

Guide to the Florida Study Commission on Child Welfare papers, 1989-1992

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Biographical Note

In response to the deaths of several children under state care, the Florida legislature formed the Florida Study Commission on Child Welfare in order to examine and make recommended changes to existing child welfare laws and the state's social services and welfare systems. Beginning in 1989 and spanning a two-year period, the Commission primarily was composed of members representing the state's judicial, youth and family services networks. Study Commission members included: · Judge Rosemary Barkett, Commission Chair, Florida Supreme Court · William Bentley, Executive Director, Florida Network for Youth and Family Services (Tallahassee) · Judge William Bankhead, Florida Senate (Jacksonville) · Judge Corrine Brown, Florida House of Representatives (Jacksonville) · Judge Lois Frankel, Florida House of Representatives (West Palm Beach) · Judge Carolyn Fulmer, 10th Judicial Circuit Court (Bartow) · Judge William Gladstone, 11th Judicial Circuit Court (Miami) · Judge James Hill, Florida House of Representatives (Hobe Sound) · Jay Kassack, Children, Youth and Family Services, Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (Tallahassee) · H. Mary McKeown, Esq., Growney, McKeown and Barber (St. Petersburg) · Donald Middlebrooks, Esq., Steel, Hector and Davis (Miami) · Diana Morgan, Walt Disney World (Lake Buena Vista) · Judge Eleanor Weinstock, Florida Senate (West Palm Beach) · Christina Zawisza, Esq., Florida Legal Services Corporation (Miami) · Carole Zegel, State Guardian Ad Litem Program (Gainesville) Additionally, Dr. Christian Giblin (Florida Mental Health Institute, Tampa) served as Commission Staff Director and Dr. Robert Friedman (Florida Mental Health Institute, Tampa) chaired the State -- Local Relationships in the Organization and Financing of Support and Services for Children and Their Families workgroup, which reported to the Commission on such matters as child abuse, prevention and children's rights in foster care. The Study Commission on Child Welfare assessed Florida's foster care system, children's mental health services, and laws pertaining to children in state custody. Commissioners also examined model child welfare programs in other states, speaking with experts and compiling research documents on an array of child welfare and related issues. These materials constitute a large number of resource files originally collected by Dr. Giblin and other members of the Commission. In addition to establishing the Florida Study Commission on Child Welfare in 1989, the Florida legislature also passed the Bradley McGee Act in 1991. Two-year-old Bradley McGee died in 1989, less than three months after being removed from a foster home and placed in the custody of his biological mother, where he suffered tremendous -- and eventually fatal -- abuse. Four social workers involved in McGee's case were charged with failing to report child abuse: three of the four workers were acquitted; one was convicted and placed on probation. In addition to bringing to light Florida's foster care crisis, the Bradley McGee Act also provided funding for 628 new child welfare positions in an effort to regulate pay and reduce high caseloads for the state of Florida's social workers and child protection

investigators. Moreover, this legislation expanded Medicaid eligibility, added to the availability of child care/pre-kindergarten services, and increased family-based therapeutic services for children. At its conclusion, the Commission published the two-part Report of the Study Commission on Child Welfare and A Survey of Florida's Child Protective Investigators. The Report consists of the Commission's recommendations, research and findings; the Survey answers questions related to working conditions, training, duties, in-service development, caseloads, laws and policies and obstacles faced by child protection investigators in Florida. Two copies of the final report issued by the Commission are available in this collection.

