

**FLORIDA FOSTER CARE REVIEW** is a non-profit organization that has operated the Citizen Review Panel Program in Miami-Dade County for over 25 years. The **CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL PROGRAM**, authorized by Florida Statutes 39.701 and 39.702, engages community volunteers who conduct hearings to review the cases of children in foster care. The review hearings fulfill the statutory requirement that children in foster care have a judicial review at least every six months. Judges may refer cases to the Citizen Review Panel at their discretion. At the conclusion of each review hearing, a comprehensive set of recommended findings for each child is submitted to the judge. These become binding court orders that directly impact the safety, well-being and permanency of individual children and youth in foster care.

Florida Foster Care Review's Citizen Review Panel (CRP) conducted **462 case reviews in FY 2013-2014**, resulting in **1,774 judicial orders**. Through the collection of aggregate data, the process also serves as a critical system check on behalf of children and youth in order to promote safety, support transitioning foster youth and young adults, and maximize limited resources. *Through a volunteer-based approach, the CRP Program...*

#### **PROMOTES THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

- ✓ The panel asks pointed questions to children/youth, case managers and foster parents/relative caregivers to determine whether the child is living in a safe and appropriate home.
- ✓ The panel scours through extensive documentation to identify inconsistencies in the paperwork and inadequacies in the home environment that create safety threats or risk of harm.
- ✓ Many panelists have received training about human trafficking and are able to identify red flags.

#### **SUPPORTS YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS LEAVING FOSTER CARE**

- ✓ Knowing that youth who "age out" of foster care face a range of daunting challenges, the CRP works to advance permanent, lifelong adult connections for older youth in care.
- ✓ The panel supports the Quality Parenting Initiative by determining whether foster parents are meeting the quality standards, including actively teaching foster youth independent living skills.
- ✓ The CRP combs through each Transition Plan, inquiring about the youth's involvement in its development and how the plan is being implemented.
- ✓ The CRP reviews the cases of young adults opting for Extended Foster Care to ensure that they are receiving ongoing support services, and not just a check.

#### **MAXIMIZES LIMITED RESOURCES ON BEHALF OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

- ✓ Oversight and quality assurance of the child welfare system is a complex and costly process; the Citizen Review Panel Program leverages limited resources by engaging volunteers.
- ✓ In FY 2013-2014, volunteers contributed 3,500 hours for a total of \$200K in 'time philanthropy.'
- ✓ Volunteers also bring unique perspectives, connections and resources to support the Citizen Review Panel Program and the children and youth they serve.

In addition to the CRP, Florida Foster Care Review engages in a number of initiatives designed to address specific challenges or engage the community. Among these is the new Permanency Roundtable Program, a strength-based, inclusive effort that we administer in conjunction with OurKids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. The program is focused exclusively on setting young people up with the supportive family that each of us needs to succeed in life. Since its launch on July 1, 2014, the program has served 19 children. Six children have achieved permanency to date. Please visit our website for more information on this and other exciting new initiatives. Thank you!