



## Florida's Public Health & Medical System **PREPARES & RESPONDS**

### **VULNERABLE POPULATION: Children in Foster Care/Child Welfare System**

The Florida Department of Children and Families provides child welfare services through a community-based care system. Six sheriff offices and numerous Department protective investigation units statewide provide protective investigation services. There are also twenty lead Community-Based Care agencies (CBCs) providing case management services in twenty-two service areas.

#### **Key Issues:**

- Each CBC provider has developed a child-welfare disaster plan for the department's vulnerable population based on local resources and needs.
- This vulnerable population includes children that are under the care and custody or supervision of the department due to allegations of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
- As of March 1, 2013, the Department of Children and Families had 31,147 children under its care and supervision.

#### **Planning Considerations:**

- Coordinate with community-based care agencies to identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster.
- Ensure infrastructure support is in place for responsible agencies to maintain capacity to respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases.
- Collaborate with local community-based care agencies to assure process is in place for caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster to report status, essential program records preservation, and service coordination.
- Utilize a best practice tool, "Servicing Child Welfare Client Needs: Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Activities," developed and disseminated as a guide of critical points that should be addressed in each plan. The guide includes details as to developing a plan, managing a disaster, and rebuilding in the aftermath. The Guide can be found on the Center for Excellence in Child Welfare webpage at: <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/DisasterPlanning/CBCSheriffPlans.shtml> (Click on the link, "Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006..." under the Statewide Resources heading.

#### **Supporting Agency:**

Office of Child Welfare, Department of Children and Families [www.myfloridafamilies.com](http://www.myfloridafamilies.com)

**Additional Information:** The following resource provides more information on planning considerations for children in foster care/child welfare system during disasters and other emergencies:

[www.centerforchildwelfare.org](http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org)