
Section 2.

4.c Snapshot of Florida Network of Youth and Family Services

This is a brief description of the Florida model, designed to provide basic information about the legal and structural framework of the system, a description of the process FINS youth go through, and some key pieces of data regarding youth served and their outcomes. The following are a few key pieces of information this snapshot presents:

Structure and Process:

- While responsibility for managing CINS/FINS services comes under the purview of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), all services provided to this population are privatized. More specifically, DJJ contracts with the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services (the Network) to provide oversight of the CINS/FINS programs and services.
- The Network is a not-for-profit statewide association representing community-based agencies that serve homeless, runaway and troubled juveniles and their families. The Network is composed of 27 agencies in 34 sites across the state, largely organized by judicial district. Participating agencies are the primary providers of services to the CINS/FINS population. Through Network providers, residential and non-residential services are available 24-hours a day and seven days a week. Children and families with an existing investigation into abuse, open delinquency referral, or current supervision by DJJ are not eligible for CINS/FINS services.
- A family referred to FINS services is immediately met by a crisis intervention specialist at a participating youth shelter and offered an assessment. The Network functions, in some respects, like triage in a hospital emergency room. Depending on the presenting needs and issues, participating providers can offer runaway and crisis shelter beds, non-residential service options for youth, outpatient services for families, and referrals to case and court management services.
- The Florida Network is committed to the philosophy that to the extent possible, all CINS/FINS cases should be diverted from court and referred to community-based services. Nonetheless, when service plans and FINS interventions are insufficient to address the underlying behavioral concerns, youth may be petitioned to court as CINS.

Data:

- Between January 1 and August 11, 2007, a total of 17,356 FINS cases had been served by the Network statewide; of those, only 6 percent (1,076) were petitioned to court as CINS.
- Of the children and families screened, a total of 14,170 eligible children and families received CINS/FINS services through the Florida Network in fiscal year 2006-2007.
- The Network had highly positive client and program outcomes in the last fiscal year: 94 percent of youth referred to residential and nonresidential services did not commit a crime while enrolled in their programs; and 86 percent of youth successfully completed their programs.

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- The Network also tracks clients for 6 months following program exit: 89 percent of youth had no adjudications during this time period. In addition, of the 12,742 youth who successfully completed their programs and were living with parents or relatives when services began, 88 percent of children returned to live with family, relatives or another parent.

A Snapshot of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services

In Florida, status offenders are called children in need of services (CINS) and families in need of services (FINS). CINS are persons under the age of 18 who are found by the court to exhibit behaviors such as running away, truancy, or ungovernability and who are neither delinquent nor dependent. FINS are families which include a child who fits the CINS criteria; FINS is not an adjudicated status. Youth who meet the CINS criteria are eligible for judicial intervention only following an attempt to engage and serve the youth and their family in the community as FINS.

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The standard procedure for CINS/FINS youth begins with a referral to a Network provider. Referrals typically come from law enforcement, parents, or school staff. A family referred to FINS services is immediately met by a crisis intervention specialist at a participating youth shelter and offered an assessment. The Network functions, in some respects, like triage in a hospital emergency room. Depending on the presenting needs and issues, participating providers can offer runaway and crisis shelter beds, non-residential service options for youth, outpatient services for families, and referrals to case and court management services.

The Florida Network is committed to the philosophy that to the extent possible, all CINS/FINS cases should be diverted from court and referred to community-based services. Nonetheless, when service plans and FINS interventions are insufficient to address the underlying behavioral concerns, youth may be petitioned to court as CINS.

Once a CINS case has been brought to court, judges may order participation in treatment and services as well as placement for up to 90 days in a staff-secure shelter. State law permits placing CINS in physically-secure facilities for violating valid court orders. Under the state's innovative structure, few youth and families actually require court involvement. The most recent data we have on this point is from earlier this year. Between January 1 and August 11, 2007, a total of 17,356 FINS cases had been served by the Network statewide; of those, only 6 percent (1,076) were petitioned to court as CINS.

The Florida Network relies heavily on data collection to measure outcomes and meet goals. In the contract year 2006-2007, the Network completed 31,647 screenings of children and families, offered

services in both non-residential and residential settings, and compiled important data from these clients. Some data highlights follow:

- Of the children and families screened, a total of 14,170 eligible children and families received CINS/FINS services through the Florida Network in fiscal year 2006-2007.
- The 15-year-old age group was the highest represented in the client population. The majority of clients were between the ages of 14 and 17, and 94 percent of the youth served were between the ages of 10 and 17 years old.
- Clients were split down the middle by gender, with girls and boys each respectively comprising 50 percent of the group.
- Regarding race, 53 percent of the Network's clients were white, 37 percent were black, and 10 percent were other or unknown. Client breakdown by ethnicity shows that 16 percent were Latino, or "Hispanic."
- The Network had highly positive client and program outcomes in the last fiscal year: 94 percent of youth referred to residential and nonresidential services did not commit a crime while enrolled in their programs; and 86 percent of youth successfully completed their programs.
- The Network also tracks clients for 6 months following program exit: 89 percent of youth had no adjudications during this time period. In addition, of the 12,742 youth who successfully completed their programs and were living with parents or relatives when services began, 88 percent of children returned to live with family, relatives or another parent.