

# CARING FOR **FLORIDA FAMILIES**



# GOVERNOR SCOTT IS WORKING HARD FOR FLORIDA'S FAMILIES, AND WON'T REST WHILE THERE IS MORE TO BE DONE ...

As a father and grandfather, Governor Scott believes Florida has no higher priority than providing for the care and safety of families. Since taking office in 2011, Governor Scott has led efforts to make Florida more effective at providing for the care and protection of its youth. He focused his efforts on reforming agencies and programs that address children's needs – insisting on greater accountability, frequent evaluations and measurable outcomes.

Maintaining the status quo was not an acceptable option to Governor Scott. During his time in office, Governor Scott dedicated significant resources to provide more opportunities for early learning – knowing it would be a positive investment for Florida's future. He reformed government agencies to provide needed care and a positive outlook for those with disabilities. He implemented common-sense solutions to increase the quality of life for those in foster care. He allocated more critical resources allowing better safety measures to protect children facing harmful situations at home.

## INVEST IN EARLY LEARNING AND SCHOOL READINESS

*"Making sure that every child has the opportunity to achieve his or her fullest potential is essential to Florida having a bright future. And, that all begins with high-quality early learning and caring, knowledgeable parents. I'm encouraged by the Governor's eagerness to make both quality and access in early learning – as well as resources available for parents through the Help Me Grow initiative – a priority in his campaign." – Dave Lawrence, Chair, The Children's Movement of Florida*

Governor Scott believes that investing in early learning programs is the best method to enhance a child's future success and to lift families out of poverty. In his first term, Governor Scott successfully pushed for the **first funding increase** for early childhood education in the last ten years. Florida families are getting back to work and their children are developing critical skills.

In order to ensure a quality education for Florida's children, Governor Scott championed early learning and voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, resulting in improved quality, greater transparency and more accountability. By the end of the Governor's first year in office, 72 percent of Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs met the state's increased standards up from 68 percent in the prior year.

# 1

## GREATER ACCESS

Governor Scott plans to significantly reduce the waitlist and provide more Florida children with access to early learning and school readiness programs. Governor Scott recognizes that meaningful early learning programs are the best method for children to achieve future success. It is also a way for families to escape the cycle of poverty.

*"In the last 4 years, Rick Scott has raised the awareness of the importance of quality early learning. The governor has visited early learning centers across the state, and as a result seen the necessity for high quality programming and additional funding." – Toni Crawford, Past Chair, Duval County Early Learning Coalition*

# 2

## "HELP ME GROW" PARENT HOTLINE

Every parent wants what is best for their children and strives to give their children the best care possible. Governor Scott will work to ensure parents are aware of the resources available to them by fully implementing the "Help Me Grow" program that provides parents with answers to every question they may have regarding the health development of their child. The "Help Me Grow" hotline provides the answers for all question ranging from health, food safety – to coping and connecting parents to services for children with learning disabilities.



# 3

## INCENTIVIZE HIGH QUALITY

Many school readiness and VPK providers in the state are important small businesses that provide early learning services for parents and students - and job opportunities for instructors. Governor Scott is dedicated to improving the quality of education these small businesses provide, by establishing a system of incentives and assessments for instructors. Florida parents should never have to worry about the quality of instruction provided to their children. Providing financial incentives to instructors and providers to obtain further training and education will encourage a better quality education for all Florida children.

## MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

*"The continued attention Governor Scott has given to the APD wait list has given Florida families hope. There have been dramatic and positive changes in the lives of those on the long term wait list; they are now receiving critical services and support that enhances their quality of life and increases opportunities for them in their communities. Governor Scott's efforts are working, and I look forward to seeing continued positive results."*

*– Betty Kay Clements, Past Chair,  
Family Care Council Florida*



## RECORD INVESTMENTS FOR APD

When Governor Scott pledged to create more opportunities for Floridians – he meant ALL Floridians.

