



Connections - January 6, 2022



New Year, New Needs



The following is a column by Kurt Kelly, CEO of the Florida Coalition for Children. The FCC is a Tallahassee-based statewide advocacy organization that represents the community-based care agencies and service providers that administer child-welfare services in Florida. CCKids is among the organization's member agencies.

Florida is in the midst of an avoidable catastrophe that is hurting our at-risk children. Case managers, who are trained to help at-risk families and children navigate what can be a

difficult and confusing child-welfare system, are quitting the profession at an alarming rate, leaving children with fewer focused advocates for their needs in a time of crisis. The ever-changing faces of those tasked to help them only worsens what can be a terrifying experience for families and children.

Case managers help children and families in complex and stressful environments. Their profession requires appropriate and effective training and a specialized set of intellectual and behavioral skills that improve with professional experience. People who choose case management as a profession do so because of an intense desire and ability to help those who need it most in their communities.

At-risk children and families benefit with improved results from a stable case management workforce. Unfortunately, very high case manager attrition rates are negatively affecting the ability to properly and effectively provide necessary services.

For more than 20 years, case manager attrition has been a growing problem throughout the country. In Florida, attrition generally occurs in the first three years of employment, with the average tenure being two years. Some of Florida's lead child-welfare agencies throughout the state are currently reporting staggering turnover rates higher than 50 percent.

Why do case managers leave a profession they love? Higher paying and less stressful jobs can be found elsewhere. The small workforce creates a high caseload and long work hours in what is already an intense profession. Many are avoiding burnout by seeking a better work/life balance elsewhere, especially during the "Great Resignation" that is happening post-COVID.

Florida case managers' salaries are not competitive to those in other states and comparable professions. Florida is having trouble attracting candidates to the profession as it offers a significantly lower average statewide starting salary of \$37,064. The average case manager starting salary from seven comparison states is \$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 \$57,600 in Florida.

The Florida Coalition for Children is urging the state Legislature to increase its yearly investment in case managers and other critical child welfare positions by \$40 million to be spread throughout the state. With increased case manager funding, awareness of the case manager profession will be increased to potential high-quality candidates.

Recruitment and hiring practices will become more selective, strategic and effective. Pay will become comparable to those in other community service-related fields. Case workers will have increased incentives to continue as salaries increase.

A more positive organizational and work climate will grow. Case workload will also become more manageable leading to better outcomes for the children, families and communities that are served.

Please consider sending an email of support to your legislator:

[Sen. Gayle Harrell](#)

[Sen. Debbie Mayfield](#)

[Rep. Toby Overdorf](#)

[Rep. Kaylee Tuck](#)

[Rep. Dana Trabulsy](#)

[Rep. John Snyder](#)

[Rep. Erin Grall](#)

Get Healthy in 2022 - In This Week's, *In the Clinic*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN
CCKids Nurse Care Coordinator

COVID restrictions, social distancing and grab-and-go food are all impacting what, for Americans, has always been a significant struggle to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Good nutrition and increased activity are part of that struggle.

It's long been known that active people live longer, feel, function and sleep better, and are at a decreased risk for serious health issues. Activity combined with healthy eating habits—more fruits and veggies — can greatly improve your life in many areas.

So, where do you start? Speak to your primary care physician or your child's pediatrician. They may have programs that they run or can refer you to ones locally that have been successful. You can also call your insurance company; many insurers offer health management programs.

You don't have time, right? ! I get it! Here are some tips that can help you on your journey:

- Schedule activity in to your day. Find the time of day you have the most energy and block out a 15-minute timeframe.
- Enlist a friend. Having someone to do the activity with makes it more fun and holds you both accountable.
- Choose an activity that you like. You don't need a gym membership or fancy clothes to get started. Just get up and dance through that next commercial or go for a walk in your neighborhood.
- Keep cut veggies and washed fruit out on the counter so that bag of chips in the pantry is less tempting.



- Drink water! Sodas and fruit drinks add a lot of sugar to your day.

If you're a CCKids caregiver, the [Sunshine Child Welfare Specialty Insurance Plan](#) also has benefits that are available to help:

- 1) The Care Grant provides up to \$150 dollars per calendar year per child for services or supplies for social use or physical activities. Contact your Dependency Case Manager for this benefit.
- 2) The Weight Loss Health Coaching Session Program allows you to earn up to \$20 on your My Healthy Rewards Card when you sign up children ages 10 and older.

Contact Sunshine CWSP Member Services at (855) 463-4100 or give me a call at (772) 873-7800 for other resources/articles available.



Road to Success and program staff, like Margie Dotson, pictured above center, provides teens and young adults in foster care the chance to travel and advocate for their own rights and opportunities.

Teens Find Steadfast Champion

Foster a Dream Foundation Awards \$10,000 for 2022

A program that prepares teens and young adults for life after foster care received a jolt of support for the New Year, after the [Kathryn A. Basile Foster a Dream Foundation](#) awarded Communities Connected for Kids a \$10,000 grant.

The award allows CCKids' [Road to Success](#) program - which prepares teens for

life after foster care - to expand and provide opportunities otherwise unavailable.

Awarded every winter since 2010, the grant funds high-school graduation expenses, pays for computers and laptops for young people heading to college and even allows those same students to travel to different campuses or to advocate in Tallahassee for the rights of children in care.

Kathryn A. Basile was the longtime director of the Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County. She believed that any child in foster care could find success with the right support.

Since the foundation was created in 2010, Foster a Dream has contributed more than \$90,000 and helped more than 150 young people in foster care.
