

Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

Call us at (772)873-7800



News & Media

Next steps in ongoing process to improve local foster care

Port St. Lucie – Foster parents, case managers and a host of Devereux Community Based Care staff and volunteers met March 27 to plan the next steps in an ongoing process to improve local foster care.

The gathering at the St. Lucie County Children's Services Council was the latest meeting of the Quality Parenting Initiative, a statewide program that is redefining caregiver/staff relationships and what it means to be a foster parent.

Members discussed current issues, including a new foster-parent training curriculum that promises to better prepare caregivers for their roles as foster parents and the increasing length of stay in care for some children.

Devereux CBC Chief Operating Officer Cheri Sheffer said plans are already in place to improve permanency outcomes for children.

"Four years in care doesn't speak well of what we're trying to achieve for children," said Christine Ellis, placement specialist for Devereux CBC. Ellis was referring to the long stays that harder-to-place children sometimes experience in the foster-care system.

Plans are already underway to improve those outcomes, Devereux CBC Chief Operating Officer Cheri Sheffer said.

Devereux CBC is working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national foundation that works to improve outcomes for children and families, to establish a permanency roundtable. This roundtable will bring together the decision makers in a foster child's life – guardian ad litem, the dependency court system, the Department of Children and Families and Devereux CBC –to identify and remove barriers to permanency on a child-by-child basis.

The model has found success throughout the country, and local child-welfare advocates are eager to begin work locally.

"We're one of the poorest performing areas in the state for permanency," Sheffer said. "This is a skilled and studied process that identifies barriers to permanency and addresses them. That process itself will change the way everyone thinks about permanency and infuse the way we look at all cases, not just the ones we bring to the roundtable."

Representatives from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Devereux CBC have scheduled training for all partners in the process May 3 and May 7 so that all parts of the Circuit 19 dependency system understand the roundtable model and work toward the same goal.

The group also discussed foster-parent recruitment and established a brand statement to better identify the work of caregivers:

"Foster parents are trained, valued partners who advocate to make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families."

That means changing some long-held beliefs about who is responsible for performing certain tasks in a foster child's life and raising expectations for both foster parents and case managers.

For example, caregivers – and not case managers – should be scheduling and transporting children to dental and medical appointments under Quality Parenting Initiative best practices.

"The days of 'my job is to provide three square meals and a roof overhead' are long gone," said Jill Poole, Caregiver Support Coordinator for Devereux CBC. "We're talking about quality parenting; it's not OK to have a stranger take your child to the dentist."

Expectations for case managers have also changed. They are expected to maintain relationships with caregivers, keep them better informed and, when appropriate, include them in the decision-making process.

The Quality Parenting Initiative is one of several steps Devereux CBC is taking to improve outcomes for children in foster care. Recruiting and retaining more caregivers is part of that plan. Several breakfasts are planned this month to introduce the issue to the community and to increase local interest in foster care.

More News:

[Active](#)

[Archived](#)

May 6, 2014

Contact: Christina Kaiser
(772) 528-0362



• *Inspiring hope. Empowering lives. Since 1912.* •

Devereux CBC • 10570 S. Federal Hwy. Port St. Lucie, FL 34952 • (772)873-7800

Special Notice: If you require Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations to participate in any Devereux CBC event or activity, please notify Rusty Kline, Single Point of Contact, by phone at 772-873-7800 or by email to flbccivilrights@devereuxcbc.org within at least seven (7) days of the event. Accommodations will be provided at no extra charge.

Sponsored by the state of Florida Department of Children and Families

©Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health • 444 Devereux Drive, Villanova, PA 19085 • (800) 345-1292