

from the *Heart*



Council Members

Judith J. Weber
Council Chair

Elmira R. Gainey
Vice-Chair

Cheri Sheffer
Treasurer

Hon. Sherwood Bauer, Jr.

Michael Busha

Anthony D. George, Jr.

Nancy Kline

Robert Ranieri

Doug Smith

The Need:

Freeing Children from Abuse and Neglect



A shrine of white flags with the names and ages of children who died in Florida last year, CASTLE's Memorial Field in February highlighted the 155 children who suffered unnecessarily due to abuse or neglect.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, but the issue of child abuse and neglect is always a priority for the Children's Services Council of Martin County. Locally, we have fewer cases of verified abuse and neglect than state averages, but our cases are increasing—both in number of cases as well as severity. Experts connect this troubling trend to the economy and prescription drug abuse, along with many other factors. The Council funds a variety of programs to address this problem, and we are working hard to keep Martin County below state averages. Last year, 155 children died in Florida due to abuse and neglect. Working together, we can prevent these unnecessary tragedies.

The Response:

Targeted Programs

CASTLE's programs teach parents safe, nurturing parenting skills while providing safe spaces for relationship-building for families at risk or already with a history of abuse. Using evidence-based lessons based on the age of the child, the Safe Families program provides weekly in-home training for parents so they are confident and comfortable handling everything from toilet-training to excessive crying. The goal of the program is keeping families together and stable. The Valued Visits program offers safe space for parents with a history of abuse to participate in a court-ordered visit. Their child is in a supervised facility while maintaining separation from the other parent (when there is a history of domestic abuse). This works to break the cycle of abuse while teaching new skills for loving parents.



Valued Visits and Safe Families

The Children's Services Council of Martin County is an independent district, approved by voters by referendum in 1988, to enhance the lives of the children of Martin County and to enable them to attain their full potential by supporting 34 impactful programs for youth in our community. Learn more about your agency at: www.cscmc.org and www.facebook.com/cscmc.

The Response: **Targeted Programs**



**Helping
People
Succeed**

Helping People Succeed:
Healthy Families

Helping People Succeed's Healthy Families program works to prevent child abuse and neglect by targeting at-risk families with voluntary in-home visits starting prenatally. This comprehensive, nationally accredited education program teaches expectant parents and parents of newborns experiencing stress the best methods to improve outcomes in children and increase family self-sufficiency through empowerment. HPS Family Support Workers collaborate effectively with other agencies, such as Martin County Healthy Start Coalition, for referrals and to avoid duplication of services.

The Father & Child Resource Center, a division of Martin County Healthy Start Coalition, works to educate fathers about healthy parenting practices and methods for positive involvement in the lives of their children. They also provide responsible parenting classes for high school students, as well as provide legal help and paternity acknowledgement for fathers to help them connect or reconnect with their children.

Martin County Healthy Start:
Father & Child Resource Center



A culture of support:

Many of the programs funded by the Council work to reduce child abuse through monitoring the physical and emotional health of children and teens by trained childcare professionals and school nurses, providing resources to parents to reduce stressors and develop a foundation of support for families to encourage strong, stable and nurturing environments. These programs include:

Dunbar Child Care Center:

Early Head Start

Early Learning Coalition:

Subsidized Child Care

Easter Seals:

Early Steps

Whole Child Connection:

www.connectingmartinkids.com

2-1-1 of the Treasure Coast: (call) 2-1-1



Early Learning Coalition
Of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties, Inc.



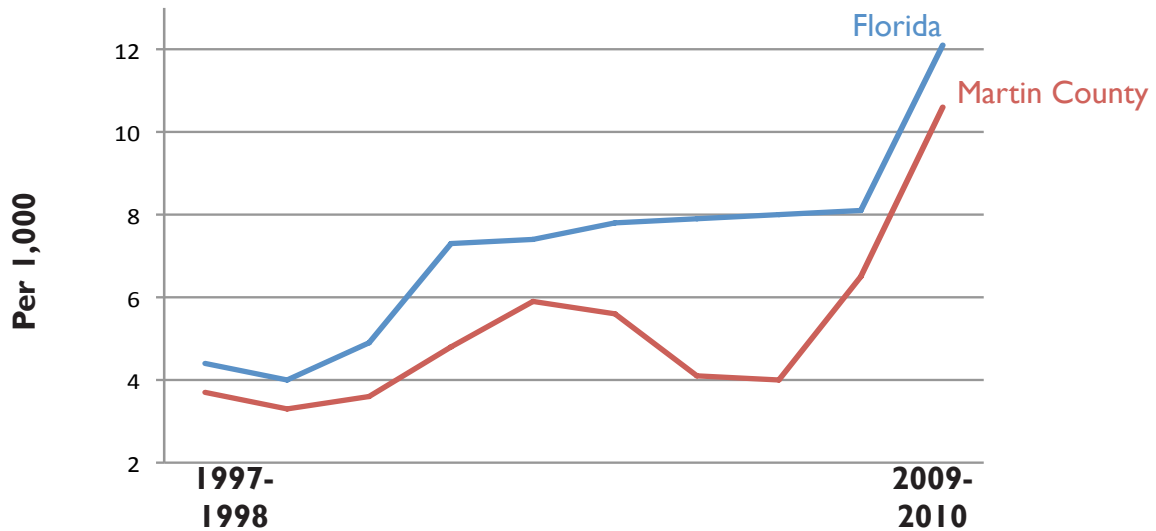
Learn more
about these
programs at
www.cscmc.org.