Scope Note

Includes the research and working documents of the Florida Study Commission on Child Welfare. Specific items comprising the collection include: Child Protection Investigators survey and related materials; Foster and Shelter Parent survey and related materials; meeting agendas; reports; memoranda and other correspondences; materials generated by subcommittees; and presentations to and by the Commission. Of particular interest are the documents related to former HRS (Health and Rehabilitative Services) Child Protection Investigator Sally Wenstrand, who documented a series of problems within HRS that led to an independent investigation. In addition to the Commission's papers, researchers will note the availability of records from the Florida Governor's Commission for Government by the People. These records are comprised of items from the Frederick Commission, including materials generated by the Human Resources Committee and the Human Investment Committee. Consisting of 27 appointed members representing private industry, the judiciary, state and local government, and community-based organizations, the Frederick Commission worked to develop governmental reforms that would increase cost-effectiveness, accountability and productivity. Dr. Christian Giblin worked with the Frederick Commission to develop strategies for integrating the delivery and planning of education, human services and law enforcement at local levels in Florida. Relatedly, the Human Resources Committee and the Human Investment Committee sought to examine the roles of families, public and private community services (including prevention and early intervention), and community and governmental support for the state's citizens. The Human Investment Committee's reports were reviewed and discussed by members of the Study Commission on Child Welfare as part of its mandate for change.

Arrangement Note: Complete

Arrangement

Complete

Subject Headings

Corporate Names: Florida. Department of Children and Families
Florida. Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Subject Terms: Children

COLLECTION CONTENTS

Series 1 : Commission History

Scope/Content: id340

BOX 1

Scope/Content: id344

BOX 1 BOX 1

FOLDER 1 : Background information

Scope/Content: id345

FOLDER 2 : Meeting materials - January - March, 1990

Scope/Content: id346

FOLDER 3 : Meeting materials - April-June, 1990

Scope/Content: id347

FOLDER 4 : Meeting materials - July-September, 1990

Scope/Content: id348

FOLDER 5 : Meeting materials - November-December, 1990

Scope/Content: id349

FOLDER 6 : Meeting materials - 1991

Scope/Content: id350

BOX 2

Scope/Content: id351

BOX2 BOX2

FOLDER 1 : Correspondence - 1989-1990
Scope/Content: id352

FOLDER 2 : Correspondence - 1992
Scope/Content: id353

FOLDER 3 : Assorted materials
Scope/Content: id363

Series 2 : Child and Family Welfare

Scope/Content: id354

BOX2

Scope/Content: id355

BOX2 BOX2

FOLDER 4 : Juvenile delinquency
Scope/Content: id356

FOLDER 5 : Kids Count (part 1)
Scope/Content: id357

FOLDER 6 : Kids Count (part 2)
Scope/Content: id358

FOLDER 7 : Healthy Start and Healthy Kids
Scope/Content: id359

FOLDER 8 : HRS (Florida Health and Rehabilitative Services)
Scope/Content: id360

FOLDER 9 : HRS Reports (part 1 of 3)
Scope/Content: id361

BOX3

Scope/Content: id364

BOX3 BOX3

FOLDER 1 : HRS Reports (part 2 of 3)
Scope/Content: id365

FOLDER 2 : HRS Reports (part 3 of 3)
Scope/Content: id366

FOLDER 3 : HRS - Wenstrand, Sally
Scope/Content: id367

FOLDER 4 : Child abuse and neglect - Reports
Scope/Content: id368

FOLDER 5 : Child abuse and neglect - Case files
Scope/Content: id369

FOLDER 6 : Assorted materials
Scope/Content: id370

FOLDER 7 : Support networks
Scope/Content: id371

BOX4

Scope/Content: id372

BOX4 BOX4

FOLDER 1 : Children's mental health services (part 1 of 2): Florida Mental Health Institute
Scope/Content: id373

FOLDER 2 : Children's mental health services (part 2 of 2): Other organizations
Scope/Content: id374

FOLDER 3 : Children's health care
Scope/Content: id375

FOLDER 4 : FMHI Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (part 1 of 2)
Scope/Content: id376

FOLDER 5 : FMHI Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (part 2 of 2)
Scope/Content: id377

FOLDER 6 : State services for children (Non-Florida)
Scope/Content: id378

BOX5

Scope/Content: id379

BOX5 BOX5

FOLDER 1 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Development
Scope/Content: id380

