

This report covers the CCKids fiscal year,  
from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.



Communities  
Connected  
*for Kids*

**2021**

# **Annual Report**

# Who We Are

Communities Connected for Kids is the Lead Agency for child-welfare services in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. Our services include:

- Prevention Services
- Residential care
- Extended foster care
- Licensed foster care
- Case management
- Post-adoption supports
- Independent living
- Adoptions

Our mission is to enhance the safety, permanency and well-being of all children in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast through a community network of family support services. Our vision is to eliminate abuse, neglect and abandonment so all children grow to their full potential. *We continue to adjust our services to accommodate for safety during the ongoing challenges of the COVID pandemic. Our greatest challenge has been case-manager turnover.*

## 2021 Board of Directors (for the period running July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)

**Kathryn Hensley, Chair**

Retired

**Vanessa Farnes**

Seacoast Bank

**Melanie Wiles, Vice Chair**

Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County

**Dr. Angie Bailey**

Indian River State College

**Pat McCoy**

Okeechobee School District

**Leslie Kroeger**

Cohen, Milstein, Sellers & Toll

**Doris Plym**

Guardians for New Futures

**Kristy Conway**

Indian River State College

**Steve Simon**

Rosenthal, Levy, Simon & Simon

**Kay Hammond**

Retired

**1 Organization**

*coordinating*

**34 Contracted Providers**

*servicing*

**825 Children**

*And their families*



Communities  
Connected  
*for Kids*

# A Message from the CEO



## **Our Focus in the New Year will be on Case Management Salaries**

**By Carol Deloach  
CCKids CEO**

I am proud to introduce the 2021 annual report and to share with you the successes of the last. Our accomplishments are especially impressive — and a testament to the hard work and dedication of a committed work force — when you consider our many challenges.

These include a still-present pandemic that has forced us to adapt new protocols and to watch an alarming increase in case-manager turnover. This last challenge will be the focus of our advocacy work this year as we work with our sister lead agencies throughout the state to bring more funding home. You see, the people directly responsible for the safety and well-being of children in foster care are leaving in record numbers a profession they love. But why are they leaving work that began as a calling?

They are leaving for less mentally and emotionally taxing jobs that also pay better. And I want to make one point very, very clear: These men and women have dedicated their lives, and sacrificed nights, weekends and time with their own children to help others.

They volunteer additional hours to watch over children and young people who haven't found homes or who refuse placements. They drive children throughout the state and sometimes cross-country. They fill in for one another and support each other on particularly difficult cases. They are dedicated. They are mission-focused. But they are tired.

The Great Resignation has found us in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast. It has found us in child welfare. Case managers, who historically have a high turnover rate due to the nature of the work, are leaving the job at record numbers. Why? Because they can find less demanding work for better pay in their own neighborhoods. In fact, no longer constrained by the geographical limitations that existed in the pre-covid, pre-virtual world, they can find the same work for more money in other states.

Case manager salaries in Florida are not competitive, a fact borne out in high attrition rates and an historically shallow candidate pool. This is because Florida offers a significantly lower average starting salary of \$37,064, compared to the starting salary from seven comparison states of \$48,958.

A Florida case managers' average salary is \$39,646, which is \$18,000 below similar professions, like police officers, teachers and social workers, whose average salary is \$57,000 in Florida.

Case manager turnover – 30 percent throughout much of the state – is avoidable. That is why Communities Connected for Kids will join its sister Child Welfare Lead Agencies and the Florida Coalition for Children in the coming months to advocate for greater funding to help raise the starting salary of case managers.

Case managers are the foundation of the child welfare community. If our goal is to stabilize and protect our community's most vulnerable children, then we must stabilize our workforce.



# We ensured permanency

Communities Connected for Kids exceeded its adoptions goal for the year, continuing a six-year trend that began with heightened recruitment efforts and an efficiency project that cut the amount of time children spend in the adoption process.

For the 12-month period ending June 30, 2021, 167 children were adopted from the local foster-care system. This represents a 27 percent increase over the 2021 goal of 131.

Still dealing with the COVID-19 health crisis and its variants, judicial and child-welfare officials continued to use video conferencing tools adopted the year before when in-person activities were unadvisable or could not be facilitated. Forever Family—an adoption recruitment tool that produces children’s adoption wishes for local television — also continued to interview and produce weekly news segments virtually when necessary. The stories of 14 children were featured on the program and aired on News Channel 12 from June 30, 2020, through July 1, 2021.

## 167 kids adopted

Five children featured on the program were adopted, and three of those adoptions were the result of the children’s Forever Family segments. Three more children featured on the program were matched to prospective families. The segments of the children who were not adopted, matched or placed will continue to be aired to help increase awareness for their needs.