Upon taking office, he inherited an Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) that was severely in debt and in danger of running out of funds. Governor Scott reformed the agency to improve access to care while bringing it out of a financial deficit for the first time since its inception. Under Governor Scott's leadership, APD revamped services people with disabilities received so the emphasis was aligned to their needs.

As a result of the Governor's leadership, APD was able to eliminate the critical needs waitlist and provide necessary care. Those with a critical need no longer had to wonder if they would ever receive home-based care. Florida also became the first state in the nation to guarantee disabled children of Florida's active duty servicemembers waiver services from another state. These children will continue to receive priority care while their parents are deployed in Florida.

Governor Scott wants every person to reach his or her full potential, regardless of the challenges they face. This is why he is committed to improving the way the state assists those with disabilities. Governor Scott established a commission with the mission of recommending policies that help Floridians with disabilities find a job. By implementing the commission's recommendations and providing necessary resources, the state will be able to connect employers to students with disabilities.

Governor Scott also expanded parental rights by allowing parents to choose the right specialist for their child and the course of learning that best meets their child's needs. This year, he signed SB 850 which eliminated the "special diploma," and allowed children with disabilities to earn the same diploma as their classmates. Governor Scott supports efforts to ensure teachers are better trained to teach children with disabilities.

## FLORIDA IS THE FIRST STATE TO GUARANTEE DISABLED CHILDREN OF FLORIDA'S ACTIVE DUTY SERVICEMEMBERS WAIVER SERVICES FROM ANOTHER STATE.



Created Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts that reimburse families up to \$9,000



Expanded Parental Rights, Allowing Parents to Determine the Correct Specialist for Their Child



Brought APD Out of a Deficit for the First Time in Agency History



Eliminated the Critical Needs Waitlist and Provided Necessary Care

Governor Scott is providing life-changing benefits to families by creating “personal learning scholarship accounts.” These accounts reimburse families up to \$9,000 for the cost of tuition, therapy, and tutoring. The accounts are flexible and can be rolled over into future years so families can plan for a college or other advanced education – an opportunity many of these children previously thought was out of reach.

## 1 INCREASE ACCESS AND FUNDING FOR PERSONAL LEARNING SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

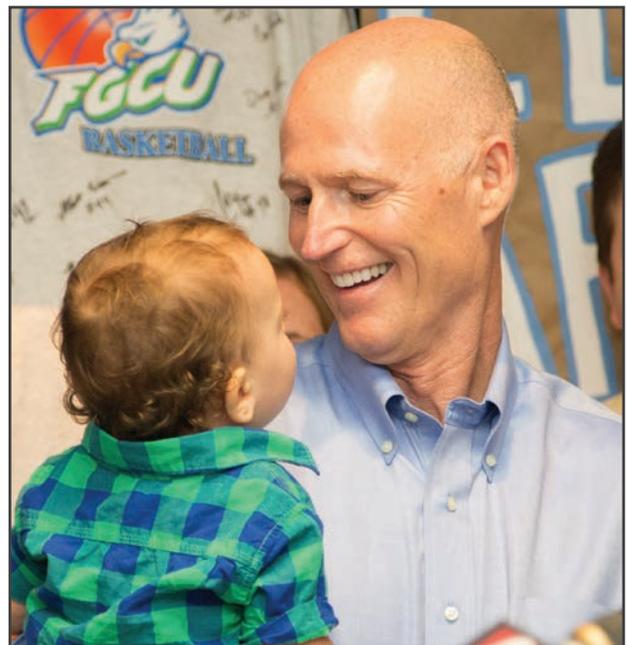
Governor Scott will push for more funding and access for these life-changing accounts, giving families more control and greater comfort in knowing their children will have the resources they need to lead a productive life.

## 2 GREATER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Governor Scott will partner with the private sector to promote and expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This partnership will educate employers of the potential employability and skillsets these individuals possess. Governor Scott will fully implement a centralized point of contact where employers interested in hiring people with disabilities can find potential applicants. This central office will also provide those employers with the resources available to them, which will help ensure the success of those future employees.

