Seminole County is comprised of 308 square miles and in 2009 ranked 13th most populous of Florida’s 67 counties. The median household income in 2009 for the county was $56,201.

Our Purpose

The Seminole County System of Care, Families And Communities Together, is a comprehensive effort funded through the federal Children’s Mental Health Initiative to establish an inclusive mental health service system to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. Seminole County was one of nine sites selected nationwide in 2010 by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to enhance its efforts for a six year period.

Mission: Working together to improve the lives of Seminole County’s children, youth and families in their communities.

Vision: Seminole County’s children and youth with mental and behavioral challenges benefit from an effective and enduring system of care that is family driven, youth-guided, trauma-informed, and culturally and linguistically competent.

Population of Focus:

- Children and youth in kindergarten through 8th grade who have a diagnosable mental health disorder, and
- Are enrolled, referred or are at-risk to one of the following:
  - Exceptional Education;
  - Department of Juvenile Justice; or
  - Child Welfare.

Data Matters

It is imperative to know where we are, where we want to go, and is what we are doing getting us there! Families And Communities Together believes that data-driven policy development and program implementation will help guide decisions that impact Seminole County’s children, families and our community. All evaluation activities invest Seminole County’s community members, families and youth, and formal and informal services and support providers with a shared commitment to data informed program outcomes and quality improvements. Data updates will be provided to the community throughout the year, leading to a better understanding of the well-being of our children, youth and families and what we need to do to improve their lives.
In Seminole County in 2009, the population was 423,759 with 98,689 children under the age of 18; making Seminole County rank 11th highest in Florida child population.

While the number of children in Seminole is projected to rise to 113,459 by year 2030, the percent of children will remain relatively stable at 21.6.

Percent of Population Under Age 18

Population Under Age 18 by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2009

Percent of Children Under Age 18 by Relationship to Householder, 2005-2009

There were 938 children under age 19 served by the child protection system in 2009/10; 511 were in out-of-home care for at least one day. In 2008/09, there were 207 children discharged from out-of-home care and 3.4 percent reentered the system within 12 months of exit.

There were 1,322 homeless students identified by the Florida public education system in 2009/10, an increase from 829 in 2005/06.

There were 653 minor children reported as having an incarcerated parent in December 2009. These were identified by self-reports of inmates.
In Seminole County, there were 42,537 persons living in poverty in 2009; of these, 14,687 were under the age of 18. The poverty threshold was $21,756 for a family of two adults and two children in 2009. The number of public school students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program rose by 4,603 students from 2005/06 to 2009/10, a 22 percent increase in number.

**Identifying risk and protection factors of Seminole County children helps coordinate services.**

**Seminole County continually works to improve all services and supports for children, youth and families by building on its strengths…**

Ranks among the lowest counties in Florida in the percent of children living in poverty.

Has higher public high school graduation rates compared to most Florida counties.

Has only 5.1 percent of children living in homes where no parent is in the labor force compared to 7.8 percent for the state.

Public school district continues to be an academically high performing school district with an A rating as designated by the Florida Department of Education.

Leisure Services is nationally recognized and has over 24 parks, over 40 miles of paved trails, and eight wilderness areas encompassing over 6,600 acres.

Citizens contributed almost 400,000 hours of volunteer service.

**And in meeting challenges head on…**

A summary of school-based health data for 2009/10 identified 14,475 students with health conditions by type; the most frequently reported were allergies (5,124), asthma (4,053), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (1,589) and psychiatric issues (514).

Results of the 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey - Seminole County Report showed that 40.5 percent of sampled middle school students reported alcohol or any illicit drug use in their lifetime. Sampled high school students reported 42.1 percent had used alcohol or any illicit drug during the past 30 days.

There were 14 deaths to youths age 10 to 19 in 2009; 5 due to unintentional injuries, 3 suicides and 3 were identified as a homicide.

In 2009, there were 2,244 domestic violence offenses, and 1,351 domestic violence arrests; these were primarily for simple and aggravated assault.

**Being aware of our strengths and challenges in Seminole County allows for integrated planning and care coordination.**
Goals

Families And Communities Together is about transforming the service system and is focused on five goals.

1. To design and implement a culturally and linguistically competent system of care for the population of focus and their families, that is guided by family and youth voices and choices, and is trauma informed.
2. To ensure an easily accessible, comprehensive integrated array of behavioral health treatment for children and youth with serious emotional/behavioral challenges and their families in the child welfare, DJJ and education systems.
3. To increase the quality of services available to children and youth with serious emotional/behavioral challenges and their families by implementing best practice models for care coordination, prevention, early intervention, treatment and systems of care.
4. To expand collection and use of data for continuous system improvement, and to implement knowledge-based evaluation to monitor progress and promote replication of proven and promising practices.
5. To ensure sustainability for the improved system of care.

Communities of Seminole County will work together to improve the lives of its children, youth and families.

Background

Seminole County has a long history of community service and a spirit of cooperation. These qualities of community and cooperation are evident in the work of The Children’s Cabinet of Seminole County. The Cabinet ensures that program implementation services for children in Seminole County are planned, managed and delivered to improve self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health and quality of life. The mission of The Cabinet is developing and integrating services and effectively utilizing resources to address the physical, social, emotional, vocational, transitional and educational needs of all children and families to produce measureable, positive outcomes for the Seminole County Community.

The Cabinet provides leadership and guidance to Families And Communities Together. As a federally funded system of care site, Families And Communities Together has access to a broad array of national technical assistance and training, including a contractual agreement with the University of South Florida, College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, to conduct national and local evaluations. The National Evaluation consists of six core studies:

1. Cross Sectional Descriptive Study: Examines the child and family characteristics of all children/youth entering the Seminole County System of Care.
2. Child and Family Outcome Study: Examines how the Seminole County System of Care affects child/youth clinical and functional status and family functioning.
3. Services Experience Study: Examines to what extent system of care values and principles are experienced by children and families.
4. Services and Costs Study: Examines the types of services used by children and families, their utilization patterns, and associated costs, and the relationship between service use and outcomes.
5. System of Care Assessment: Examines to what extent programs have been implemented in accordance with the system of care program model; and, examines how systems of care develop over time to meet the needs of the children and families they serve.
6. Sustainability Study: Examines what system of care characteristics and factors are related to sustainability of infrastructure during the life of the award and after the federal funding cycle is complete.

To learn more about Family And Communities Together contact:

Tracy Pellegrino, MSW
Director, Families And Communities Together
321-441-2090 • tracy.pellegrino@cbccfl.org

Norin Dollard, PhD
Evaluator, University of South Florida
813-974-3761 • dollard@usf.edu

Kathy Lazear, MA
Evaluator, University of South Florida
813-974-6135 • klazear@usf.edu

For questions about data in this publication or other data on children, youth, and families contact:

Florida KIDS COUNT
Susan Weitzel, MA, Director • weitzel@usf.edu
Cindi Shockley, Data Coordinator • shockley@usf.edu
www.floridakidscount.org • 813-974-7411