# We ensured safety

Children abused or neglected while receiving services and after returning home—though dropping by less than a percent — continued to outperform state standards: The percent of children who did not experience abuse while in care was 96.15, while the percent in Florida overall was 95.14.

Likewise, the percentage of local children who remained safe after returning home was 94.8 percent, versus 92.74 statewide.

Calls to the state’s child-abuse registry — which decreased significantly during the spring shutdown of 2020 — returned to more normal levels in 2021 when children returned to school. This is an important point because child-welfare professional feared that the decrease in calls indicated a lack of reporting—and not abuse. Locally, 708 calls were made to the state registry in 2021 compared to 654 for the same period the year before.

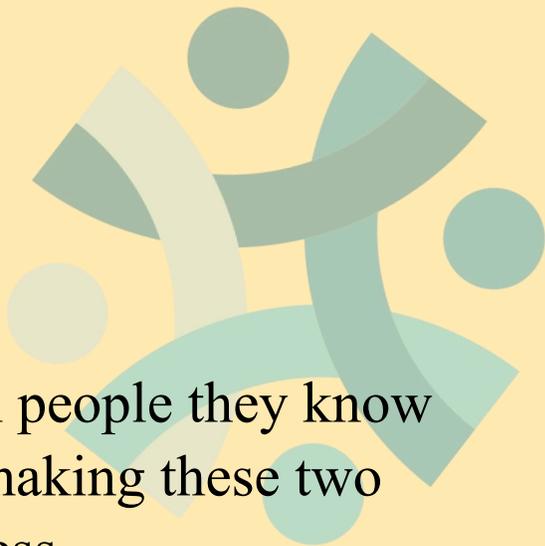
**96%**

**Safe at  
Home**

# We ensured well-being



Last year, 20 percent fewer children were placed in group care, and 3 percent more children were placed with relatives, totaling more than 41 percent and 8 percent changes, respectively, over the past two years.



Children do better when they live with people they know and when they live in home settings, making these two measures critical to our system's success.

In 2021, CCKids' caregiver support team licensed 97 relative caregivers (called Level 1 Foster Homes) for the care of 128 children. Licensure — unavailable prior to 2020 — opens up new resources to relatives, making it easier for extended family to care for children and keeping those same children out of the foster-care system. A total of 193 relative caregivers have been licensed since the program began last year.

Additionally, 41 children in those homes became eligible for a new resource called the Guardian Assistance Program, designed to keep children from advancing into higher-end, more expensive levels of care. This marked a steep increase over the four who became eligible the year before.



We measure a child's well-being in many ways including visits to the doctor or dentist, access to mental-health services and education. CCKids out-performed state targets in some of these areas including children who have seen a doctor in the last 12 months (98.7%), and young adults who leave care and achieve their educational goals (90.4%). This last statistic is itself an improvement from last year's 88.4%, which was also above the state average.

Well-being also is measured by the extent to which children feel “normal” while in care—like starting the school year with supplies, having overnight bags to carry their belongings and receiving gifts during the holidays. In 2021, CCKids collected more than 300 packs of school supplies through its partnership with the United Way of St. Lucie County and merged efforts with longtime partner Guardians for New Futures to double the number of children served.

**90.4% met  
educational  
goals**



# 2021 Highlights



Some brought dogs, some brought children and still others brought teams of colleagues. They all brought game – and a healthy sense of competition that helped Communities Connected for Kids win a private audience with legendary Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Tony Dungy.

It was all part of the 2021 Foster Care Month celebration, which began May 1 with a statewide awareness and registration campaign and culminated locally in a 1K in Port St. Lucie.

Earlier in the spring, foster care professionals throughout Florida asked residents to commit to any 1 kilometer of activity by signing up for a statewide initiative called 1K For 1Kid. To encourage participation, Dungy, who also is a foster and adoptive father, offered to set up a private Zoom call for the organization that registered the most people.

The prize went to CCKids, which gifted the call to its foster families as a thank you for service.

“We were determined to win on their behalf because Coach Dungy is such an important figure in foster-care and adoption community.”

Of the 290 people who registered for the event, 26 percent signed up from Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee or St. Lucie counties. Many of them came to #CCKThePark, a special event set up for local registrants to complete their 1K of activity.

# CCKids led the state in 1KFor1Kid



# 2021 Highlights



CCKids families were invited to attend free shoe events hosted by the St. Lucie County Fire Rescue/Lil' Feet project. In 2021, 96 children were served at two separate events. Plans are underway make the events quarterly in 2022.



Anthony Dosio, a CCKids youth and recent graduate of Vero Beach High School, received the inaugural Alice Gaskill Memorial Scholarship from the Exchange Club of the Treasure Coast in the spring.



PGA Village Knit Wits hosted a drive-through event to collect diapers and other baby items.



We hosted a drive-through manicure event to highlight child abuse prevention efforts.



