



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

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

June 28, 2013

DCF colleagues,

Shortly after I took the role as Secretary for DCF, the tragic death of Nubia Barahona occurred and shined a bright light on the systematic failures in our child protection system that had been ongoing for years. The system was broken.

The workforce was experiencing rapid turnover, they were inexperienced and did not receive proper training to equip them to do their jobs. There was no consistent standard process for workers to follow and therefore processes and policies varied throughout the state. There was a great deal of duplicating efforts as information was not shared between professionals. It was even unclear who had responsibility for casework with families.

Upon this realization, I made it our mission and top priority not just to tweak the existing system using band aid approaches, but to implement a full scale redesign of the child protection system in order to keep kids safer.

I knew we couldn't revolutionize Florida's child welfare system on our own so we sought input from various stakeholders including the Children's Research Center, the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services, law enforcement, judges, child welfare advocates, and many others. As a result of this collaboration, we have developed a new holistic approach to ensuring safety.

Our new approach to child protection centers around two core principles—consistency and safety. We are moving from a risk-based model to a determination of safety—a child is either safe or unsafe.

Using this model, we will work with families to develop joint solutions on behalf of the child. Our focus will shift to assessing a full family unit to understand the dynamics and set the stage for identifying needs that will keep the children safe. Regardless of which investigator in whatever part of the state knocks on the front door of one of our families' homes, the family will experience the same process. They will follow a common methodology to assess the safety of the child. Our investigators and case managers are being trained to engage the family in the process to teach them to make better decisions.

Starting next week, we will begin training more than 5,000 child protection staff to utilize the new and improved system. We also will be putting new and improved technology at their fingertips which will assist in the information sharing and ensuring accuracy. This training will be happening in collaboration with Guardians ad Litem, judges and contracted service providers.

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

This is the next stage of the transformation process that we've been working toward for more than two years. I am committed to seeing this transformation through and eager to see the positive impact it will have on the safety of children in our state. In order for this to be successful, we will need collaboration and support on all levels from DCF staff, sheriffs, community-based care agencies, judges, advocates and providers.

Thank you for your continued support as you will be an integral component of making this successful for the children and families of Florida.

Secretary David Wilkins