

Manatee County, Florida

CHALLENGES

1 Core Funding

The State of Florida contracts with several Community-Based Care (CBC) agencies who are responsible for providing services in specific counties. CBC agencies are funded through the Department of Children and Families using a formula; however, this formula has not been updated in many years and has created significant funding inequities.

When compared to the CBC agency serving Miami-Dade county, the Safe Children Coalition is nearly **\$50,000,000 short in equitable funding despite serving more children**. They are currently in the process of renegotiating their contract with the State.

	CBC Agency Miami-Dade county	Safe Children Coalition Sarasota, Manatee, & Desoto counties
Core funding	\$74,716,960	\$24,878,409
Children in out-of-home care	1,470	1,564
Total children served	3,450	4,174

*Data source: [2021 Tableau report](#)

2 High caseloads and turnover

In Manatee county alone, the Safe Children Coalition had **20 caseworkers for an average of 700 kids in out-of-home care**. With caseloads double, even triple, the typical amount they should be, caseworkers spent an average of 15 months on the job before quitting due to burnout.

SOLUTION

The Safe Children Coalition was introduced to CarePortal, and in July 2021, the care-sharing platform was activated within their Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT). This team provides and coordinates services for families who are at high risk for entering the child welfare system. The goal of the ERAT team is to ensure children's safety and wellbeing within the home and help avoid unnecessary removal of children in order to preserve families.

Launching this resource for this one team enabled the agency to monitor CarePortal's effectiveness in connecting caseworkers to churches and members in the community with the resources to meet urgent needs focused on strengthening families and safely preventing children from having to enter out-of-home care.

RESULT

In the nine months since launch, CarePortal has had a tremendous impact on the ERAT team and the entire organization. Not only have no caseworkers resigned, the team has been able to add more caseworkers and sustain this growth in order to serve more children and families with excellence. This is a result that Kathleen Cowan, Vice President of the Safe Children Coalition, attributes to the encouragement, assistance, and joy that the local church has provided. The organization is now taking next steps to get CarePortal activated within the kinship team to measure its impact on caseworker turnover and effectiveness in supporting relative caregivers.

9 MONTHS AFTER LAUNCHING CAREPORTAL:

13+ local churches
activated

250+ church response team volunteers have been trained on the platform and educated on the child welfare system, trauma and poverty in their county, and the role of case workers.

341 children
served

179 needs were met to safely prevent children from entering foster care. Beds were the most requested item needed.

10% decrease in children entering out-of-home care **MONTH OVER MONTH.**

\$77,644 economic
impact

With donations, funds, and other assistance coming from churches, this has opened up the Safe Children Coalition's budget to hire more team members and provide vital services.

0 resignations on
the ERAT Team

Churches have not only stepped up to help meet needs, they have embraced opportunities to encourage caseworkers and show their appreciation for the work they do.

10 more caseworkers
added to ERAT team.