## 3 IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE PROVIDERS

Governor Scott will direct state agencies to promote greater efficiencies for caregivers, reduce duplicative training and increase access to care. Currently, when caregivers move to a different employer they often have to go through training or a re-certification process they have previously completed. This adds unnecessary costs and delays. Streamlining the process and establishing certification standards will result in a better quality of care.



## A FAMILY FOR EVERY FLORIDA CHILD

Governor Scott is committed to ensuring children within foster care and adoption communities find safe and loving homes. For children awaiting permanent, stable homes, Governor Scott is implementing a number of commonsense reforms that will “let kids be kids.” These reforms are enabling them to join athletic teams, get a driver’s permit, and go to the beach with friends without unnecessary interference from caseworkers. Additionally, Governor Scott extended foster care eligibility to age 21 to provide youth with more stable living conditions and offer them more time and opportunity to grow in a family setting while receiving benefits and services from the state.



10,000+ 

**SINCE JANUARY 2011, MORE THAN 10,000 CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE HAVE BEEN ADOPTED INTO FOREVER FAMILIES.**

### **1 DESIGNATE AN OMBUDSMAN FOR PARENTS TO ASSIST IN THE PROCESS OF FOSTERING A CHILD.**

Beginning the process of becoming a foster parent can be daunting, especially for new parents. Having a designated person to hear the challenges parents are facing in becoming a foster parent provides a centralized resource to help parents get the answers they need, navigate the system, and teach stakeholders and policymakers what reforms are needed.

### **2 FOCUS ON INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS AND JOB TRAINING FOR FOSTER KIDS WHO AGE-OUT OF THE SYSTEM.**

Unfortunately, many foster children today who age-out of the system are not prepared for higher education and the workforce. Governor Scott will work to improve coordination among state agencies and educational institutions to focus on ensuring these individuals are aware of the various programs available, including two and four year degree programs and technical and industry certifications.

# 3

## INCREASE RESOURCES FOR ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER FAMILIES.

Foster parents often become adoptive parents, so recruiting more foster parents is a successful strategy to finding permanent homes for children. In order to encourage the recruitment of foster parents, Governor Scott will work to increase the number of foster/adoptive parent-and-child support groups and post-adoption counselors, so that families have access to a local network of support.

## BY MEASURING THROUGH THE NEW COMMUNITY-BASED CARE SCORECARD AND OTHER REPORTING, DCF HAS PROMOTED ACCOUNTABILITY AND BETTER OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AND INCREASED THE KEY MEDICAL AND QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN.



The percentage of children who received medical care services within the past 12 months increased from 42% in June 2011 to 98% in May 2014.



The percentage of children who received dental services within the past 6 months increased from 24% in June 2011 to 92% in May 2014.



The percentage of former foster youth ages 19-22 with a diploma or GED increased from 32% in November 2011 to 67% in May 2014.



The percentage of children who received immunizations increased from 56% in June 2011 to 99% in May 2014.