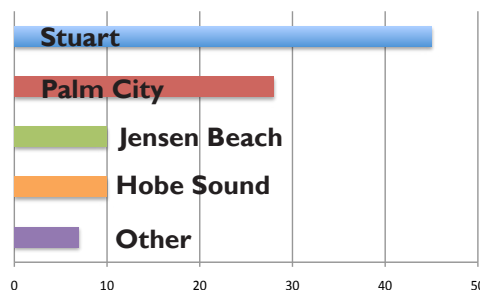
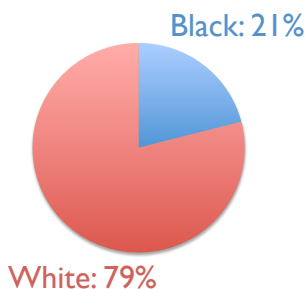
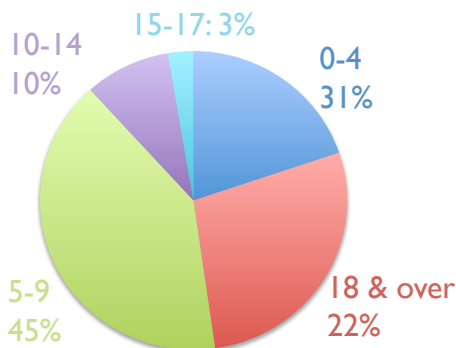
The Impact:

Caring for Children

Martin County continues to have fewer cases of verified abuse and neglect than overall in Florida, but the trend is troubling. Experts believe that there are at least four times more cases than those verified by the Florida Department of Children and Families.



A diversity of children and families are helped by CASTLE's Valued Visits program:



100%

of families who participated in CASTLE's Safe Families program did not have a report of abuse for up to one year after completing the program in 2010-2011.

All of the staff we fund through grant requests are required to have a **Level 2 Background Check** by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. This adds a level of **protection** for our community's children who attend summer camps, childcare facilities and other programs.

Success: Functioning Families

Success story Just turning 2, Johnny* was going through a difficult stage, having frequent outbursts, meltdowns and temper tantrums. His father wanted to use physical punishment as a discipline technique, because that was how he was raised and how his friends disciplined their children. A Family Support Worker with Helping People Succeed learned that the father thought his wife was being "soft" for trying positive discipline methods, so he hits and spansks their son. The worker acknowledged that this can be a scary time for parents, but it's also often a lonely and scary time for toddlers as well. She explained what they could expect from their son at his age—understanding normal stages of development makes dealing with trying times easier. They talked about discipline versus punishment, and the Family Support Worker helped the father explore whether he wanted his son to be afraid of him or if he wanted his son to learn that he is loved, safe and important. Johnny's father told her that no one had ever taught him this. He was thankful and said he would try this positive discipline approach. After a few weeks, the worker received a phone call from the mother expressing how grateful she was because her husband was using these techniques. As a result, Johnny's behavior was improving. The father admitted he didn't think it would work, but now he is very proud and pleased that he has helped decrease his son's temper tantrums. They are all much happier. While it's still a work in progress, it is a great beginning of a far more positive approach that will pay off for Johnny and the whole family in the long run!

* Name changed to protect privacy

Events & Meetings

April 27: State of the Child Symposium (**invitation only**)

May 2: Student Art Exhibit Opening
Public welcome to meet the artists and tour our facilities from 4:30-6:30 p.m.!

May 11: Training for funded agencies on child abuse prevention by Guardians for New Futures, Inc.

This Summer: SPLASH free swimming lesson vouchers will be available. (Stay tuned to learn more!)

Want to schedule a free Lunch and Learn for your club or homeowner's association? Contact Suzanne Wentley at swentley@csmc.org!

Council News



Public Education Coordinator Suzanne Wentley read Dr. Seuss to the Jensen Beach Community Church Pre-K as part of the Library System's effort to encourage reading every day. Many Council-funded programs focus on reading on grade level by the 3rd grade.

Contact Us

Children's Services Council of Martin County
101 S.E. Central Parkway
Stuart, FL 34994
(772) 288-5758 • www.csmc.org