FOLDER 2 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Mailing list
Scope/Content: id381

FOLDER 3 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Cover letter
Scope/Content: id382

FOLDER 4 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (001-039)
Scope/Content: id383

FOLDER 5 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (041-080)
Scope/Content: id384

FOLDER 6 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (081-120)
Scope/Content: id385

FOLDER 7 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (121-139)
Scope/Content: id386

BOX6

Scope/Content: id387

BOX6 BOX6

FOLDER 1 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (140-160)
Scope/Content: id388

FOLDER 2 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (161-200)
Scope/Content: id389

FOLDER 3 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Instruments (201-248)
Scope/Content: id390

FOLDER 4 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Alternate survey instrument
Scope/Content: id391

FOLDER 5 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Coding sheets
Scope/Content: id392

FOLDER 6 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Coding manual
Scope/Content: id393

BOX7

Scope/Content: id394

BOX7 BOX7

FOLDER 1 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Results (part 1 of 2)
Scope/Content: id395

FOLDER 2 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Results (part 2 of 2)
Scope/Content: id396

FOLDER 3 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Correspondence

Scope/Content: id397

FOLDER 4 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Position descriptions

Scope/Content: id398

FOLDER 5 : Child Protective Investigator Survey - Related materials

Scope/Content: id433

BOX 8

Scope/Content: id399

BOX 8 BOX 8

FOLDER 1 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Report

Scope/Content: id400

FOLDER 2 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Mailing lists (part 1 of 3)

Scope/Content: id401

FOLDER 3 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Mailing lists (part 2 of 3)

Scope/Content: id402

FOLDER 4 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Mailing lists (part 3 of 3)

Scope/Content: id403

FOLDER 5 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (12-206)

Scope/Content: id404

FOLDER 6 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (207-299)

Scope/Content: id405

BOX 9

Scope/Content: id406

BOX 9 BOX 9

FOLDER 1 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (300-429)

Scope/Content: id407

FOLDER 2 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (430-599)

Scope/Content: id408

FOLDER 3 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (600-799)

Scope/Content: id409

FOLDER 4 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (800-949)

Scope/Content: id410

FOLDER 5 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (950-1096)

Scope/Content: id411

FOLDER 6 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey instruments (surveys without identifying numbers)

Scope/Content: id412

BOX 10

Scope/Content: id413

BOX 10 BOX 10

FOLDER 1 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Blank surveys

Scope/Content: id414

FOLDER 2 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey coding sheets

Scope/Content: id415

FOLDER 3 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Survey coding - Assorted material

Scope/Content: id416

FOLDER 4 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Florida Foster Care Review project

Scope/Content: id417

FOLDER 5 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Assorted materials

Scope/Content: id418

FOLDER 6 : Foster and Shelter Parents Survey - Foster care articles

Scope/Content: id419

FOLDER 7 : FMHI Child and Family Studies Department survey
Scope/Content: id420

Series 3 : Related Documents

Scope/Content: id421

BOX 11

Scope/Content: id422

BOX 11 BOX 11

FOLDER 1 : Florida Governor's Commission for Government by the People - Frederick Commission
Scope/Content: id423

FOLDER 2 : Florida Governor's Commission for Government by the People - Human Investment Committee
Scope/Content: id424

FOLDER 3 : Northside Centers (part 1 of 3)
Scope/Content: id425

FOLDER 4 : Northside Centers (part 2 of 3)
Scope/Content: id426

BOX 12

Scope/Content: id427

BOX 12 BOX 12

FOLDER 1 : Northside Centers (part 3 of 3)
Scope/Content: id428

FOLDER 2 : Friedman, Bob
Scope/Content: id429

FOLDER 3 : Friedman, Bob - Correspondence
Scope/Content: id430

FOLDER 4 : Assorted documents
Scope/Content: id431

FOLDER 5 : Confidential materials - RESTRICTED
Scope/Content: id432

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