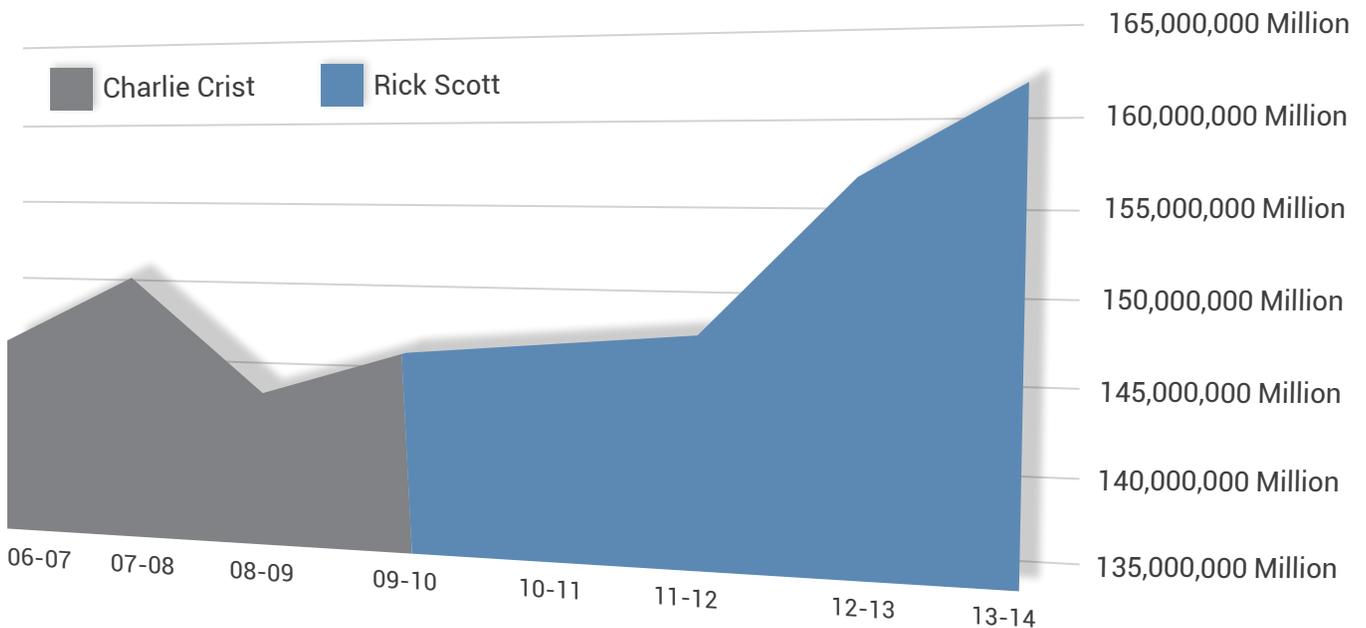
## PROTECTING FLORIDA CHILDREN

270+ 

AN ADDITIONAL 270 FRONT LINE CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATORS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO REDUCE INVESTIGATOR CASELOADS AND INCREASE THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INVESTIGATIONS.

The Scott administration spearheaded a massive transformation within the Florida's Department of Children and Families allowing for better care and protection of the state's youth. Governor Scott provided historic funding to enhance child protection responsiveness, increase the number of child protective investigators (CPI), increase the salaries of CPIs, and implement Florida's first standardized child protection practice model, which improves the decision-making process of child welfare workers. As these increased resources and needed reforms are implemented, they will provide a better approach to ensuring the safety of at-risk children.

### ANNUAL FUNDING FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATORS



# 1 STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE RISK DETECTION METHODS.

Recognizing the importance of protecting at-risk Florida children, Governor Scott significantly increased the number of child protection investigators assigned to protect Florida's vulnerable children. In addition to ensuring Florida's agencies have more resources, Governor Scott's administration implemented newer and more innovative methods (Rapid Safety Feedback, Safety Decision-Making Methodology) to determine child safety in certain regions. With proven success and additional resources, Governor Scott will ensure those best practice methods are implemented statewide.



# 2 BETTER PREDICTING CHILDREN'S NEEDS.

In 2013, Governor Scott allotted funding to the Department of Children and Families to study past years of child fatalities. The results of the study yielded data that helped child protective investigators (CPI) anticipate a need for intervention. Florida became one of the first states to use these analytics for child welfare cases. Governor Scott proposes to expand on the success of this process by further studying and analyzing the factors causing child abuse. The more we know about child abuse, the better we are able to prevent it. With the additional investment in investigators, Governor Scott will be able to support additional supervision for cases with risk factors most frequently associated with child fatalities or severe maltreatment.

# 3 COORDINATING EXPERTS TO PROVIDE MORE SAFETY

In order to provide a seamless approach, Governor Scott will implement a coordinated strategy between child protective and domestic violence professionals. Governor Scott will direct DCF to include at least one domestic violence professional at each child protective investigative unit. Frequently, child abuse and domestic violence co-exist in a home. If CPIs have ready access to a domestic violence counselor, threatened individuals will receive the help they need to stay safe.