

9/30/2010

For Gainesville's Children

Rectifying the Disadvantages of Socio-Economic
Disparities

The Gainesville City Commission, Office of Equal Opportunity

Authored by: J. Kate Stowell, Ed.D

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Rectifying the Disadvantages of Socio-Economic Disparities

Background

The City Commission of Gainesville has set as a strategic initiative/goal to eliminate the impact on children's life outcomes of living in families of lower socio-economic conditions. Goal 8C from the City of Gainesville, Office of Equal Opportunity Strategic Plan Summary 2009-2011 is: Regularly inform the public of the status of Gainesville's youth, minorities and underprivileged.

The Gainesville City Commission Top Priorities for the Office of Equal Opportunity 2009-2010 include:

4. Bring a set of alternative plans to the City Commission for adding children in lower socioeconomic status families to the City's top priority concerns.

5. Evaluate manifestation of disparity in Gainesville (i.e. "achievement gap" in test scores and graduation rates; interactions with the criminal justice system) and recommend actions to address negative indicators and outcomes.

12. Develop a plan for seeking private sector or state and federal grants support to help disadvantaged children and individuals succeed and to meet EO AA goals.

To meet these goals, the Gainesville City Commission wanted to know the current status of children, particularly relating to lower socioeconomic status families; the extent to which this status is improving or declining; and the best ways to implement solutions to remediate unacceptable status. This information will help in the development and implementation of a plan to address concerns.

Following discussions early in 2010, the Gainesville Office of Equal Opportunity suggested the best way to accomplish these goals was to engage in a logical, sound, reasoned process that encompasses all stakeholders but which is focused on the child and family, not individual programs or services. By articulating desired outcomes that are data-driven and research-based, the Commission can establish a sound foundation for building understanding, engaging stakeholders, focusing efforts and ensuring that collective actions successfully address concerns.

This Report is a Foundation

This report is the first step in the process. It provides data showing the current status of Gainesville's children, using established, research-based indicators of child well-being aligned to the broad goals articulated by the commission. Where available, data has been disaggregated to the county level.

In order to understand the extent and impact of disparities in Gainesville and Alachua County, it is first necessary to have a starting point – baseline data on the status of Alachua’s children. The baseline data presented here relate closely to indicators (or outcomes) shown by research to signify well-being or improvement in child well-being. The indicators form a “results” framework that can lead to shared goals and actions.

This report includes the most recent data on key indicators of child well being, disaggregated to the county level and specific socio-economic factors, where available. Trend line data has been provided for the indicators, where possible. The data has been analyzed and implications for action drawn from research-based, evidence-based solutions (what works).

The report also includes information on what is being done locally to assist in changing the trend lines in a positive direction, and recommendations for moving forward.

Comments on the Data

This report used a variety of data sources including respected Kids Count data and Child Trends data. All indicator data sources are provided. Most of the indicators present state data and county data for comparison. In all instances, the most current data available have been provided, even though the data may be from years prior to 2010. It should be noted that it is not unusual for some data to be reported annually, but collected in a previous year or years and simply updated annually. In some instances, data collection methods may change and so comparisons cannot be easily made. In still other instances, data are collected during a given year, with extrapolated and/or further analyzed information released in subsequent years before data are again collected.

There are instances where only state data are provided, since the information is currently being collected and reported on a state and national level only. This data is included in this report because the indicator is important to child well being and because it is likely the county/city will match the state profile fairly well. This report does not contain risk indicators such as juvenile delinquency, because they are not considered *well-being* indicators in the truest sense.

THIS REPORT FOCUSES ON POPULATION-LEVEL INDICATORS AND DOES NOT CONTAIN PROGRAM- OR SERVICE-SPECIFIC DATA, which are best described as performance measures. (See Table 1.) The focus on population-level indicators allows a broad, research-based view of conditions affecting Gainesville’s children, provides a framework for engaging a wide variety of stakeholders in addressing collective goals, and creates an environment where stakeholders can share progress toward results. The Next Steps section beginning on page 45 contains more information on how performance measures can be used to measure progress toward outcomes.

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Table 1. Differences between Population Indicators and Performance Measures

POPULATION-LEVEL INDICATORS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Indicators are about <u>whole</u> populations.	Measures are about <u>client or customer</u> populations.
Indicators are usually about peoples' lives, <u>whether or not they receive any service.</u>	Performance measures are usually about people who receive service.
Indicators are proxies for the well-being of whole populations	Performance measures are about a known group of people who get service and conditions for this group can be precisely measured.

The capacity for monitoring child and youth well-being on the state, national and local level is limited but improving. Gaps in existing child indicator systems include a shortage of data in important areas such as social-emotional development, positive behaviors and the influence of neighborhoods; scarcity of data for infants to about age 10; narrowly-focused surveys that collect data; and frequency of data collection to allow useful application of information to policy and practice.¹ It also should be noted that census data may change once the 2010 census is analyzed and reported.

Finally, the indicators presented here were chosen based on research, input from a variety of sources and ability to provide useful and helpful insight to the City of Gainesville. There is no intention to present these indicators as the only ones that definitively measure child well-being. (For a thorough overview of indicator use, see *A Guide to Resources for Creating, Locating, and Using Child and Youth Indicator Data*, Brown, Hashim & Marin, 2008 [Online]. Available at http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2009_01_05_FR_ChildIndicatorGuide.pdf).

Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities Beginning With Children

The City of Gainesville is interested in addressing socio-economic disparities. The City recognizes that a good way to do this is by starting with its children. The research shows that starting with children 0 to 5 provides the best and most efficient opportunities to address socio-economic disparities. Here's why:

RISKS FOR POOR OUTCOMES DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT YOUNG CHILDREN, LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AND MINORITY CHILDREN.² Poverty poses risks for children of all races.³ Gaps in the abilities and skills between disadvantaged and advantaged children occur early. Family environments are important predictors of a variety of child well being outcomes, yet a greater proportion of children are being born into disadvantaged families, including minorities and immigrant groups.⁴

YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OLDER CHILDREN TO LIVE IN ECONOMICALLY INSECURE FAMILIES. Of Alachua children ages under age 5, 22.7% are below poverty, and another 23% of 5-year-olds are below poverty. Slightly more than half of Alachua children under 5 in single-mother families are below poverty. Black or African-American children represent more than half of the children in poverty in Alachua County.⁵

Disproportionality refers both to the presence of minorities in percentages that dramatically exceed their presence in the general population, as well as poor – or disparate - outcomes for these children. Disproportionality of children of color is the result of multiple disadvantages that are social, political, economic and attitudinal in nature. Specific factors leading to disproportionality in the child welfare, educational, juvenile justice and other systems include poverty, classism, racism, organizational culture, service strategy and resources.

Source: *Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in*

ON ALMOST EVERY INDICATOR OF CHILD WELL-BEING, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF COLOR ARE REPRESENTED IN NUMBERS THAT FAR EXCEED THEIR RELATIVE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION. However, it is important to note that outcomes for white children and families in Florida also are also less than desirable. According to the Southern Institute on Children and Families, “the South is plagued by high rates of children and individuals in poverty, a high percent of children unprepared to succeed in school, adults unprepared for the workforce and high rates of children whose lower income working parents cannot afford safe, quality child care.”⁶ Research supports the belief that when outcomes are improved for those who are currently most disadvantaged, they will be improved for all children.⁷

A summary of the data by Project Thrive at the National Center for Children in Poverty provides these **EXAMPLES OF OUTCOMES THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT YOUNG, LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY CHILDREN:**⁸

- Being born at low birth weight or premature places a child at risk for poor development. U.S. low birth weight rates show continuing racial/ethnic gaps: 7.1% for whites, for example, while the rate is 13.4% for African-Americans.
- At least one in five U.S. children goes without annual dental care. Many dentists aren't willing to accept Medicaid reimbursement rates set below the actual cost of treatment. Only 25 states pay dentists at least 60.5% of retail fees.
- Obesity among U.S. children is increasing and low-income and minority children face excess risks.
- Among poor and minority children, asthma care is more likely to be of lower quality and lack continuity. Asthma prevalence, morbidity, and mortality are higher among African-American than white children.
- Low-income and minority women are disproportionately likely to be affected by maternal depression, with rates reaching as high as 40%. The effects of maternal depression on children range from poor bonding to lower reading and language scores to higher incidences of later mental health issues and depression.
- National surveys indicate that about one-third of U.S. young children (3.1 million) have two or more risk factors for poor health and development.
- Data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being indicate that both toddlers (41.8%) and preschoolers (68.1%) who had contact with the child welfare system had high developmental and behavioral needs; however, few children were receiving services for these issues (22.7%).
- Some data show that violent disagreements are most prevalent among black households, followed by "other," Latino, and white. All exposure to violence is detrimental to all children.
- Data from the National Survey on Early Childhood Health shows disparities in safety measures and home routines in the reports of Latino and African-American parents. In



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addition, this national survey reveals significant differences in family routines and parenting practices associated with positive early childhood development.

- On average, minority children arrive at school with lower levels of school readiness than white children. (Largely attributable to income.)
- Minority children remain less likely than their counterparts to have health coverage, public or private.
- A study of families with babies enrolled in Medicaid in Washington State found that infants with parents whose primary language is not English were half as likely to receive recommended preventive care as infants whose parent's primary language is English. This disparity was persistent across groups of white, Latino, and African-American infants, but not in Asian-American infants.
- The immunization gap between minority and white infants and toddlers has narrowed, but rates among minority children remain lower.
- National data indicate that poor children under age 5 are less likely to visit a doctor's office or health maintenance organization (HMO) for sick care than their more affluent counterparts.
- The data also reveal disparities in pediatric providers' patterns for discussing selected topics with parents. For example, in talking to minority families, pediatric providers were more likely to discuss community violence and household alcohol or drug use.
- Nationally, African-American children are twice as likely to not be in excellent or very good health, compared with white children. Yet health care providers are almost twice as likely not to refer minority children to specialists, even after adjustment for insurance coverage, health status, and other relevant factors.



The next section provides a look at Alachua's children in general, and data that promote understanding of socio-economic disparities, in particular.

Alachua's Children

Of the nearly 90,000 households in Alachua County, almost one in five includes children under the age of 18. In 2008, Alachua's under-18 population totaled 47,866, representing about 20% of the total county population.

Alachua children under 5

represent 5.7% of the county's population. Gainesville's under-5 population is 4.8% of the total population; the under-18 population represents 17.8%.

For the past five years, the percentage by race of Alachua's under-18 population has remained relatively consistent at 63 to 65% white, 29 to 30% black, 6% other, and 8% Hispanic (of any race). In comparison to Florida, Alachua County has fewer white children, more black children and fewer Hispanic children. Florida's under-18 population, in 2008, was 74% white, 22% black, 3% other, and 26% Hispanic (of any race).⁹ (See Figure 1.)

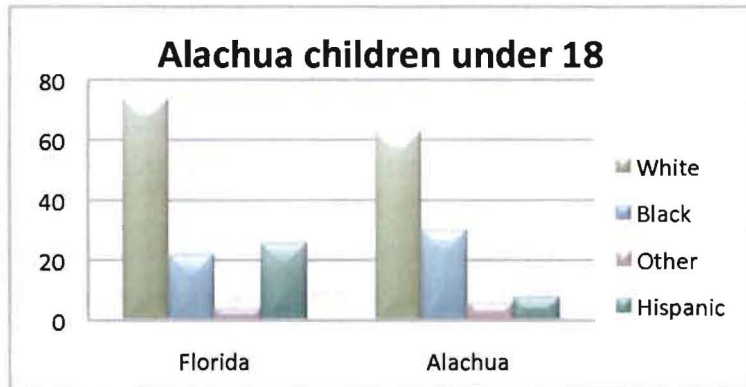


Figure 1. Hispanics can be of any race. Therefore, percentages may total more than 100%.

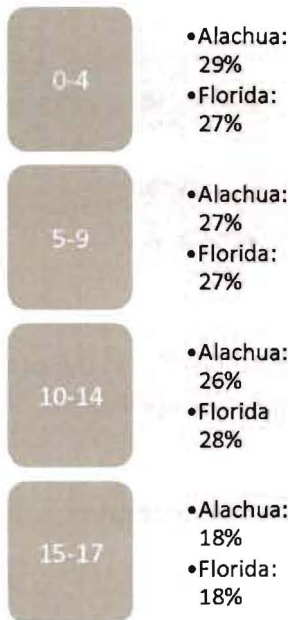


Figure 2. Alachua Child Population by Age Group

ALACHUA COUNTY IS VERY SIMILAR TO FLORIDA IN TERMS OF DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP (see Figure 2), with almost even percentages of children in the 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 age groups. Also like Florida, Alachua's children are 51% male and 49% female.¹⁰

The majority of Alachua's children live in married couple households, but 31% of Alachua's children live in single-parent households, compared to 26.5% in Florida.¹¹ **BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN IN ALACHUA ARE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO LIVE IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME AS ANY OTHER RACE.**

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN POVERTY IN ALACHUA

COUNTY HAS GROWN FROM 16.9% IN 2004 TO 19% IN 2008

(see Figure 3). Almost 40% of Alachua's children live in high-poverty neighborhoods (where 20% or more of the population is below poverty), compared to 19.6% in Florida. The number of black or African-American Alachua children in poverty more

than doubles the number of whites, and represents 60% of all Alachua children in poverty.¹² Of the Gainesville child population, 26.7% are in poverty, compared to 20% of the Alachua child population. Median family income in Alachua County is \$51,772, compared to Florida's \$58,339 (in 2008 inflation-adjusted dollars).

