

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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## New Name, Same Passion

Our passion has a new name—Communities Connected for Kids  
07.01.2018

## News & Media

### Law bans overnight visitation in sober homes

**Stuart** – The legislative session - and special session - are now over, and one by one bills intended to improve the lives of vulnerable children are being signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott.

One of those bills, HB 329, filed and championed by Stuart Rep. Gayle Harrell, prohibits shared custody plans from requiring a child to visit a parent living in a substance abuse recovery residence overnight.

It also provides as a condition of certification by the Department of Children and Families that a recovery residence may not allow a child to visit a resident parent between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. and prohibits court-ordered visitation of a minor to a recovery residence where a sexual predator or sexual offender resides.

"This was actually happening," said Karen Sweeney, Rep. Harrell's legislative aide. "Neighbors started to see young children - two little girls - visiting and staying overnight for a week at a time."

Prior to the law's passage, a custodial parent who did not want his or her children to spend the night in a recovery home would have to file an emergency injunction with the court, Sweeney said.

"Now it's law, and if the custodial parent does not want their child to visit overnight, regardless of the parenting plan or child custody agreement, they can call law enforcement for help enforcing HB 329," she said.

Rep. Harrell, who advocates on behalf of children's issues and substance abuse and mental health services, said it's important to both encourage recovery and protect children.

"This legislation is an important step in addressing the issue of sober homes and assuring the safety of children by allowing for visitation only when it's appropriate," Rep. Harrell said.

The law does not impact places like Fort Pierce's Counseling & Recovery Center, a fully staffed residential treatment facility for women with substance abuse or mental health disorders. Those types of facilities provide important services to Devereux Community Based Care's child-welfare system and the families it serves, said Christina Kaiser, the organization's community relations director.

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