

Governor Scott: Florida Families First Budget Invests in Keeping Florida Families and Visitors Safe

Governor Rick Scott today highlighted investments in the Florida Families First

On May 20, 2013, in News Releases, by Staff

budget that ensures the continued protections of Florida families and visitors to Florida. The Florida Families First budget provides necessary resources to our state and local criminal justice agencies and the judicial branch to ensure the safety and protection of Florida families and visitors through effective investigations, prosecution, and targeted rehabilitation and prevention efforts.

Governor Scott said, “Just last week, we had the opportunity to celebrate the great news that Florida’s crime rate is at a 42-year low. Having a low crime rate is important to our goal of creating jobs and opportunities for Florida families, and making our state the best place in the nation to live, work and raise a family.”

The Florida Families First budget supports Governor Scott’s commitment to keeping Florida families and visitors safe:

- **Ensuring Safe Prisons:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$13.7 million to hire more than 245 correctional officers at high risk prisons. The Florida Families First budget invests \$1.3 million for critical prison facility maintenance and repairs and \$500,000 for prisoner transport vans.
- **Safe Communities through Security and Effective Rehabilitation to Reduce Recidivism:** The Florida Families First budget invests:
 - \$3.8 million for the added security of electronic monitoring of inmates on work detail in community work release centers;
 - \$2.9 million for the opening of the newly built Gadsden Reentry Center, which will bring jobs into Gadsden County for targeted rehabilitative programs for inmates within three years of release; and
 - \$2.6 million expands community based substance abuse treatment beds for drug offenders.
- **Continuing Reforms in Juvenile Justice:** With continued reductions to residential commitment programs for youth as a result of effective prevention and intervention programs, the Florida Families First budget provides more than \$10 million to expand effective prevention and treatment programs for youth at risk to engage in criminal activity. This investment includes:
 - More than \$2 million to expand slots in existing PACE Center for Girls across the state and open a new school in Miami-Dade;
 - \$1.5 million to expand the children-in-need/families-in-need counseling services to at-risk youth in rural counties;
 - \$5 million for Boys and Girls Clubs to expand their Street Smart, Gang Prevention and Prevention through Reentry programs statewide; and \$1.5 million for the Big Brothers Big Sisters programs targeting youth of incarcerated parents for mentoring and counseling.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Children:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$3.8 million to increase volunteers to represent dependent children through court proceedings and \$323,000 to provide attorney ad-litem for dependent, disabled children in nursing homes.
- **Protecting Families from Abuse and Violence:** The Florida Families First budget provides:
 - \$3.5 million for the continued funding of the 25 child advocacy centers statewide that provide coordinated services for abused children;

- \$200,000 for the Florida Coalition on Domestic Violence;
- \$100,000 for the Justice Coalition;
- \$316,000 to continue the Domestic Violence Offender Monitoring program all designed to protect, assist, and prevent further senseless violence among our families;
- \$500,000 for Lauren’s Kids to prevent sexual abuse of children through education and awareness; and
- \$2.9 million to enhance child abuse investigative teams led by local

Sheriffs to investigate suspected child abuse, neglect, abandonment, and sexual abuse.

- **Rape Crisis Centers:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$2.5 million for the state’s 30 rape crisis centers.
- **Human Trafficking:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$3 million to provide shelter and services to children who have fallen victims to human trafficking.

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Secretary Wansley Walters said, “Today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders, and what we do for them now will impact our state’s communities for generations to come. Governor Scott’s Florida Families First budget funds the priorities outlined in the Roadmap to System Excellence, DJJ’s plan to transform the current juvenile justice system into a more sustainable model that focuses on ensuring the right youth receive the right services at the right time. The crux is a greater emphasis on prevention and diversion services, which save taxpayer dollars while also ensuring youth have the greatest chance at a successful future. I applaud Governor Scott for his foresight and I look forward to advancing the proposals set forth in the Roadmap.”

Florida Department of Corrections Secretary Michael D. Crews: “On behalf of the more than 23,000 men and women of the Florida Department of Corrections, we applaud Governor Scott for his strong leadership and support to ensure a secure and safe Florida prison system. Through targeted investments in effective rehabilitation programs, we will no doubt, continue to drive Florida’s recidivism rate down and ensure safe communities for Florida families and visitors.”

Dr. John Armstrong, State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health said, “Preventing sexual violence in Florida’s communities and providing access to services for victims of sexual assault are public health priorities. I want to thank the Governor for including \$2.5 million for the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence in his Florida Families First budget and the legislature for this commitment in the budget. These resources go directly to support certified rape crisis centers around the state that provide crisis intervention, therapy and other sexual battery recovery services to those impacted by sexual assault.”

Florida Sheriffs Association President and Highlands County Sheriff Susan Benton: “The safety of Floridians is the number one priority for all of Florida’s Sheriffs. Governor Scott is putting our youth first by expanding effective prevention and treatment programs for youth, maintaining funding for the treatment of the mentally ill and substance abusers in our jails, and by continuing to fund the Child Abuse Investigative teams led by Sheriffs.”

Jennifer Dritt, LCSW (LA), Executive Director for the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence said, “As Executive Director of the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence, and on behalf of our network of 30 certified rape crisis programs, I applaud Governor Scott for recognizing the need to provide more funding for rape crisis services. When our Governor recommended an appropriation of \$2.5 million for rape crisis services, he understood it was time that Florida make a commitment to providing the resources and services needed by the men, women, children, and families living with the trauma of sexual victimization. This appropriation will make a world of difference in the lives of Florida’s citizens, and we’re grateful for his commitment.”

Cathy Craig-Myers, Executive Director of the Florida Juvenile Justice Association: “The Florida Juvenile Justice Association applauds Governor Scott’s continued support and heightened focus on front end services. These critical interventions make a huge difference in the outcomes of our at-risk youth. We are experiencing positive results in these targeted investments, which often help to keep youth from entering the juvenile justice system altogether, and which also reflect the best use of Florida taxpayer dollars.”

Mark Fontaine, Executive Director, Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association: “This budget reflects a strong commitment on behalf of the Governor and the legislature to provide critical drug treatment and rehabilitation programs that will ensure public safety while providing offenders the essential tools needed to live a drug and crime free life”