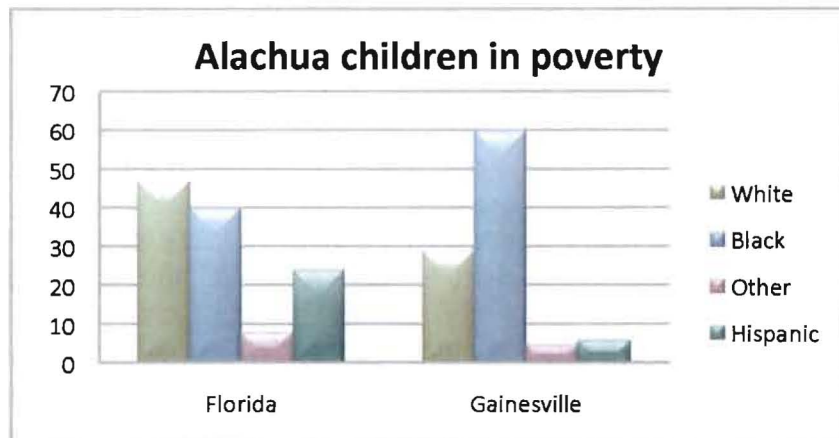


Figure 3. Hispanics can be of any race. Therefore, percentages may total more than 100%.

FORTY FIVE PERCENT OF ALACHUA'S STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FREE/REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM (49.6% in Florida). Alachua's population of 9th- to 12th-graders who are dropouts (2.6%) is only slightly higher than Florida's dropout population (2.3%), but Alachua's population of 16- to 19-year-olds who are not in school and not working (3.6%) is much lower than Florida's (9.7%).

NINETY-ONE PERCENT OF ALACHUA'S POPULATION WAS BORN IN THE UNITED STATES, compared with 95% of Florida's population. Only 2% of Alachua's children 5 to 17 have difficulty speaking English, compared with 6.6% of Florida's children. Almost 8% of Alachua's children 5 to 15 have one or more disabilities; for Florida, the percentage is 6%.

Many Alachua children live with their grandparents. A whopping 52% of grandparents are responsible for the grandchildren who live with them, and 22% of them have been responsible for their grandchildren for five or more years.

Gainesville's population is 45% of the total Alachua population. Census calculations show a 2.5% loss in Gainesville's population between 2000 and 2006, compared to an 11.8% increase in the Alachua population.

Research for a community application for Gainesville to receive a planning grant for a Promise Neighborhood revealed that there are two areas in Gainesville where a cluster of factors place children and families at greater risk. The first is in northeast Gainesville and the other is in southwest Gainesville. As discussed in the application:

The NE Quadrangle is comprised of low-income neighborhoods and Section 8 housing including Village Green, Forest Green, Eden Park and Lewis Place.

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Twenty three percent of residents in the quadrangle do not have a high school diploma and the infant mortality rate for blacks (30 per 1000) is triple that for whites. Census data ... indicate twice the proportion of children under age 18 compared to the rest of the county, more than two-thirds of households with children headed by single women, and more than twice the proportion of Black residents as the county as a whole. Although 20% of Alachua County residents live in poverty, in the NE Quadrangle, 28.4% of residents live in poverty (US Census Bureau, American FactFinder 2000).

The SW Triangle is comprised of five low income projects and Section 8 housing: Tower Oaks, Cornerstone Mobile Home Park, Linton Oaks, Holly Heights/Gordon Manor and Majestic Oaks. These at-risk, densely populated (6,365 total) residential neighborhoods fall inside a one square mile area. Census data indicate a large proportion of renter occupied housing units and many households headed by females under 18. The SW Triangle has many women and children living in poverty (30%). The Alachua County Sheriff's Office, serving the unincorporated SW Triangle, reports this area has the highest concentration of crime in the county, and the most common calls are for domestic disturbances. High crime rates are coupled with the highest density of children under 5 in the county, yet the neighborhood is served by only one licensed childcare center with a capacity of less than 10% of eligible under 5 year olds. Families eligible for free pre-school are unlikely to own cars, and bus service does not accommodate easy public transport to licensed childcare. Medical services are likewise distant, requiring three bus rides and 90 minutes of travel each way.

The information from the Promise Neighborhood application may provide focus for the City's efforts to address disparities, which will be discussed in the Next Steps section (see page 45).

Improving the Outcomes for Alachua's Children

The data demonstrate that Alachua's opportunities for improving socio-economic disparities center on the reducing the number of children and families in poverty. The good news is that **IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IMPROVES OUTCOMES FOR ALL CHILDREN.** And, **RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT INTERVENING EARLY PROMOTES ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND REDUCES LIFETIME INEQUALITY.** Remedial interventions for disadvantaged adolescents who don't receive a strong initial foundation of skills are difficult to justify as economically efficient, and they usually have low rates of return.¹³

PROVIDING A STRONG INITIAL FOUNDATION OF SKILLS DURING THE EARLY YEARS IS MOST EFFECTIVE FOR INFLUENCING OUR FUTURE SOCIETY AND WORKFORCE. Before age 5, children establish the building blocks for thinking, learning and positive social interactions that affect both their individual lives and the contributions they make to society as a whole. With increasingly limited resources, public policies must reflect an investment in activities that result in a high return to the public good. Economic analyses confirm that improving children's lives in the early years produces a high return on investment. Dollars spent on a child before age 5 produce a higher economic benefit than if the same amount were spent when the child is older.¹⁴ (See Figure 4.)

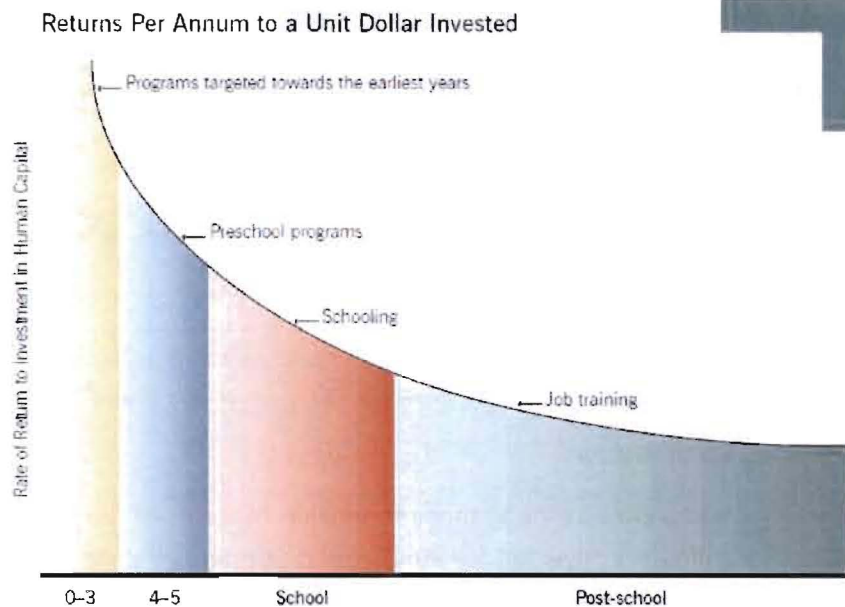


Figure 4. Source: This chart demonstrates return to a unit dollar invested at different ages from the perspective of the beginning of life, assuming \$1 initially invested at each age. Heckman, J. J. (2007, August). The economics, technology, and neuroscience of human capability formation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104(3), 13250–13255.

It is not unusual for communities to focus on indicators such as teen pregnancy, teen drug use and juvenile delinquency and graduation rates to try to understand what their children need. Doing so, however, removes the opportunity to address the root of these outcomes, which occurs during the early years. All the experiences from pregnancy through early childhood have a significant impact on development and future success and productivity.

Research has shown that a wide range of programs, policies and services with a prevention focus, including those directed toward early care and education, health, family support and caring communities can promote the foundation of what children need to thrive to become good citizens and a top-notch workforce. (See Figure 5.) **ADDRESSING POVERTY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION, HEALTH, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES PROVIDES CLEAR AND LOGICAL DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION.** These directions will be discussed later in the Analysis and Next Steps sections of this report (see page 45).

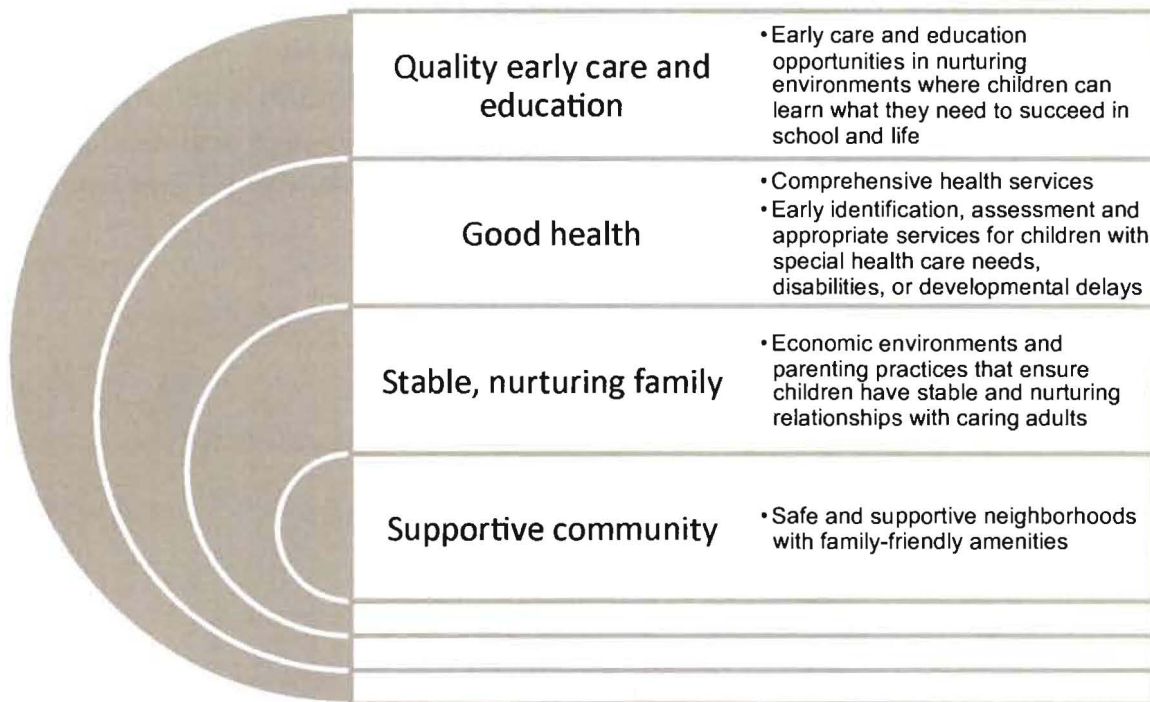


Figure 5. The Context in Which Children Thrive

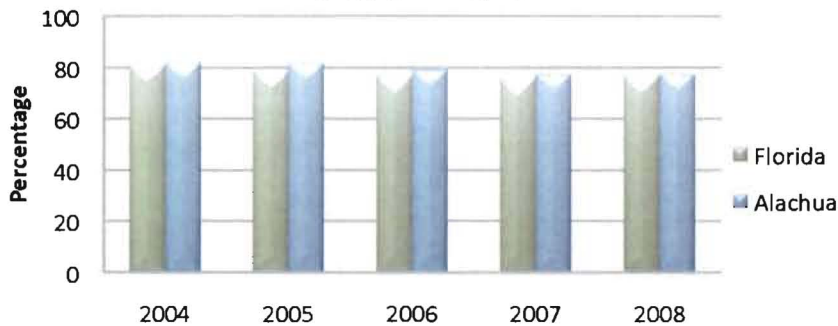
The following section takes a closer look at these four areas in terms of the status of Alachua’s children. The data that follows is provided for indicators that measure child well-being in the four areas. As used in Florida, nationally and internationally, these indicators increasingly include positive outcomes (as opposed to being primarily focused on negative outcomes), and they place an emphasis on “well becoming,” which means they are predictive of subsequent

well-being as well as current well-being.¹⁵ The indicators provide a basis for comparison between and among municipalities, states, communities, the nation and other countries.

Are Alachua's children healthy?

