indicated the return on investment of risk pool funds within Circuit 6 will be seen in the continuation of the reduction of youth in residential group and licensed foster care. Further, Eckerd Circuit 6 believes with risk pool dollars they will see improvement in specific contract measures of permanency within 12 months due to improved case management stability, fewer children returning to care due to kinship services and the addition of a reunification program in FY 2020-2021, and placement stability as capacity increases and with the specialty teen case management agency.

9. The areas identified above are illustrative of the expected areas for review and analysis, but additional factors may be identified in the application or suggested by findings during the course of the Peer Review Committee's work.

Summary of Findings:

Based on the information reviewed the Risk Pool Review Committee was able to affirm the following:

- Eckerd Circuit 6 is now the lowest funded CBC in the state, despite the allocation of new funding in FY 2020-2021.
- Based on the Florida Funding for Children; Eckerd Circuit 6 is funded at 70.9%
- Although removals have recently trended lightly downward, there is a lag time between removals and exits from care. Therefore, it will likely take up to 24 months before those reductions will be realized and the number of kids served decline.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 is reporting an increase in Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) eligible client's costs. All CBC's and provider agencies are and have been struggling with APD and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) client's costs for the past several years. This will require a statewide solution.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 has struggled with meeting their performance measures over the past several years.
 - Eckerd Circuit 6's Title-IV-E eligibility rate is below the state average and the goal of 72%.
 - Placement moves per 1,000 bed days is the lowest in the state.
 - Eckerd Circuit 6 is the second lowest in the state in placing siblings together.
 - Eckerd Circuit 6 is not meeting 7 of the 12 Scorecard goals.
- There has been a significant increase in total population served, and more importantly a significant increase in out-of-home care, which is more costly than in-home care.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 has seen an increase in Residential and Group Care especially for the teen population. They are the second highest in the state. They have decreased their bed hold expenditures.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 is experiencing a decrease in exits. Their months to discharge and their time to permanency have been steadily going up. Their Average Length of Stay is 21.31 months which is higher than the State Average of 18.53 months and it is trending upward.
- Front end services seem substantial however there is a question as to the cost effectiveness of the Evidence Based Programs.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 reports an increase in the number of foster homes; however, they are not meeting the need for placement of teens.
- Eckerd Circuit 6 continues to have improvements in a number of areas, including:
 - Decrease in the number of children entering dependency by 120 children year over year.
 - They have decreased youth in residential group care placements by 44 children.

Risk Pool Allocations:

The Peer Review Committee found that Eckerd Circuit 6 qualifies for risk pool funding and recommends a partial distribution of \$5,000,000. The recommended distribution is the balance of risk pool funds available after considering each risk pool application and partially funding qualified applicants. The Risk Pool funding is approved to be used to offset out of home care costs.

The expenditure of approved risk pool funds is based on relevant and verifiable service trends and changes that have occurred during the current fiscal year. The applicant's financial need is caused by circumstances beyond the control of the lead agency management. The use of risk pool funds meets at least one of the purposes specified in section 490.990 (7)(c), F.S. (2020).

Recommendations:

1. Place a stronger emphasis on the reduction in the number of children in residential group care.
2. Reduce residential/group rate adjustments and/or no future rate increases in light of the deficit.
3. Review and reexamine administrative costs to identify efficiencies and reduce those costs. Administrative cost rates have gone up between FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020.
4. Re-negotiate or re-examine front end services with provider since number of families served is going down but the cost remains the same.
5. Explore rapid permanency reviews and/or other targeted reviews to move cases to permanency.
6. Review in-home placements over 6 months (including post placement supervision) to assess for continued service needs or safe case closure. 142 out of 493 children have been in in-home placements more than 6 months.
7. Focus on reducing the caseload ratio (as recommended in prior risk pool reports).
8. Consistent with the finding during the most recent on-site monitoring, Eckerd Circuit 6 should continue to focus on addressing case manager turnover.