Businesses, social groups and community leaders celebrated the 187 families reunified in 2021 with a “Moment of Cheer”.



CCKids supported local efforts to bring the Children’s Advocacy Center to the area. The CAC is posed to open February 2022.



More than 2,000 children received toys through the joint CCKids and Guardians for New Futures gift drive.



# 2021 Achievements



## Safety—

Retained 100% of case management supervisors in St. Lucie County, helping to meet the needs of children and families despite the challenges of COVID, case-manager turnover, and increasing performance expectations.

Diverted 39 children from coming into care thanks to the Keeping Families Connected program. KFC draws from the strengths of the various important people in a child's life—from parents and extended family to neighbors and teachers — to create a safety plan that allows them to stay safely at home.

Initiated several special projects designed to inform the community of the specific strengths and needs of the system to ensure constant growth, accountability and greater well-being.

Trained staff on a range of child welfare issues, including Managing Compassion Fatigue, Intimate Partner Violence, and Cultural Competency, resulting in a better educated, stronger workforce.

## Permanency —

Licensed 97 Level I—relative — foster homes and expanded health-care and academic services to 41 youth placed in those homes.

Implemented “comfort calls” to parents immediately after their child has been removed. The Florida project was designed to ensure better transitions for children through a parent/caregiver partnership called co-parenting.

Established the Topaz Award to recognize local foster parents for going above and beyond. Matt and Jenny Deyarmond, pictured left, became the first caregivers to receive the award.

## Well-Being —

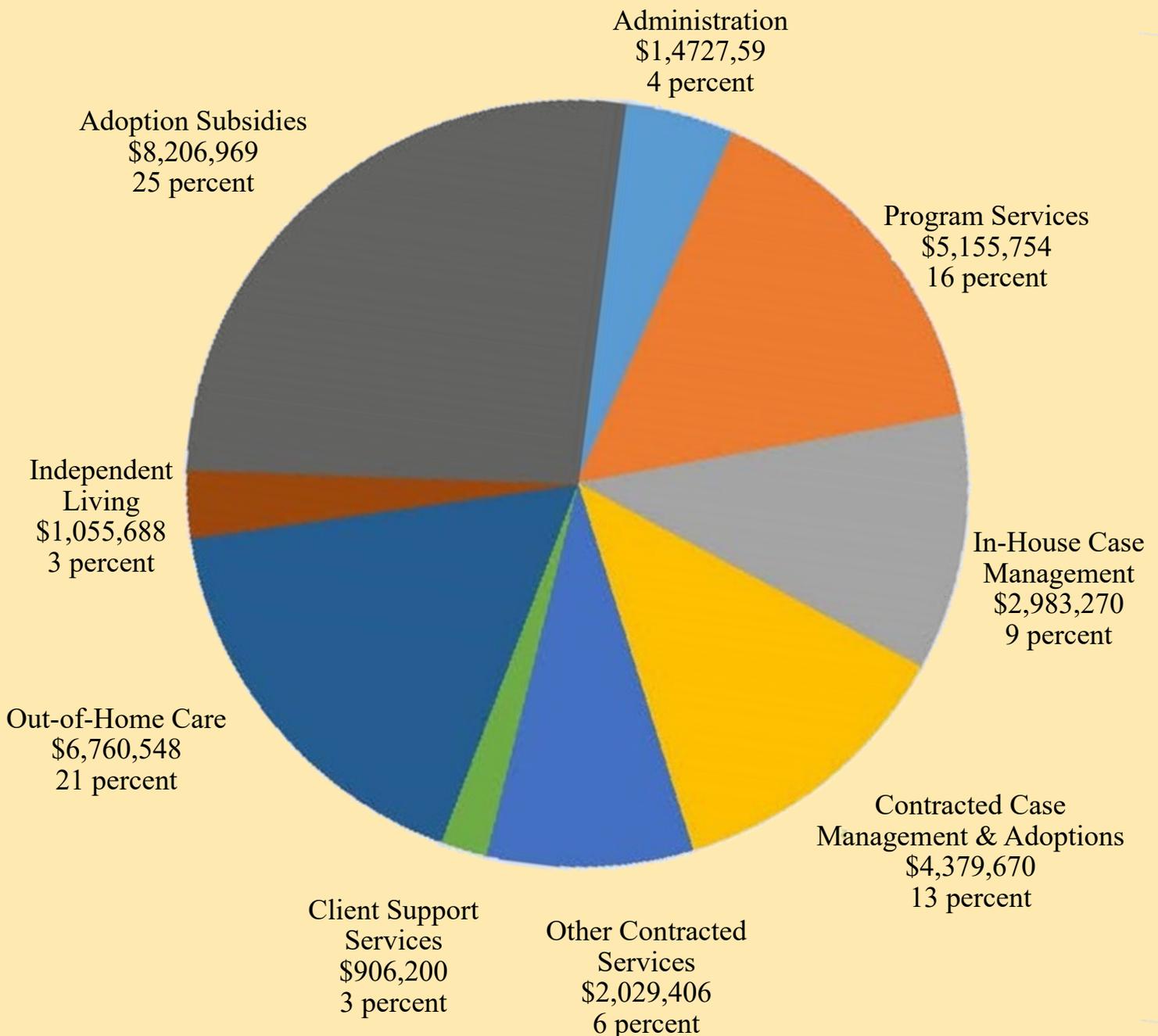
Increased number of children living with relatives by 3%, and increased supports for those families.