Healthy child development is a foundation for future sustainable economic and community development. Capable children are the building blocks of a solid and productive society.¹⁶ All children need basic health care. Many health problems that might otherwise threaten a child's overall well-being and school achievement can be prevented or treated. Approximately 15% of all children nationwide have a chronic condition, and approximately a third of these are considered moderate to severe.¹⁷ Eighty percent of all non-traumatic health care spending is attributable to chronic illness, a figure applicable to just 20% of all children.¹⁸ The remaining majority of children have minimal, relatively low intensity/cost needs. All health care for children and youth should be prevention-based, family-focused and developmentally-oriented.¹⁹

Mothers beginning prenatal care in the first trimester



Indicator definition:

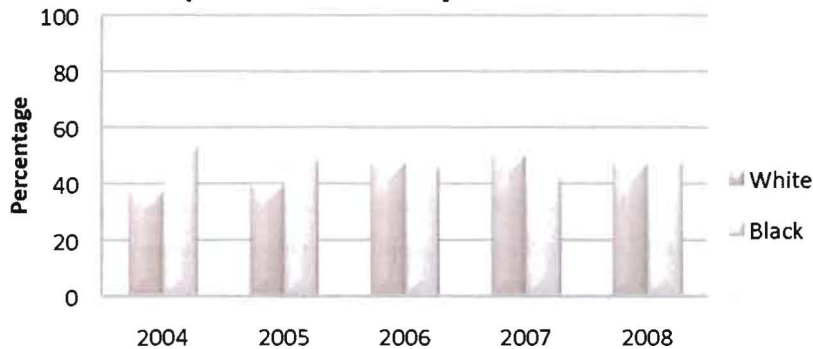
Percent of live births with prenatal care beginning in the first trimester

Source: Florida Department of Health, Florida Charts

Note: Florida is among reporting areas that adopted the 2003 revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth in 2004 and 2005. According to Betty Serow, MPH, Ph.D., Senior Health Policy Analyst for the Florida Department of Health, this change meant that the baseline for this data effectively "started over" in 2005.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Research has shown that access to primary care for women of reproductive age encourages early prenatal care, leading to better pregnancy outcomes and healthier children.²⁰

Alachua births with late or no prenatal care by race



Indicator definition:

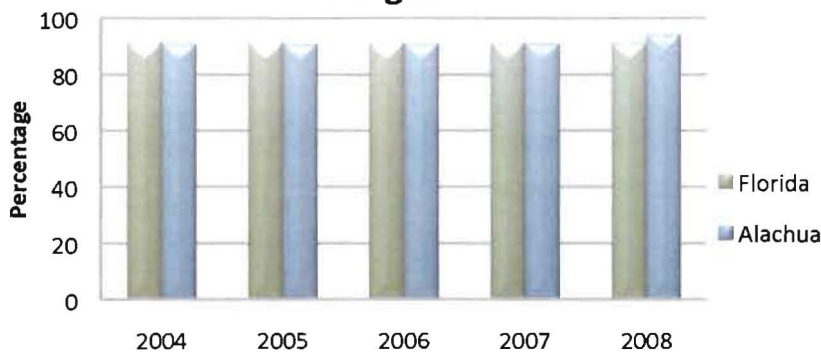
Percentage of Alachua births with no prenatal care, or prenatal care that began in the third trimester, by race

Source:

www.floridacharts.com

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The data show that there is currently little difference between whites and blacks in terms of percentages of births with late or no prenatal care. However, the percentages for black mothers have been decreasing somewhat since 2004.

Infants born at appropriate birth weight



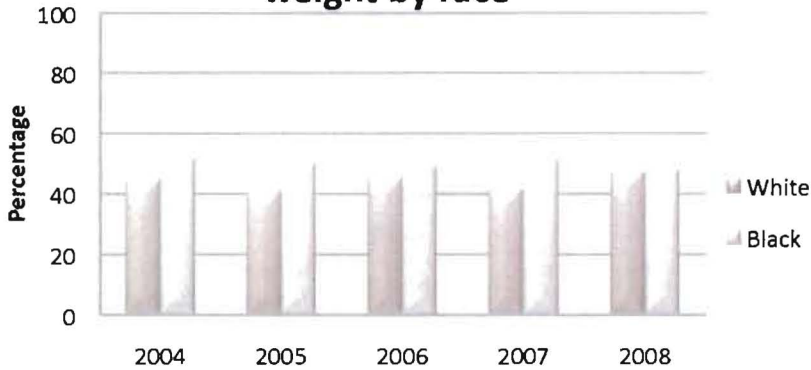
Indicator definition: Live births weighing more than 5.5 pounds

Source:

www.kidscount.org, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), National Vital Statistics Reports, or through the NCHS VitalStats system, www.cdc.gov/nchs/VitalStats.htm.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Children who were born with low birth weight and fewer parental resources have poorer health, are less likely to work and have lower earnings as adults.²¹ The risk of low birth weight babies for African-American women is greater in segregated neighborhoods than in less segregated areas. And, mothers of low birth weight babies are 27% less likely to be married than mothers of normal weight babies.²²

Alachua infants born at low birth weight by race

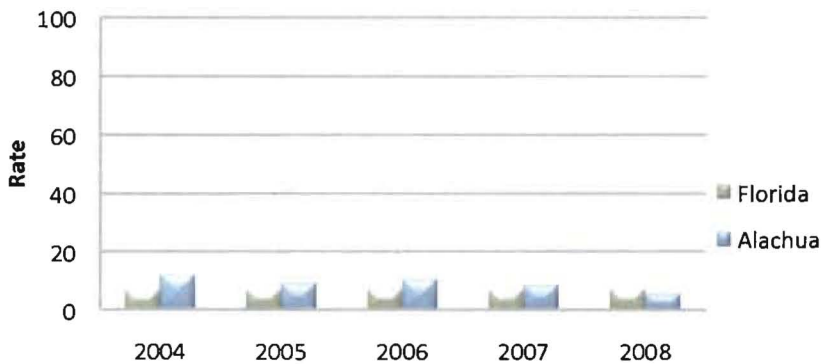


Indicator definition: Of the total number of low birth weight babies, the percentage by race of mother

Source:
www.floridacharts.com

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The data show that there is little difference between whites and blacks in terms of percentages of low birth weight babies. The percentage of low birth weight black babies has been slightly decreasing.

Infant deaths that occur before age 1

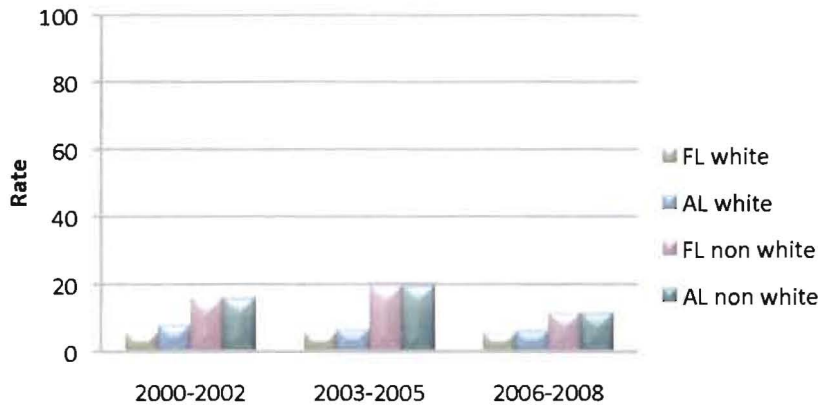


Indicator definition: Deaths occurring to infants under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births. The data are reported by the place of residence, not the place of death.

Source:
www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The cost of neonatal and health care for infants born with severe and life-threatening problems far exceeds the cost of prenatal care and other supports that can prevent these problems. While infants in every socio-economic category have better odds for survival than in past years, babies in households at or near poverty face greater risks than infants born to more affluent families.²³

Infant deaths before age 1 by race

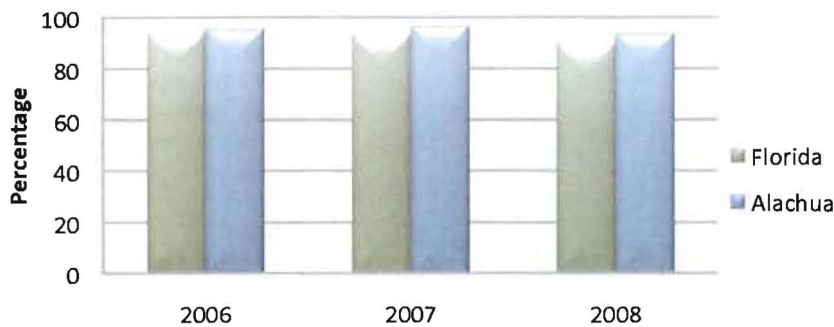


Indicator definition: Deaths occurring to infants under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births, by race. The data are reported by the place of residence, not the place of death.

Source: www.floridacharts.com

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The data clearly demonstrate that more non-white infants in Alachua and in Florida die before age 1.

Children who are immunized

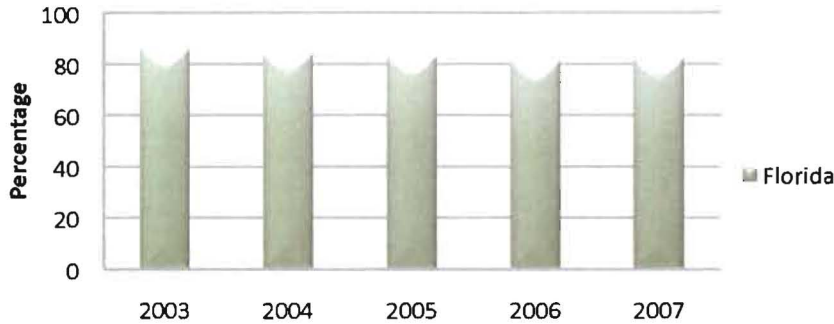


Indicator definition: Percentage off kindergarten students enrolled in public and private schools with an up-to-date Certificate of Immunization as required by Section 1003.22, Florida Statutes and Rule 64D-3.046, Florida Administrative Code.

Source: www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Progress toward immunization of all young children has stalled since 2004. Immunizations prevent a wide range of diseases, and are a good indication of child health status. There is no difference in immunization rates by race, but children in poverty are less likely to receive the combined series vaccination.²⁴

Florida children with health insurance

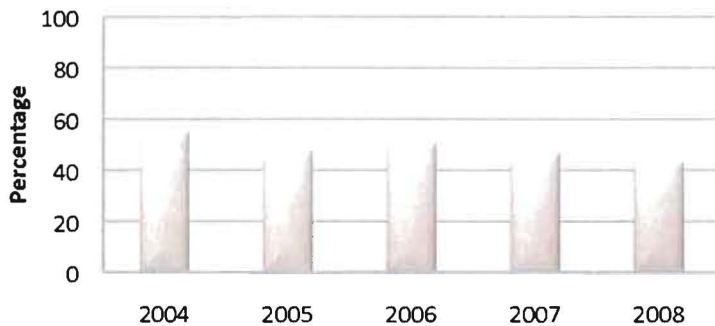


Indicator definition:
Children 17 and under who were covered by health insurance at any point during the year

Source:
www.kidscount.org, from The Urban Studies Institute at the University of Louisville, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Children with health insurance have a better chance of receiving routine health care, thus avoiding preventable health costs²⁵ and increasing school participation and opportunities for learning. Hispanic children are much less likely than other children to have health insurance. There is little difference in the percentages of children of other races with insurance.²⁶

Alachua children under 5 covered by KidCare



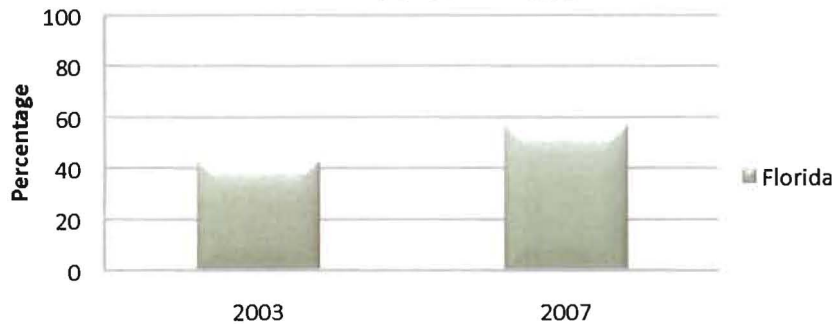
Indicator definition:
Percentage of Alachua children 0 to 5 who are covered by Medikids and Medicaid

Source:
www.floridacharts.com

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The data show that the number of children served by KidCare (primarily low-income children) in Alachua county has been decreasing since 2004, which may mean more children are uninsured. However, in mid-September 2010, Florida reported that enrollment in KidCare has increased statewide by 15% in the 15 months since the Governor signed a law making it easier for low-income families to get health insurance for their children. That increase still would only return percentages covered to 2004 levels.

NOTE: The Florida percentages in the table "Florida children with health insurance" include private sector insurance generally provided through work, as well as insurance provided through the public sector, such as Medicare and Medicaid. Thus, the percentages in this table are included in the Florida table. The breakout data provided here is simply illustrative of the number of children who depend upon health insurance provided through the public sector.

Florida children receiving care within a medical home

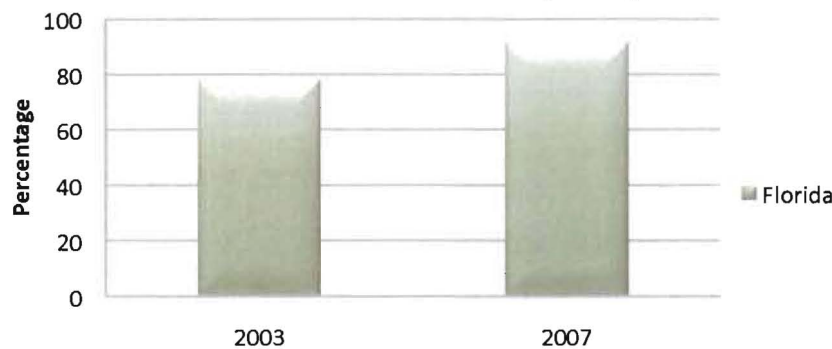


Indicator definition: Percentage of children 0-17 who received health care in the past 12 months that meets the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) definition of medical home, defined as primary care that is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate and culturally effective

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Children with accessible, coordinated primary health care have a medical “home” where all developmental needs can be identified and addressed.

Florida children receiving a preventive medical visit in the past year

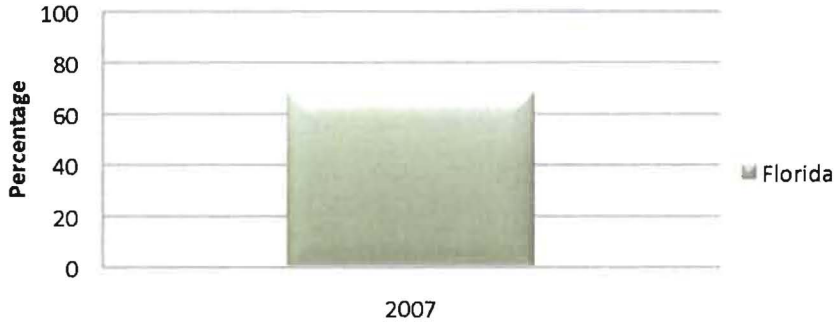


Indicator definition: Percentage of children who saw a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider for preventive medical care such as a physical exam or well-child check-up, during the past 12 months

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Preventive medical care means problems can be identified and addressed early, when they are less costly and there is more opportunity for successful outcomes.

Florida children receiving a preventive dental visit in the past year

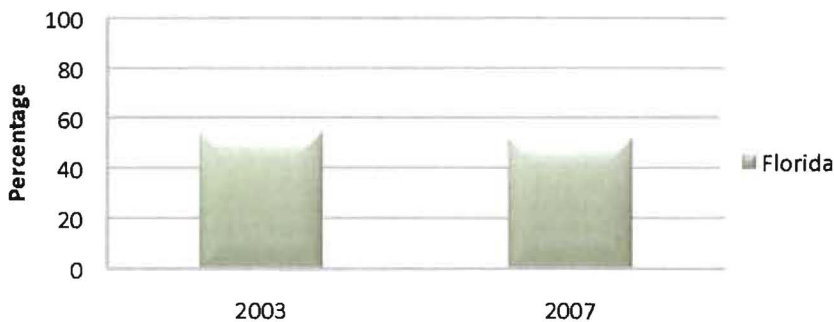


Indicator definition:
Percentage of children who saw a dentist for preventive dental care, such as check-ups and dental cleanings, during the past 12 months

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Children from low-income families are less likely to receive dental care and more likely to have unmet dental needs.²⁷

Florida children 2-17 with mental health problems requiring counseling who received mental health care



Indicator definition:
Percentage of children who received any treatment or counseling from a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurses and/or clinical social worker)

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Studies have shown that a 4 to 10% prevalency rate of clinically significant emotional and behavioral difficulties among young children, with significantly higher estimates for low-income children.²⁸ Of non-institutionalized children 5 to 15 with special needs, 5.5% have a mental disability, by far the largest percentage among types of disability.²⁹ These data show that many children are not receiving the mental health counseling they need. Many issues, if left unaddressed, can lead to other poor outcomes such as drug use and teen pregnancy.

Helpful links:

Kids Count Indicator Brief – Preventing Low Birthweight

www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefPreventingLowBirthWeig/PreventingLowBirthweight.pdf

Kids Count Indicator Brief – Reducing Infant Mortality

www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefReducingInfantMortalit/ReducingInfantMortality.pdf

Child Trends Data Bank – Health Care Coverage

www.childtrendsdatbank.org/?q=node/83

Child Trends Data Bank - Immunization

www.childtrendsdatbank.org/?q=node/71

Child Trends Data Bank – Well Child Visits

www.childtrendsdatbank.org/?q=node/85

Child Health and Young Adult Outcomes

www.partnershipforsuccess.org/docs/researchproject_currie_200903_paper.pdf

Child Trends Data Bank – Unmet Dental Needs

www.childtrendsdatbank.org/archivepgs/82.htm

What Works? A Study of Effective Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Programs

www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid=%7b086A1697-1F82-456F-A9E7-98706677DAAE%7d

Are Alachua's children ready to learn and succeed?

Early and extensive enrollment in child care or an early education setting has become the norm in U.S. society. It is the quality of care and, in particular, the quality of the daily transactions between providers and the children for whom they are responsible, that carry the weight of the influence of child care/early education on children's development. The positive relationship between child care/early education quality and virtually every facet of children's development that has been studied is one of the most consistent findings of developmental science.³⁰ Staff qualifications are the strongest predictor of program quality and child outcomes.³¹

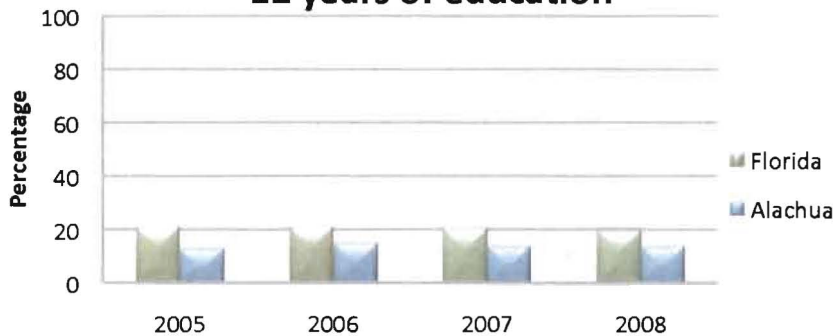
Meaningful early learning experiences are not entirely relegated to early education and care settings. A family environment that values learning and creates opportunities for rich interactions and relationships helps encourage early learning and later educational success. For all children, not just those in early care and education programs, parents are the most influential adults in their lives.

High-quality early childhood settings offer economic benefits, as well. The economic development impacts of quality early childhood settings include effects on regional economies (in terms of jobs, income and purchase of commodities in other economic sectors), effects on parents (supporting workers and their employers), and effects on children (building human capital).³²

Early childhood education costs in Florida amount to \$5,750 to \$7,584 or more a year for one child.³³ For low-income families, assistance is essential in order for them to be able to work and remain self-sufficient. Mothers who receive child care assistance are 40% more likely to remain employed after two years than those who do not receive assistance.³⁴ Former welfare recipients with young children are 82% more likely to be employed after two years if they receive child care assistance.³⁵ Unfortunately, assistance often is not available and not provided in quality programs.³⁶

Studies show that families who lose child care assistance are often forced to quit their jobs, change work hours, spend their savings, go into debt, turn to welfare, or choose lower quality, less stable child care.³⁷

Children of mothers with fewer than 12 years of education

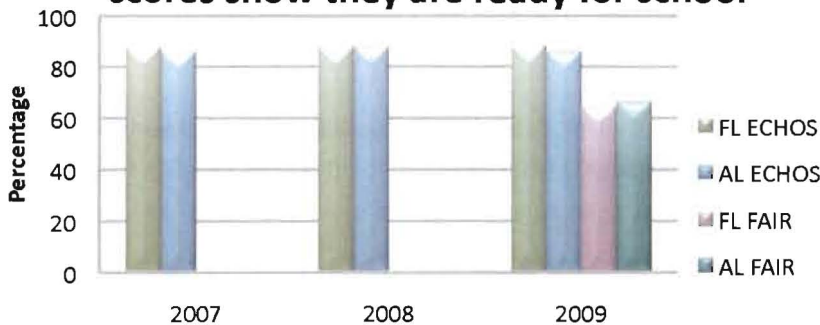


Indicator definition:
Percent of births to mothers with no high school diploma or GED

Source:
www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? There are positive correlations between a mother’s education and a child’s academic performance, particularly in cognitive development and academic outcomes.³⁸

Children whose kindergarten entry scores show they are ready for school



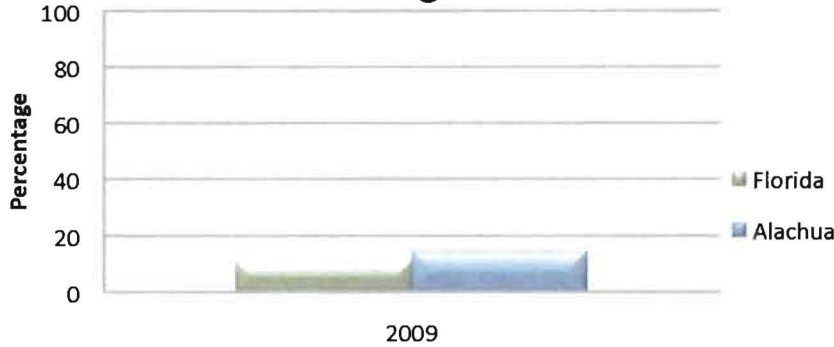
Indicator definition: The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener has two measures: the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS) and the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading – K (FAIR-K). The ECHOS measures benchmarks in seven domains; the FAIR-K measures growth and development of early literacy skills. Prior to 2009, the DIBELS was used instead of the FAIR.

Source:
www.fldoe.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? By age 5, it is possible to predict with depressing accuracy who will complete high school and college and who won’t.³⁹ The early years are critical to our future workforce and economy. Currently, kindergarten readiness scores provide the only available data on children’s early status in Florida, although they are not considered by some to be useful or accurate measures.

NOTE: Because the second readiness measurement was recently changed, baseline data is not available. And, while the state historically has used the aggregate ECHOS scores to indicate school readiness, others believe disaggregated ECHOS scores more clearly and accurately show percentages of children at various levels of “readiness.”

Early childhood staff with bachelor's degrees

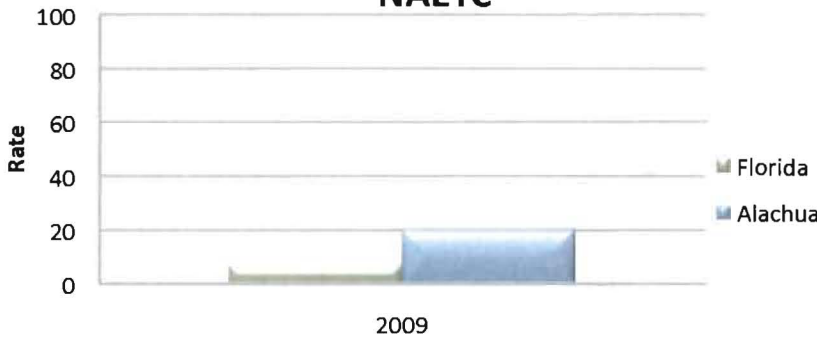


Indicator definition: Percentage of early childhood staff with a bachelor's degree (based on data collected by the 65% of facilities that report this data to DCF; this does not include staff credentials from counties who conduct their own child care licensing independent of the state. As well, the calculation does not include those staff who work with mixed age groups or staff who work with children 5+ years of age)

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Staff qualifications are the strongest predictor of program quality and child outcomes.⁴⁰ Yet most of Florida's and Alachua's young children are taught by staff without a bachelor's degree. These numbers have not changed significantly over the past five years.

Child care facilities accredited by the NAEYC

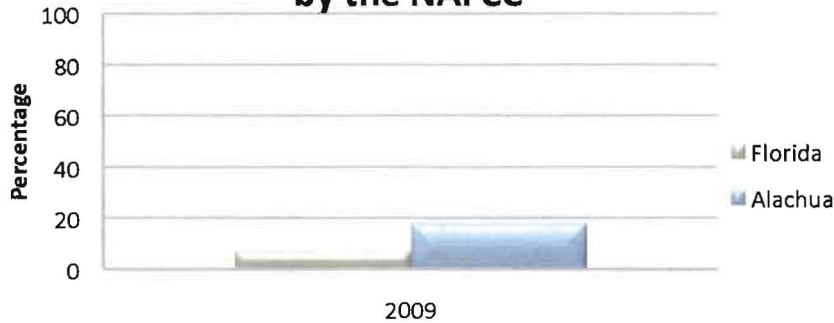


Indicator definition: Percentage of licensed facilities with accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Source: The Florida Children's Forum and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Quality programs can launch poor children onto a trajectory of success beginning with social skills and academic achievement and leading to higher graduation rates and less crime and delinquency,⁴¹ especially for poor children who arrive at kindergarten already way behind their higher income peers. Accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children is considered to be one of the best indicators of program quality, yet few programs achieve this accreditation. Alachua is commendable for being above the state percentage.

Family child care programs accredited by the NAFCC

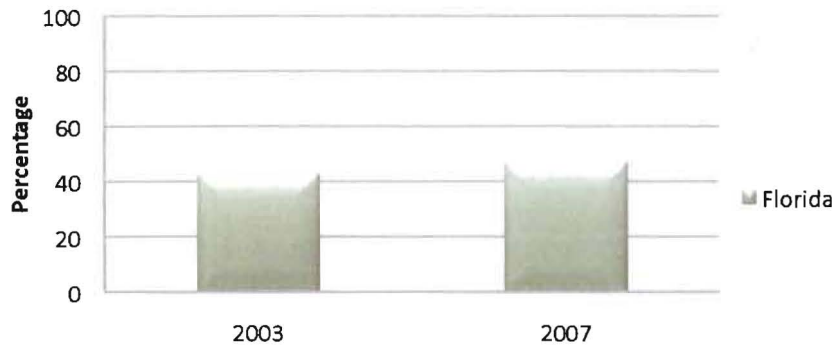


Indicator definition: Percentage of family child care homes accredited by the National Association for Family and Child Care (NAFCC)

Source: The Florida Children's Forum and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Quality programs can launch poor children onto a trajectory of success beginning with social skills and academic achievement and leading to higher graduation rates and less crime and delinquency,⁴² especially for poor children who arrive at kindergarten already way behind their higher income peers. Accreditation by the National Association for Family and Child Care is considered to be one of the best indicators of family child care home program quality, yet few programs achieve this accreditation. Alachua is commendable for being above the state percentage.

Florida children who are read to daily



Indicator definition: Percentage of children 0-5 whose families read to them every day

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Early literacy skills are fostered when adults, especially parents, read to young children.

Florida children whose families sing or tell them stories daily



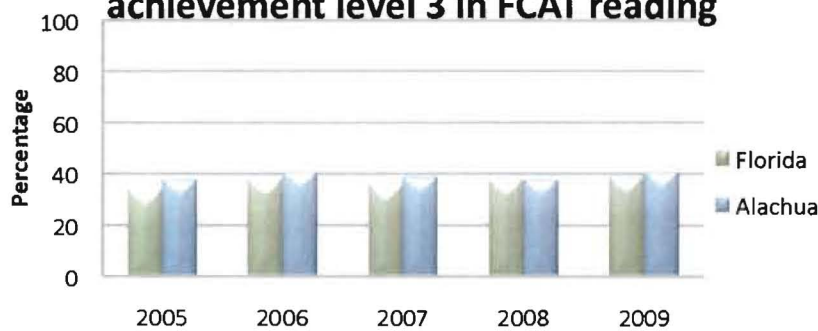
Indicator definition:
Percentage of children 0-5 whose families sing or tell them stories every day

Source: www.nschdata.org

Note: This data was not collected in 2003.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Early literacy skills are fostered when adults, especially parents, interact verbally with children. Singing and story-telling are two easy ways to do this.