Co-hosted a virtual behavioral health fair to ensure knowledge and access to local resources and open communication among the local provider network.

Submitted 37 requests through Care-Portal for everything from bunkbeds to daycare assistance. About 70 percent of those requests were fulfilled by local churches, helping to stabilize families and, in many cases, keeping children with their families.

# Financial Report

## Communities Connected for Kids—FY 2021



*This table and the pie chart on the preceding page represent income and expenses for FY2021, which ran from July 2020 through June 2021.*

**INCOME**

DCF **\$33,416,599**

Other

*TOTAL INCOME* **\$32,950,264**

**EXPENSES**

Administration \$1,472,759

Program Services \$5,155,754

In-House Case Management \$2,983,270

Contracted Case Management \$4,379,670

Other Contracted Services \$2,029,406

Client Support Services \$906,200

Out-of-Home Care \$6,760,548

Independent Living \$1,055,688

Adoption Subsidies \$8,206,969

*TOTAL EXPENSES* **\$32,950,264**

Net Surplus **\$466,335**

# Our Provider Network



CCKids' system of care is only as strong as the providers and partners who deliver its services. We subcontract with the agencies listed on the next page to deliver a wide variety of services that meet the needs of the community's most vulnerable children and their caregivers. Additionally, we work with another 50 plus

## **Adoptions**

Children's Home Society

## **Behavioral & Psychological**

Shanlis

Suncoast Mental Health

## **Case Management**

Children's Home Society

## **Counseling Services**

ADAP Counseling

## **Family Support**

Behavior Basics

Camelot Community Care

Hibiscus

Boys Town South Florida

## **Translation Services**

Translations USA

## **Foster Homes**

4Kids of the Treasure Coast

Camelot Community Care

Real Life Children's Ranch

Education Advantage

Cayuga

## **Safety Management**

Neighbor to Family

## **Residential, Shelter & Group**

2 Welcoming Arms

Hibiscus Children's Center



# Thank you!



Newborn -18 mo.  
Female



Dear Foster Care Friends: The It's My Very Own Team of the Midport Seventh-day Adventist Church appreciate you so much for the care you take with our children in need. These Bags of Love are intended to give the first night of the child's transition into new and strange surroundings a little more comfort and security. Please return them by mail so we can replenish the age and gender as

*The following is a record of contributions made from  
July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021:*

**Financial  
Donations:**

**\$10,000-\$5,000**

The Foster a Dream  
Foundation

**\$4,999-\$1,000**

The Selfless Love  
Foundation

**Up to \$999**

Melinda Jones  
Norsworthy Living Trust  
Ivan & Nancy Somers  
John & Janet Wright  
Auer Family Trust  
Joyce Santamaria & Renee  
Dodson  
Betty Grasso  
Ildiko Insurance  
Dymphna H. Friend  
Tammy Eiseman  
The Knit-Wits

Barbera Norcia  
Barbara Lioi

**In-Kind  
Donations:**

Acentria Insurance  
Amanda Steadman  
Angela Boling  
Berry Fresh Café  
Boys & Girls Club of SLC  
Clarke Inst. for Learning  
First Presbyterian Church PSL  
First United Methodist  
Florida Highway Patrol  
GFNF4Kids  
Hometown News  
It's My Very Own  
Kappa Kappa Iota  
La Buona Vita  
Lakes of Tradition  
Lil' Feet/SLC Fire Rescue  
Olive Garden, Tradition  
PSL Centennial High School  
PSL High School JROTC  
Pursuit Boats

Retired Educators SLC  
Sparemakers Bowling League  
St. Andrews Episcopal  
St. Andrews Episcopal Acad.  
St. Andrews Lutheran  
St. Lucie Gardens  
Steele Shears Salon  
Sungrove Montessori  
TC Builders Association  
The Grove Church  
The Knit Wits  
Translations USA  
Tropicana  
United Way of SLC  
Unity of Fort Pierce  
Wendy Zuniga



Communities  
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**Safety. Permanency.  
Well-Being.**

To learn more about CCKids  
visit us at [www.cckids.net](http://www.cckids.net)  
and follow us on Facebook,  
Twitter and Instagram.