Children scoring on or above achievement level 3 in FCAT reading

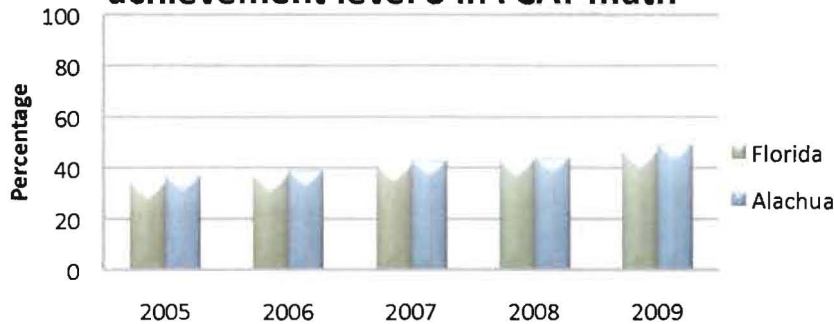


Indicator definition:
Percentage of total students in grade 3 who scored at or above achievement level 3 in FCAT reading

Source: <https://app1.fldoe.org/FCAT/Demographics/>

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Concern over dropout and graduation rates leads to a focus on prevention. Children often drop out of school because they lost interest or weren't successful in middle school, based on grade retention and academic struggles in earlier grades. Most often, the academic struggles center on the inability to read proficiently.⁴³ Therefore, dropout prevention must begin in the early grades.

Children scoring on or above achievement level 3 in FCAT math

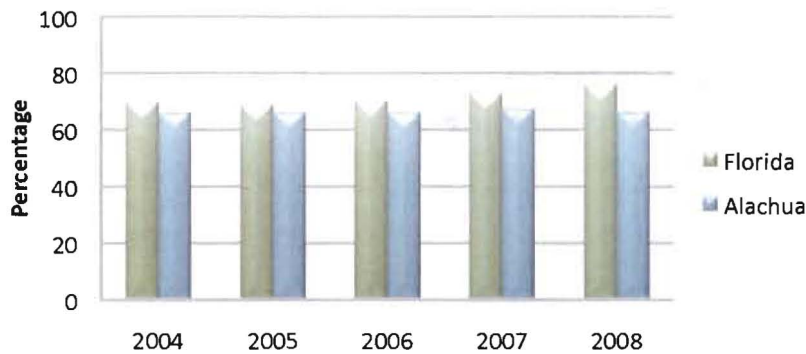


Indicator definition:
Percentage of total students in grade 3 who scored at or above achievement level 3 in FCAT math

Source:
<https://app1.fldoe.org/FCAT-Demographics/>

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? As with early reading scores, early math scores can predict later academic success or failure.

High school graduation rate

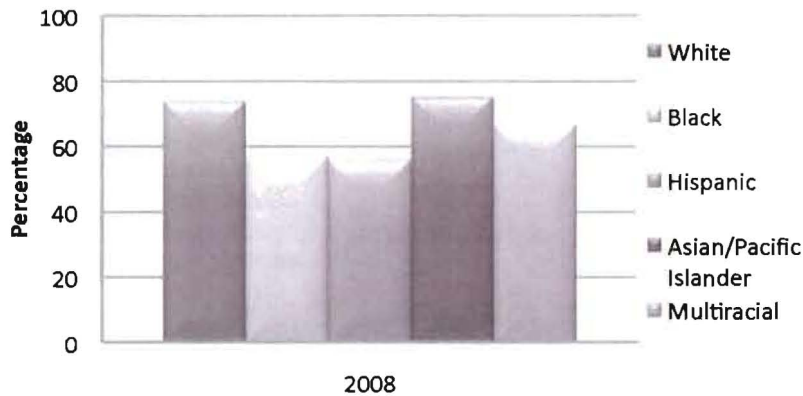


Indicator definition: In September 2009, the Florida State Board of Education (SBE) approved the state's new high school grading formula, which incorporates graduation rates into the grading of high schools. The graduation rate the SBE chose to use in the new grading formula is the state's National Governors Association (NGA) Compact rate, which includes standard and special diplomas but excludes GEDs, both regular and adult.

Source:
www.fldoe.org, Data Report: Florida Public High School Graduation Rates 2008-2009, Series 2010-09D, November 2009

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Failure to graduate from high school means lower lifetime earnings and lessened opportunities for economic success.

Alachua high school graduation rate, by race, 2008



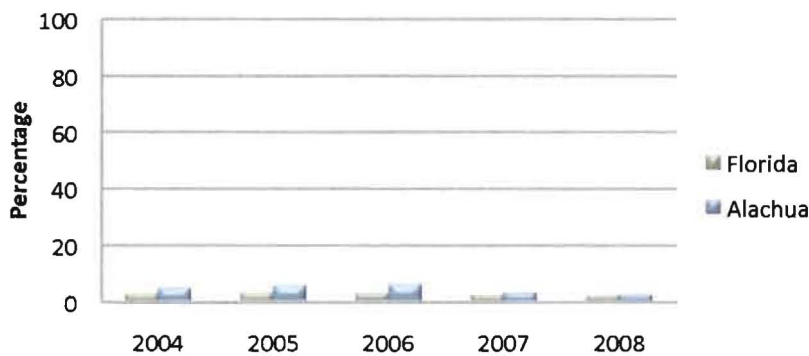
Indicator definition:
Percentage of students with standard and special diplomas but excluding GEDs, both regular and adult, by race.

Source:
www.fldoe.org, Data Report: Florida Public High School Graduation Rates 2008-2009, Series 2010-09D, November 2009

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Failure to graduate from high school means lower lifetime earnings and lessened opportunities for economic success.

ALACHUA: The county's graduation rates in general trail the state's slightly. Graduation rates for Blacks and Hispanics in Alachua are lower than those of other races by 17%.

Dropout rate

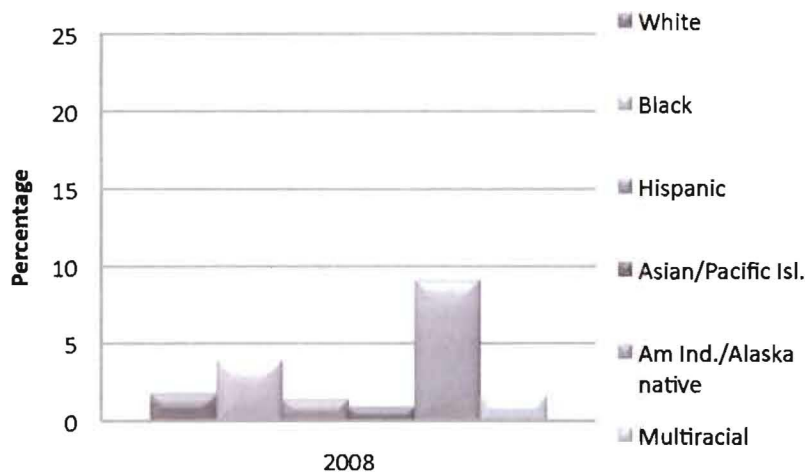


Indicator definition:
Florida's dropout rate is the percentage of 9th- through 12th-grade dropouts compared to the 9th-through 12th-grade total, year-long student membership. A dropout is defined as a student who withdraws from school for any of several reasons without transferring to another school, home education program, or adult education program.

Source:
www.fldoe.org, Data Report: Florida Public High School Graduation Rates 2008-2009, Series 2010-09D, November 2009

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Dropping out of school means lower lifetime earnings and lessened opportunities for economic success.

Alachua dropout rate, by race, 2008



Indicator definition:

Percentage of 9th- through 12th-grade dropouts compared to the 9th-through 12th-grade total, year-long student membership. A dropout is defined as a student who withdraws from school for any of several reasons without transferring to another school, home education program, or adult education program.

Source:

www.fldoe.org, Data Report: Florida Public High School Graduation Rates 2008-2009, Series 2010-09D, November 2009

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Dropping out of school means lower lifetime earnings and lessened opportunities for economic success.

ALACHUA: The county’s dropout rates, which are decreasing, still edge the state’s rates slightly. Dropout rates are higher for Blacks and American Indian/Alaskan natives in Alachua than those of other races.

A GENERAL NOTE ABOUT DROPOUT RATES VS. GRADUATION RATES: Florida’s graduation rate measures the percent of students who graduate within four years of their first enrollment in Grade 9. Subsequent to their enrollment in Grade 9, exiting transfers and deceased students are removed from the calculation. Entering transfer students are included in the count of the class with which they are scheduled to graduate, based on date of enrollment. Only recipients of diplomas are counted as graduates.

The dropout rate is the percentage of students in grades 9-12 (from the year’s total enrollment) who have withdrawn from school and have been assigned a dropout withdrawal reason code.

The Gainesville City Commission, Office of Equal Opportunity

Helpful links:

Does Readiness Matter? How Kindergarten Readiness Translates Into Academic Success

www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/www/products/DoesReadinessMatter_ALongitudinalAnalysisFINAL3.pdf

Learning to Read – Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters

http://floridakidscount.fmhi.usf.edu/_assets/docs/pubs/Reading%20Report.pdf

Research on Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/www/products/DoesReadinessMatter_ALongitudinalAnalysisFINAL3.pdf

The Costs of Disinvestment: Why States Can't Afford to Cut Smart Early Childhood Programs

www.partnershipforsuccess.org/uploads/20100402_CostsofDisinvestmentweb.pdf

Long-Run Economic Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Adult Earnings

www.partnershipforsuccess.org/uploads/20090504_LongRunAdultEarningsReport.pdf

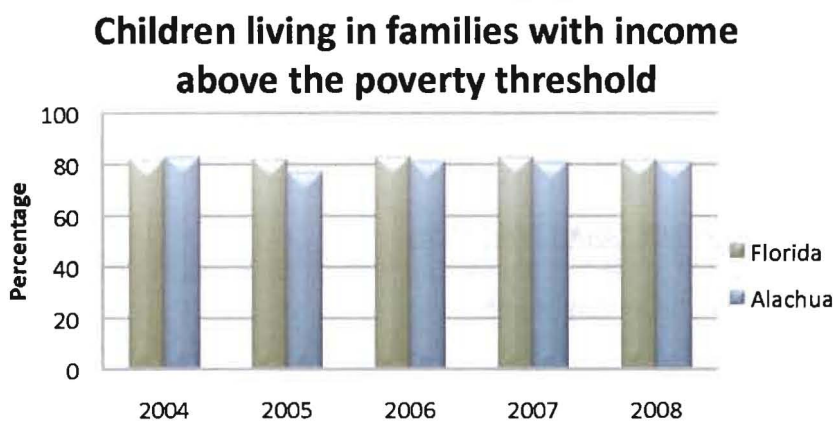
Investing in Florida's Children: Good Policy, Smart Economics

www.policygroup.org/downloads/2010-08-15%20Investing%20in%20Floridas%20Children%20-%20Good%20Policy%20Smart%20Economics.pdf

Are Alachua's children in stable and nurturing families?

Healthy child development encompasses more than just health. The early years of life matter because early experiences affect the architecture of the maturing brain. As it emerges, the quality of that architecture establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the development and behavior that follows - and getting things right the first time is easier than trying to fix them later.

When interpersonal experiences are disruptive, neglectful, abusive, unstable, or otherwise stressful, they increase the probability of poor outcomes. Severe or chronic stress releases harmful chemicals in the brain that impair cell growth and make it harder for neurons to form healthy connections.⁴⁴ The child's family and home environment can produce stress in a variety of ways, including lack of resources, abuse and neglect and domestic violence.



Indicator definition:

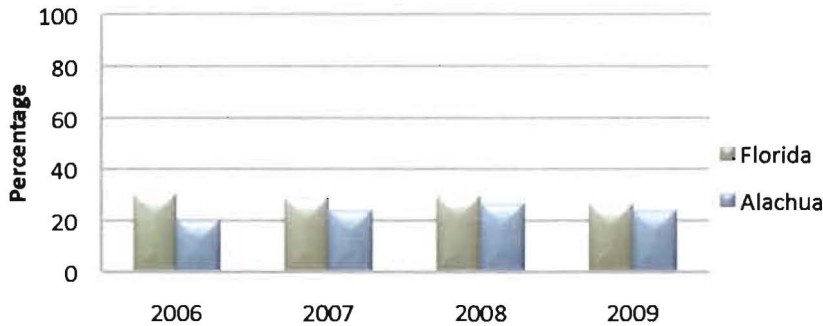
Children under age 18 living in families with incomes above the federal poverty level, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. In calendar year 2008, a family of two adults and two children fell in the "poverty" category if their annual income fell below \$21,834

Source:

www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Children who spend their lives in households that are poor are more likely to lack nutrition, quality housing and geographical stability, among other critical resources. Children who grow up poor are also more likely to become teenage parents, drop out of high school, and be unemployed as young adults.⁴⁵

Children who are maltreated



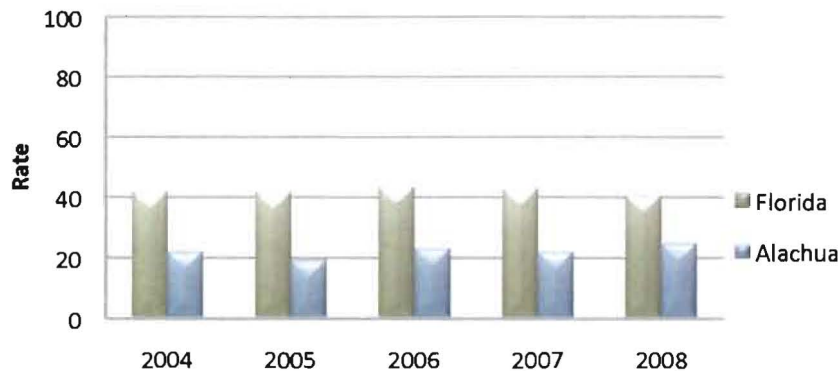
Indicator definition: Rate per 1,000 children of those who have "some indication" or "verified" evidence of being abused or neglected

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families (www.floridaperforms.org/MeasData.aspx?mcode=cf0133&graph=bar&dataset=off)

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Maltreatment at an early age is related to poor birth and developmental outcomes (40-56%),⁴⁶ and up to 82% of maltreated infants will have problems making affectionate bonds with caregivers.⁴⁷ As they grow older, maltreated children are at higher risk than non-abused children for problems in school including behavioral difficulties, truancy, delinquency, substance abuse and mental illness.⁴⁸ Many addictions and mental health problems that endure through adulthood are established early in life.⁴⁹

ALACHUA: The data for Alachua County for FY 2008-2009 show that more white children (63%) are maltreated than black children (30%).

Teen births

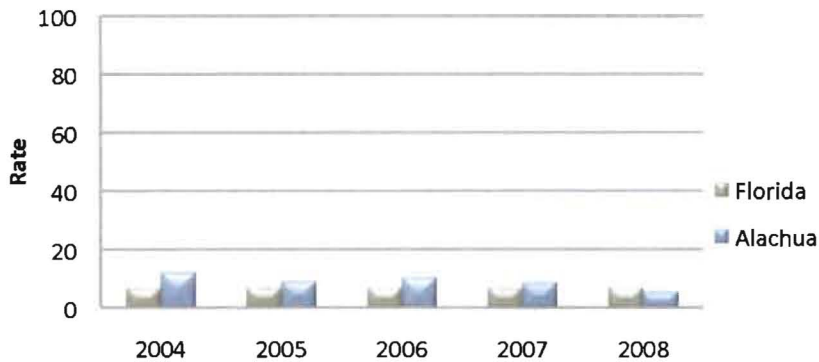


Indicator definition: Rate of births per 1,000 females 15-19

Source: www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Poverty, inadequate social support, mothers' lack of education, mothers' cognitive immaturity, and greater maternal stress have all been suggested as possible factors contributing to poor social and educational outcomes for the children of teen mothers.⁵⁰ These factors tend to be worse for younger teen mothers.

Births to unmarried women

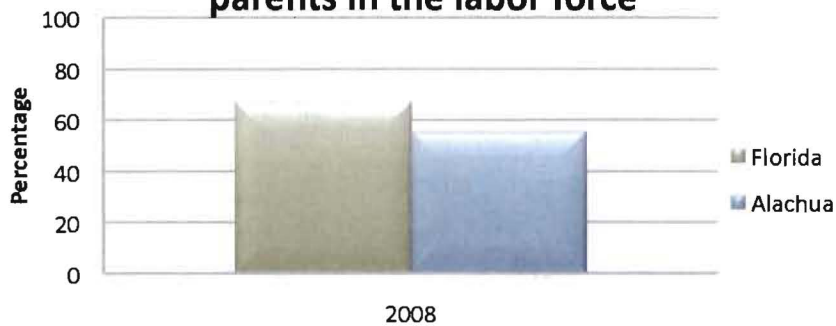


Indicator definition: Births occurring to women who were unmarried at the time of the birth

Source: www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? An economically stable family is especially important for the young child. Generally, in a two-parent family, income is greater.

Children under age 6 with all available parents in the labor force

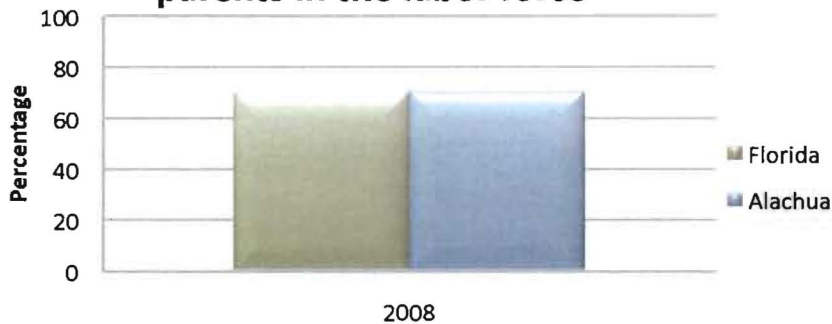


Indicator definition: The share of children under age 6 whose resident parents are in the civilian labor force

Source: www.kidscount.org and www.factfinder.census.gov

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? An economically stable family is especially important for the young child. Generally, with both parents employed, family income is greater. The percentages have not changed significantly over the past five years, and it is likely that these percentages will decrease as a result of the recent economic downturn.

Children 6-12 with all available parents in the labor force

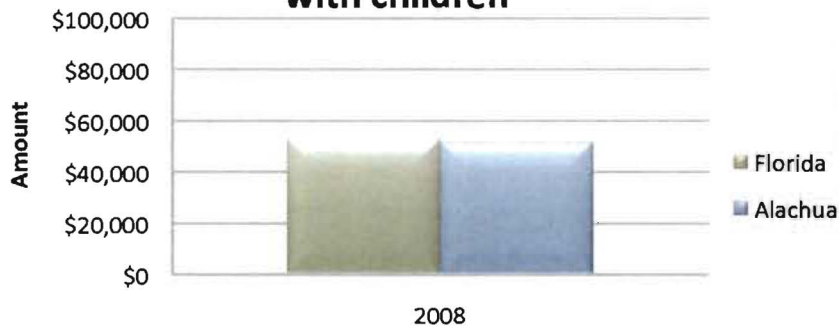


Indicator definition: The share of elementary school-age children (6 to 12) whose resident parents are in the civilian labor force

Source: www.kidscount.org and www.factfinder.census.gov

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? An economically stable family is especially important for children. Generally, with both parents employed, family income is greater. The percentages have not changed significantly over the past five years, and it is likely that these percentages will decrease as a result of the recent economic downturn.

Median family income for families with children

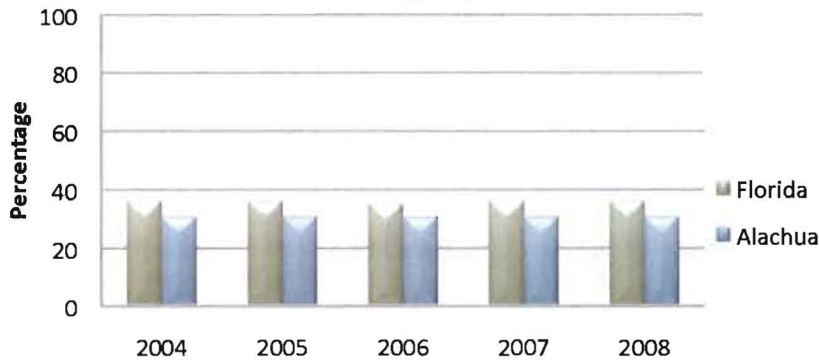


Indicator definition: Median annual income for families with related children under age 18 living in the household. "Related children" include the householder's (head of the household) children by birth, marriage, or adoption; as well as other persons under age 18 (such as nieces or nephews) who are related to the householder and living in the household.

Source: www.kidscount.org and www.factfinder.census.gov

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? An economically stable family is especially important for children. It is likely that the median family income has decreased as a result of the recent economic downturn.

Children in single-parent families



Indicator definition:

Percentage of children under age 18 who live with their own single parent either in a family or subfamily. In this definition, single-parent families may include cohabiting couples and do not include children living with married stepparents. Children who live in group quarters (for example, institutions, dormitories, or group homes) are not included in this calculation.

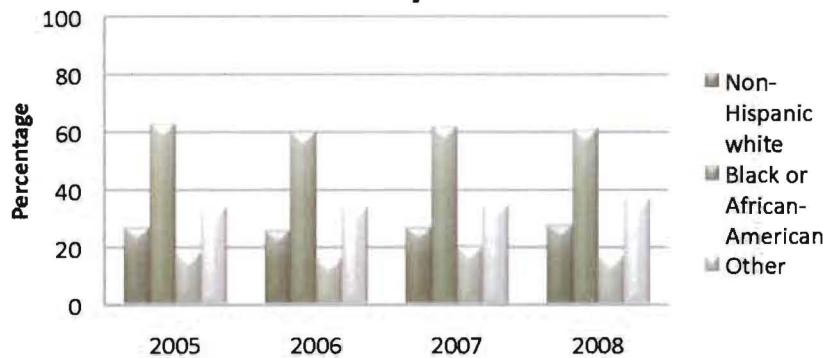
Source:

www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? An economically stable family is especially important for the young child. Generally, the income of single-parent families is less, and single parents may not have other important resources, such as time to spend with their children.

ALACHUA: Almost a third of Alachua’s children live in single-parent households. Black and African-American children in Alachua are almost twice as likely to live in a single-parent home as any other race.

Florida children in single parent families by race



Indicator definition:

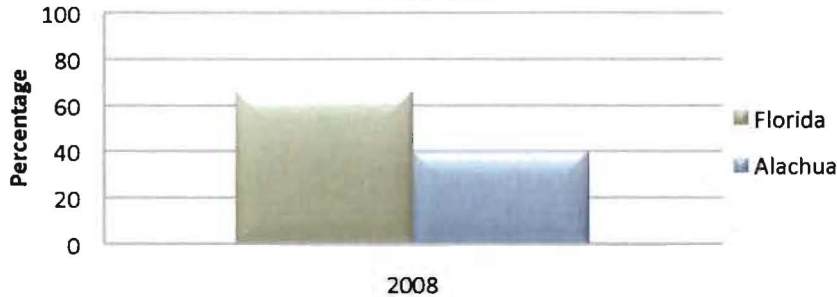
Percentage of children under age 18, by race, who live with their own single parent either in a family or subfamily. In this definition, single-parent families may include cohabiting couples and do not include children living with married stepparents. Children who live in group quarters (for example, institutions, dormitories, or group homes) are not included in this calculation.

Source:

www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? There is a disproportionate number of black or African/American children who live in single-parent families.

Children in foster care who are placed in a permanent home within 12 months



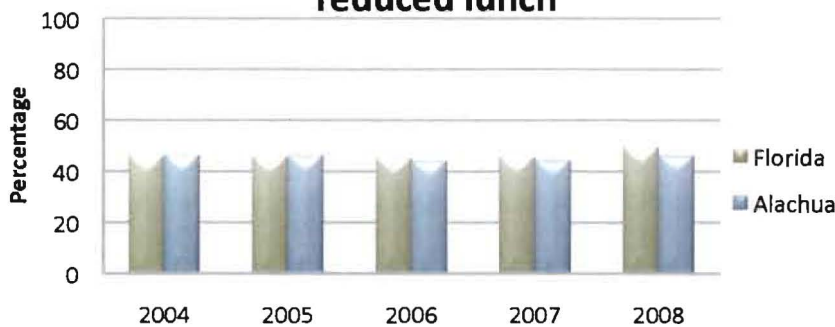
Indicator definition: Percentage of children in state foster care where the time between terminating parental rights and finalization was less than 12 months

Source: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/statistics/tpr_tbi4_2006.htm and the Florida Office of Child Adoption and Protection

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? All children need a stable home. Children who move from one care provider to another have shown impaired academic progress, especially in the early years. And moving many times increases their odds of not graduating.⁵¹

ALACHUA: Of Alachua children adopted in FY 2008-2009, nearly half were adopted by relatives. It should be noted that statewide, the percentage of children being adopted within 12 months has been steadily increasing, from 46% in 2004 to 66% in 2008.

Students eligible to participate in free/reduced lunch



Indicator definition: The number of public school students eligible to participate in the free and reduced lunch program. The percent is the number of students eligible to participate divided by the total public school enrollment. Eligibility is based on reported income.

Source: www.kidscount.org and the Division of Accountability Research and Measurement, Florida Department of Education

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? This is a measure of economic need.

The Gainesville City Commission, Office of Equal Opportunity

Helpful links:

The Children of Teen Parents

www.cpeip.fsu.edu/resourceFiles/resourceFile_78.pdf

Family Risk Factors and the Link to Adolescent Childbearing

www.cpeip.fsu.edu/resourceFiles/resourceFile_72.pdf

Economic Costs of Early Childhood Poverty: Raising Young Children Out of Poverty Can Substantially Improve Their Odds of Economic and Life Success

www.partnershipforsuccess.org/docs/researchproject_duncan_200802_paper.pdf

Kids Count Indicator Brief: Increasing the Percentage of Children Living in Two-Parent Families

www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefIncreasingthePercentag/Two%20Parent%20Families.pdf

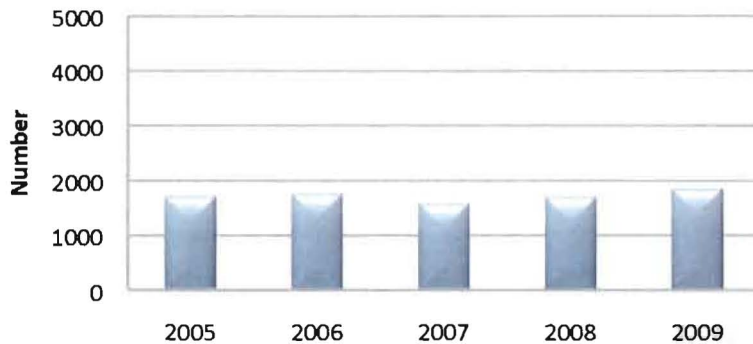
Kids Count Indicator Brief: Increasing the Number of Children Whose Parents Have Stable Employment

www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefIncreasingthePercentage/StableEmployment.pdf

Are Alachua's children in safe and supportive communities?

Research has confirmed that what young children learn, how they react to the events and people around them, and what they expect from themselves and others are deeply affected by their relationships with parents, the behavior of parents, and the environment of the home and neighborhoods in which they live.⁵² Safe and stable neighborhoods and communities engender better social interactions among residents and are healthier places for children to grow and develop. Family-friendly neighborhoods provide opportunities for children to play outside and interact with other children and adults in a clean and healthy environment. Neighborhoods associated with poverty, residential turnover, violence, significant unemployment, lack of accessibility and lack of social relationships and trust between neighbors are high-risk environments for children and families.⁵³ When we improve the public environment in which a generation develops is improved, developmental outcomes are improved. Children grow up to be better citizens who give back, thus improving the community.⁵⁴

Alachua domestic violence offenses



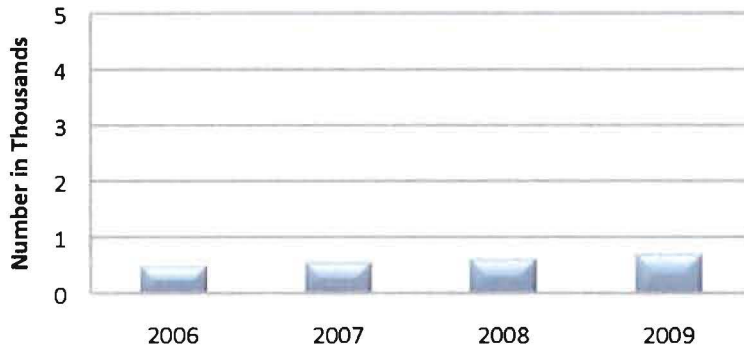
Indicator definition:
Number of domestic violence offenses in per year (includes murder, manslaughter, forcible rape, forcible sodomy, forcible fondling, aggravated assault, aggravated stalking, simple assault, threat/intimidation, stalking)

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Disruptive, neglectful, abusive, unstable or otherwise stressful interpersonal experiences increase a child's probability of poor outcomes. Severe or chronic stress releases harmful chemicals in the brain that impair cell growth and make it harder for neurons to form healthy connections.⁵⁵

ALACHUA: The number of domestic violence offenses in Alachua has recently increased. This may be due to the stresses of the economic downturn.

Alachua homeless children



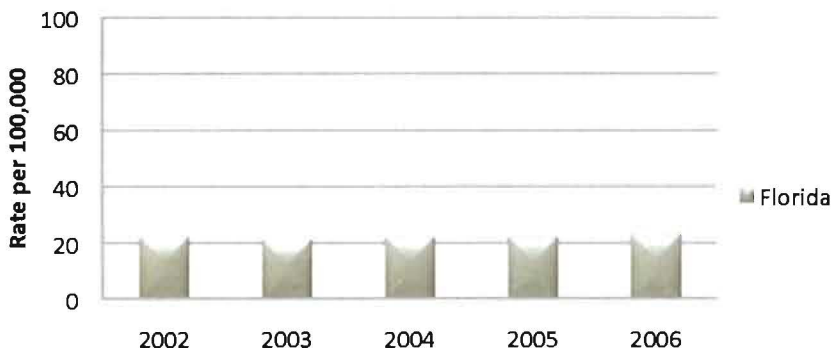
Indicator definition: Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth living in shelters, transitional housing, cars, campgrounds, motels, and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons

Source: Florida Department of Education

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? All children need a stable home. Children who move from one care provider to another have shown impaired academic progress, especially in the early years. And moving many times increases their odds of not graduating.⁵⁶

ALACHUA: The number of homeless children in Alachua has been increasing steadily since 2006.

Deaths to Florida children 1-14, from all causes



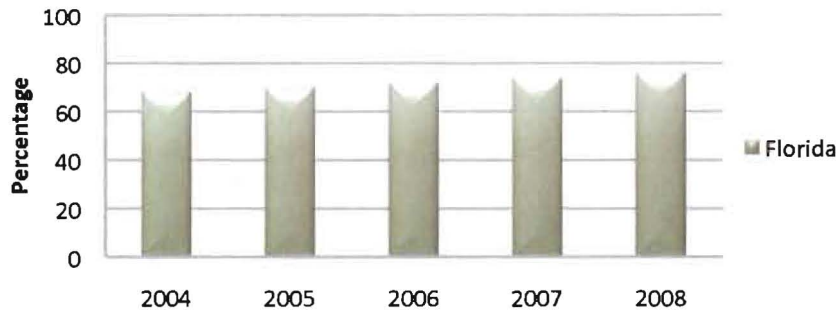
Indicator definition: Deaths to children between ages 1 and 14, from all causes, per 100,000 children in this age range.

Source: www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The child death rate not only measures absence of health, but also the effects of violence and risky behaviors such as drug use.

Alachua: Alachua County has an extremely low number of child deaths – so low they do not show in this chart.

Florida children in low-income households where housing costs exceed 30% of income



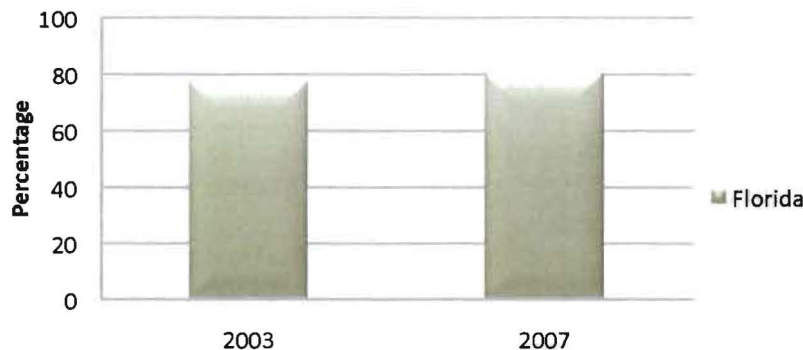
Indicator definition: The share of children living in low-income households where more than 30% of the monthly income was spent on rent, mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, and/or related expenses. Low-income households are households with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Source: www.kidscount.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The 30% threshold for housing costs is based on research on affordable housing by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD). According to HUD, households that must allocate more than 30% of their income to housing expenses, are less likely to have enough resources for food, clothing, medical care or other needs. Because they must deal with relatively scarce resources to begin with, low-income households are particularly vulnerable. It is likely that this indicator will increase as a result of the economic downturn.

ALACHUA: Comparable data from the 2008 American Community Survey shows that 37.3% of mortgaged owners in Alachua spent 30% or more of household income on selected monthly owner costs. Also in Alachua, 53% of renter-occupied units spent 30% or more of household income on rent and utilities.

Florida children in supportive neighborhoods

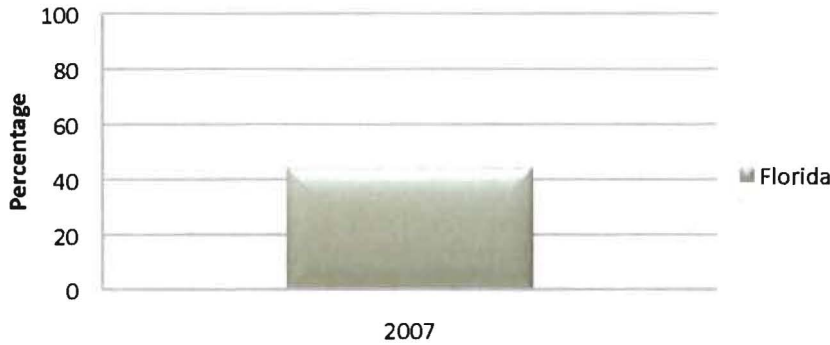


Indicator definition: Percentage of children 0-17 living in neighborhoods parents describe as supportive

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Safe and stable neighborhoods and communities engender better social interactions among residents and are healthier places for children to grow and develop.⁵⁷

Florida children in neighborhoods with a park, sidewalks, a library and a community center

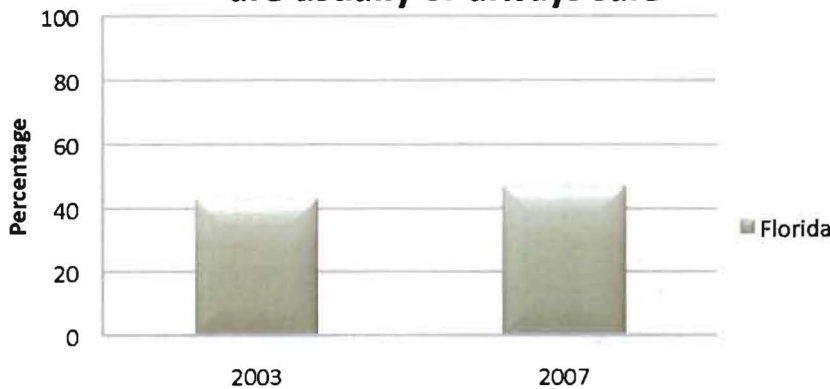


Indicator definition: Percentage of children 0-17 living in neighborhoods with a park, sidewalks, a library and a community center (weighted estimate of the number of children based on number of valid responses to survey questions)

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Family-friendly neighborhoods provide opportunities for children to play outside and interact with other children and adults in a clean and healthy environment.⁵⁸

Florida children in neighborhoods that are usually or always safe

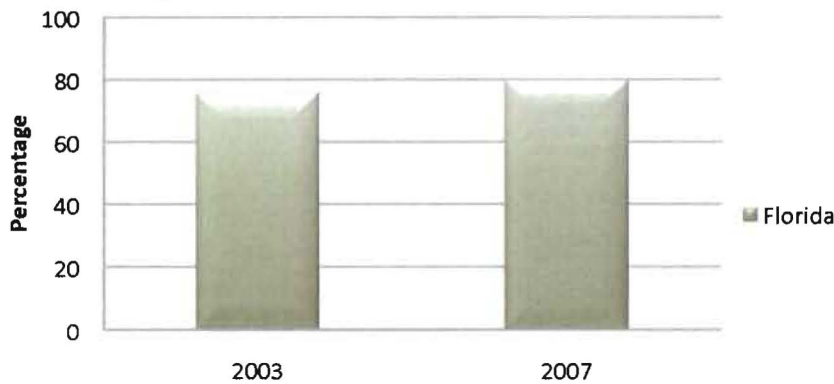


Indicator definition: Percentage of children 0-17 living in neighborhoods parents describe as usually or always safe (weighted estimate of the number of children based on number of valid responses to survey questions)

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Fear of children being harmed or killed while playing outside or walking to the neighborhood park or store is a key source of stress for parents living in high-poverty neighborhoods.⁵⁹ In contrast, parents living in safe neighborhoods tend to experience less stress and exert less energy on worrying and monitoring.

Florida children 6-17 participating in organized activities outside of school



Indicator definition:
Percentage of children 6 to 17 who participate in one or more organized activities outside of school (weighted estimate of the number of children based on number of valid responses to survey questions)

Source: www.nschdata.org

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Extracurricular activities and after-school programs provide opportunities for children to be safe and to develop positive social skills with other children and adults. Quality environments can help reduce teen pregnancy and enhance school success.⁶⁰

Helpful links:

[The Hidden Costs of the Housing Crisis: Long-Term Impacts on Young Children of Housing Affordability, Stability, and Quality](http://www.partnershipforsuccess.org/docs/research_report_200807_housing.pdf)

www.partnershipforsuccess.org/docs/research_report_200807_housing.pdf

[Child Trends Fact Sheet: Neighborhood Support and Children's Connectedness](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_02_05_ConnectednessFS.pdf)

www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_02_05_ConnectednessFS.pdf

[Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief: Ways to Promote the Positive Development of Children and Youth](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_02_27_PositiveYouthDev.pdf)

www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_02_27_PositiveYouthDev.pdf

[Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief: Practices to Foster in Out-of-School Time Programs](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_01_28_RB_Practices2Foster.pdf)

www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_01_28_RB_Practices2Foster.pdf

Analysis

Indicator data on child well-being provides a foundation on which to build an action agenda for reducing socio-economic disparities in a municipality or county, starting with children. The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce's slogan is "every path starts with passion." Such is the case with the Gainesville City Commission, which has started down a path of discovery and action driven by a passion for improving child well-being outcomes.

Thoughtful, logical planning and action can take several approaches. All activity, however, must consider the salient information revealed by the research and by the indicator data on Alachua's children. The following facts demonstrate a level of success in Alachua in addressing problems. The implications lead to an understanding that solutions to these issues already are in place and working, and/or that there is less need for a focus on these areas:



Gainesville is passionate about its children. More than 1,000 turned out for a Children's Movement rally in September 2010.

- ▶ **ALACHUA HAS A LOW TEEN BIRTH RATE COMPARED TO FLORIDA.**
Implication: The teen birth rate in Alachua has not changed appreciably over the past several years, and is about half the rate in Florida. Efforts in this area are working.

- ▶ **ALACHUA HAS A LOW NUMBER OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENSES.**
Implication: The low number of domestic violence offenses in Alachua means that fewer children are being exposed to the effects and more children have a better opportunity for positive growth and development. As with the teen birth rate, efforts in this area are working. However, this is an area to watch, since the number of cases went up in 2009, likely as a result of the economic downturn.

- ▶ **ALACHUA HAS A RELATIVELY LOW NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN, ALTHOUGH THAT NUMBER IS INCREASING, AND A RELATIVELY LOW NUMBER OF CHILD DEATHS.**
Implication: There are few children in Alachua who suffer from lack of a stable home or families from the early death of a child. Efforts in these areas appear to be working.
- ▶ **THERE IS CURRENTLY LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHITES AND BLACKS IN TERMS OF PERCENTAGES OF BIRTHS WITH LATE OR NO PRENATAL CARE.**
Implication: There are no socio-economic disparities in this indicator area. Most women are receiving prenatal care in the first trimester, although there is room for improvement in the percentages.
- ▶ **ONLY 2% OF ALACHUA'S CHILDREN 5 TO 17 HAVE DIFFICULTY SPEAKING ENGLISH.**
Implication: Very few children face the added challenge of a language barrier that can create learning difficulties.
- ▶ **ALACHUA'S FCAT SCORES SLIGHTLY EDGE FLORIDA'S.**
Implication: While still not acceptable to many, Alachua's FCAT scores have been improving over the past several years. Efforts in this area should be continued. Additional focus can be placed on the early years as a way of further improving scores.
- ▶ **ALACHUA'S POPULATION OF 16- TO 19-YEAR-OLDS WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING (3.6%) IS LOWER THAN FLORIDA'S AT 9.7%.**
Implication: Although Alachua's dropout rate is unacceptable to many, the data also show that the majority of 16- to 19-year-olds are in school and working, meaning most of Gainesville's and Alachua's high school age youth are employed or furthering their education. This bodes well for the county's current and future economic success and lessens the need for solutions to truancy, delinquency and crime among youth. Additional efforts at dropout prevention can focus on the early years.

The following facts and implications provide understanding and some specific directions for the City of Gainesville to begin addressing socio-economic disparities starting with its children:

▶ **ALMOST A THIRD OF ALACHUA'S CHILDREN ARE BLACK OR AFRICAN-AMERICAN.**

Implication: Socio-economic disparities are likely to be more prevalent.

▶ **BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN IN ALACHUA ARE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO LIVE IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME AS ANY OTHER RACE.**

Implication: Black and African-American children in Alachua are disproportionately affected by the economic impact of single parenthood.

▶ **ALACHUA SLIGHTLY TRAILS FLORIDA IN THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN UNDER 6 WITH ALL PARENTS IN THE WORKFORCE.**

Implication: Young children in Alachua are disproportionately affected by the economic impact of parental employment. (This impact has likely strengthened during the recession.)

▶ **THE NUMBER OF BLACK OR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALACHUA CHILDREN IN POVERTY MORE THAN DOUBLES THE NUMBER OF WHITES, AND REPRESENTS 60% OF ALL ALACHUA CHILDREN IN POVERTY.**

Implication: Black and African-American children in Alachua are disproportionately affected by the economy in general, and their family's economic well-being, in particular.

▶ **THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED BY KidCARE (PRIMARYLY LOW-INCOME CHILDREN) IN ALACHUA COUNTY HAS BEEN DECREASING SINCE 2004.**

Implication: More children in Alachua have no health insurance, a situation likely to be exacerbated by the recession. Without health insurance, children are less likely to receive preventive and routine care.



Young people are disproportionately affected by poverty.

Next Steps

It is commendable that Alachua County was recently named one of “The Best Communities for Young People” by America’s Promise Alliance. The Alliance is a cross-sector partnership of more than 400 corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups who want to improve outcomes for children. Alachua was among seven Florida communities recognized for “taking bold and effective steps to help their youth graduate and lead healthy, productive lives,” according to Alma Powell, chair of the Alliance.⁶¹

Much credit is given to the Alachua County Children’s Alliance for working toward increasing after-school help for those in need, reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates, and reducing the number of children in foster care.⁶² The Alliance includes Success by Six, the Department of Children and Families, county and city agencies, schools, the library system, Gainesville police and Alachua sheriff, health department, civic leaders and others.

These accomplishments are significant and the data show the community is addressing some needs in important ways. Unlike many communities, Alachua is in the enviable position of fine-tuning its work to ensure all children, including those affected by socio-economic disparities, achieve the “five promises” promoted by America’s Promise Alliance: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start and healthy development, an effective education, and opportunities to help others.



Alachua County is one of seven Florida communities named among the top 100 communities for young people.

As this report previously discussed, there are five facts that can help guide Gainesville in moving forward to address socio-economic disparities:

- ▶ **RISKS FOR POOR OUTCOMES DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT YOUNG CHILDREN, LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AND MINORITY CHILDREN.**⁶³
- ▶ **POVERTY POSES RISKS FOR CHILDREN OF ALL RACES.**⁶⁴
- ▶ **GAPS IN THE ABILITIES AND SKILLS BETWEEN DISADVANTAGED AND ADVANTAGED CHILDREN OCCUR EARLY.**⁶⁵

- ▶ **FAMILY ENVIRONMENTS ARE IMPORTANT PREDICTORS OF A VARIETY OF CHILD WELL BEING OUTCOMES, YET A GREATER PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ARE BEING BORN INTO DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES, INCLUDING MINORITIES AND IMMIGRANT GROUPS.⁶⁶**
- ▶ **IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IMPROVES OUTCOMES FOR ALL CHILDREN.**

Therefore, the data, the community work done thus far, and the research all suggest that, moving forward, the City of Gainesville:

1. FOCUS ON YOUNG CHILDREN 0-5

It has been established that the risks for poor outcomes disproportionately affect young children, low-income children and minority children,⁶⁷ and that poverty poses risks for children of all races.⁶⁸ The data show that Alachua has a significant under-18 population, with minority representation larger than the state percentage. Alachua's under-18 population also has a large percentage of children in single-mother families, which tend to face tougher economic struggles than two-parent families. Minorities also are over-represented in this population. Research clearly shows that ability gaps between the advantaged and disadvantaged occur early in life, and that the early years are the best time for closing the gaps and producing skills needed for our future workforce.

2. CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORTS AND INTEGRATE INTO ACTIONS

The family environment is a major contributor to a child's ability, yet more children are being born into disadvantaged families where supportive elements are lacking.⁶⁹ For many of Alachua's families, there is only one parent to provide for the needs of the family, including shelter and food. In tough economic times like this, many have lost their jobs and their only source of stability for their family. Work force development solutions are more critical than ever.

3. ENHANCE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS POVERTY, PARTICULARLY AMONG FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Eliminating poverty is an elusive goal for municipalities, counties, states and nations. Yet, in all its complexity, doing so can positively change many unacceptable outcomes, including educational achievement, workforce success and ultimately community viability. Addressing efforts to reduce poverty should begin with the youngest children for whom, logically, there is the greatest potential. For example, research has shown that eliminating poverty early in childhood can increase the amounts of lifetime adult earnings by \$50,000 to \$100,000!⁷⁰

4. FOCUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ONGOING EFFORTS THROUGH A RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS LEADING TO A COMMUNITY-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR REDUCING DISPARITIES

Alachua County already has demonstrated its capacity to engage stakeholders to address community goals for its children. Fine-tuning that work and setting a focus on reducing disparities can be reasonably accomplished through a results-based accountability (RBA) process.⁷¹ RBA starts with a definition of the goal population and ends with action plans that specify performance measures and link to budgets. Figure 5 represents the steps leading to a community-wide plan.

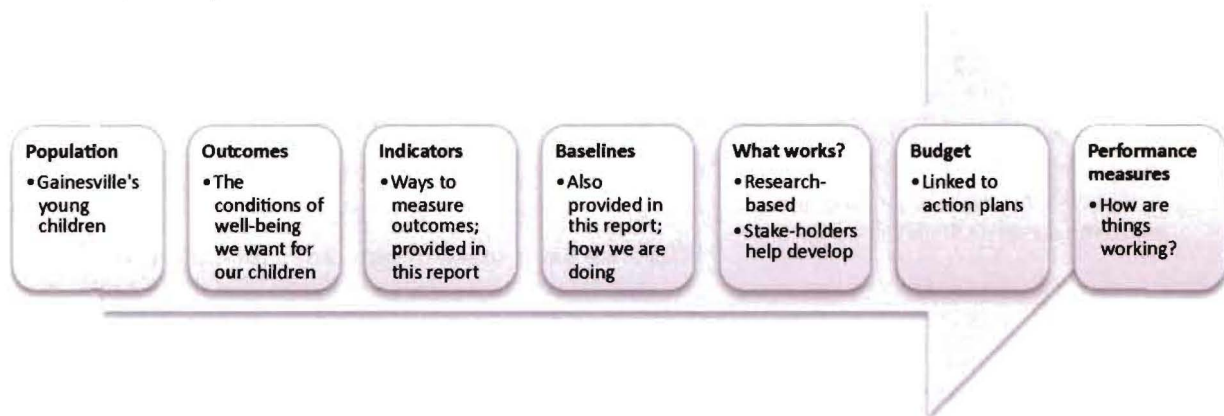


Figure 5 – Results-Based Accountability Model

The City already has indicated an interest in addressing socio-economic disparities by focusing on children. That is the first step of the progress. This report has articulated desired outcomes and provided indicator data on the status of Gainesville’s and Alachua’s children and youth. Agreement on the outcomes desired provides the foundation for measuring and tracking progress toward desired results.

An important component of an outcomes framework is “what works” to achieve the outcomes. “What works” is increasingly not defined on a programmatic level, but instead conceptualized as a collection of strategies or actions – informed policies, best practices, accumulated wisdom and evaluated programs - that have a reasoned chance of producing results. “Strategies are made up of our best thinking about what works, and include the contributions of many partners. No single action by any one agency can create the improved results we want and need.”⁷²

ALTHOUGH GAINESVILLE HAS MANY NATURAL ASSETS, THERE IS NO THRIVING INDUSTRY OR A MAJOR LEAGUE SPORTS TEAM TO FINANCIALLY BACK LOCAL EFFORTS TO INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY. IMPROVEMENTS ARE UNDERTAKEN THROUGH THE SUSTAINED COMMITMENT OF THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE.

Source: *Gainesville’s Promise*, application for a planning grant to become a Promise Neighborhood.

The stakeholders' tasks moving forward are to take an objective, research-based view of what works to change the population-level outcomes in the direction desired by the City. With the baseline data in this report, common goals, and knowing "what works," stakeholders can then guide the development and use of performance measures and budgets that support progress.

NO ONE AGENCY OR PROGRAM "OWNS" A COMMON GOAL; WE ALL DO. BUT A SINGLE AGENCY OR PROGRAM CAN AND SHOULD OWN THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES OR OUTCOMES FOR WHICH IT IS ACCOUNTABLE AND OVER WHICH IT HAS CONTROL.

Source: Friedman, M. (2005). *Trying hard is not good enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Trafford Publishing.

Performance measures are measures of how well public and private programs and agencies are working. They should align to one or more of the outcome indicators and be specified in action plans. Indicators measure the ends we want for children and families. Performance measures tell how well we achieve the outcomes. "The focus is on results and performance, not just on the number of clients served or encounters. The question asked of agencies and service providers shifts from 'Did you do what they told you to do?' to 'Did it work? What difference did it make in outcomes for children?'"⁷³

There are two approaches the City might take:

The first is that the City may wish to begin by building on work that already has been done. As mentioned previously, the Promise Neighborhood application provided data on two neighborhoods for which risk indicators show strong needs. Already in these neighborhoods, stakeholders have joined forces to begin addressing needs. The City could spearhead a results accountability process that would further define successful strategies, where gaps occur, and track progress toward goals. The second is that the City may wish to change indicators for all children in Gainesville, which would mean a city-wide approach based on what every child needs to thrive.

Either way, the City's plan for addressing socio-economic disparities starting with children must:

- ▶ **START WITH ENDS, WORK BACKWARD TO THE MEANS.** Based on the data in this report, the City should specify what it wants, how it will recognize it and what it will take to get there. Be clear and disciplined about language. Avoid jargon.
- ▶ **COMMIT TO WORKING ON CROSS-COMMUNITY CONDITIONS OF WELL-BEING AS OPPOSED TO INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS OR SERVICES.** Keep accountability for populations separate from accountability for programs and agencies.
- ▶ **USE THE DATA TO DRIVE A DISCIPLINED, BUSINESS-LIKE DECISION MAKING PROCESS TO GET BETTER, AND TO GAUGE SUCCESS OR FAILURE AGAINST A BASELINE.**

▶ **INVOLVE A BROAD SET OF PARTNERS AND GET FROM TALK TO ACTION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.**

- ✓ With partners, review this report and the City's desired results. Study what the research demonstrates will work. There are many successful efforts at reducing socio-economic disparities starting with children. The Harlem Children's Zone, for example, has some amazing results (www.hcz.org). This report also has shown that, in broad terms, Gainesville's young children need quality early learning, health insurance and economically stable families.
- ✓ Align "what works" with the desired results, determine how community programs/services fit with "what works" and where there are gaps, and determine community capacity to change indicators in a positive direction. Specify strategies to be used by partners.
- ✓ If capacity is lacking, determine how to address the lack through fund raising or other measures.

▶ **IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES AGREED UPON BY PARTNERS.**

▶ **TRACK PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND POPULATION RESULTS TO REFINE/REDIRECT EFFORTS.**

▶ **COMMIT TO THE LONG-TERM.** Changing the effects of socio-economic disparities is not done quickly or impatiently. The City and all partners must agree that disciplined and informed actions with measured results over time will provide the guidance necessary for enduring change.

About This Document

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Suggested citation for this work:

Stowell, K. (2010). *For Gainesville's children: rectifying the disadvantages of socio-economic disparities*. Gainesville, FL: The Office of Equal Opportunity, City of Gainesville

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