

Child Welfare System Outcomes

Exploring the Impact of Family Resource Centers
Partnership for Strong Families' Family Resource Centers

The Partnership for Strong Families operates four Family Resource Centers (FRCs) that are the focus of this report. These include the SWAG Family Resource Center, Library Partnership Resource Center, Cone Park Library Resource Center (all in Gainesville), and the NorthStar Family Resource Center (in Lake City). These FRCs have been situated in areas and neighborhoods known to have a historical disproportionate number of children and families investigated for child maltreatment, engaged with the Florida Department of Children and Families, and served by the Partnership for Strong Families (PSF)—the local Community-Based Care agency providing in home services for families and out-of-home care for children. As part of a broader evaluation study, efforts were made to study trends in select child welfare system outcomes (i.e., the rate of verified maltreatment and out-of-home placements) within the geographic areas served by FRCs. In addition, trends related to child welfare system involvement (prior to and following receipt of FRC services and supports) among a sub-group of consenting patrons was conducted¹.

The services and supports offered by each FRC are structured in accordance with a Protective Factors Framework to strengthen families and prevent the likelihood of child maltreatment and child welfare system engagement². The Library Partnership Resource Center was the first FRC to open in July 2009. The SWAG Family Resource Center opened its doors to the community in June 2012. The Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013 and began operating full-time in May 2014 but closed in August 2023. It was closed as part of a budget reduction plan by PSF, driven primarily by unprecedented costs associated with out-of-home care for children. The NorthStar Family Resource Center began formal operations in March of 2021 as part of a federally funded (Children's Bureau) grant.

Verified Maltreatment Trends and Comparisons

Efforts were made to identify the rate of verified child maltreatments within the service catchment areas for each FRC in Gainesville and Lake City and compare these trends to county data for the same time frame³. To accomplish this task, the specific geographic service area for each FRC needed to be determined, incident counts of verified maltreatments were obtained for each county (under PSF auspices) and estimated for each FRC service area using the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) data, and Census Bureau population data were used to calculate a rate of verified child maltreatment per 1000 children in each geospatial area under examination⁴. Consultation with data specialists at PSF responsible for FSFN data determined the most reliable and valid retrospective data for these analyses included data between 2015 and 2023.

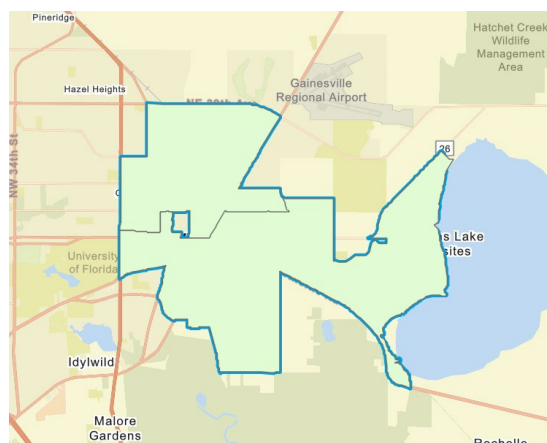
FRC Geospatial Service Areas

The smallest geospatial service area is affiliated with SWAG Family Resource Center, operating in an impoverished neighborhood on the west side of Gainesville boarding I-75 highway. The Cone Park Library Resource Center (closed in August of 2023) and the Library Partnership Resource Center (remains open) had service areas that overlapped on the east side of Gainesville. Although situated in specific neighborhoods, patrons from an expanded area sought services and supports from both FRCs. Given the overlap in service areas (and inability to distinguish an exclusive set of Census blocks and tracts for each), data from both service areas are combined for analyses. The geographic service area for the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) was expansive and occupied a large portion of Columbia County. Although located in Lake City, patrons from throughout the county (both urban and rural) sought services and supports from NSFRC.

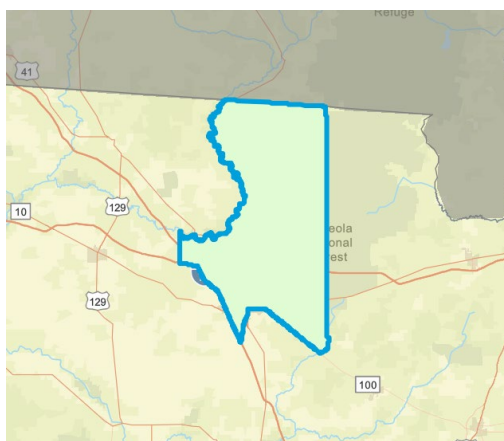
SWAG Family Resource Center



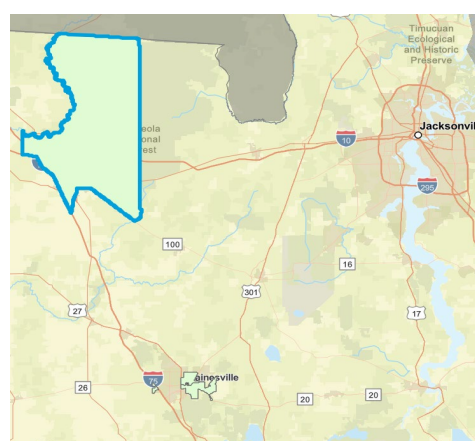
Cone Park and Library Partnership FRCs



NorthStar Family Resource Center



ALL Partnership FRCs in North Florida



Verified Maltreatment Trends and Comparisons

County and FRC Trend Comparisons

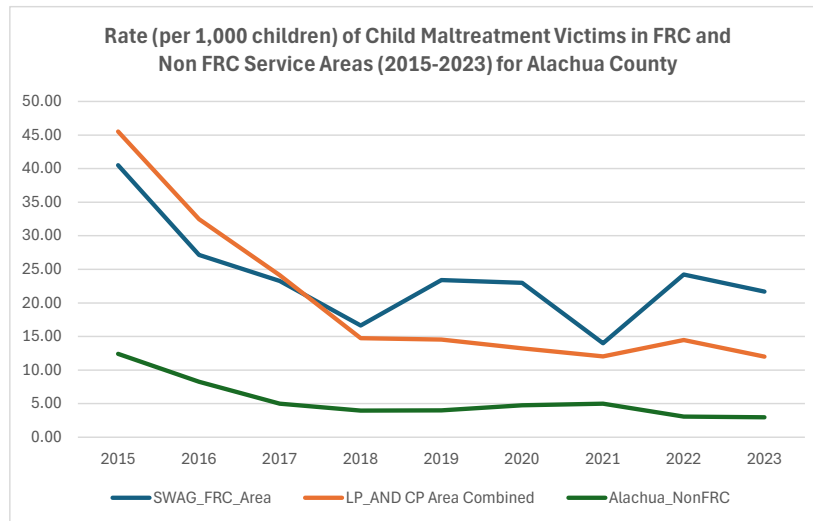
The table below displays the rate of verified maltreatment victims per 1000 children in the population (using FSFN and Census Bureau data) between 2015 and 2023 for the counties served by the Partnership for Strong Families and specific areas served by project FRCs. Rates for FRC service areas represent estimates given available FSFN and Census Bureau data⁵.

County	Rate of Verified Child Maltreatment Victims Per 1000 Children								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alachua	16.18	10.84	7.12	5.40	5.47	5.98	5.82	4.42	4.06
Baker	14.59	7.62	10.26	10.31	9.06	7.48	4.51	5.32	2.49
Bradford	18.83	18.39	16.47	9.47	8.49	4.81	8.73	8.22	9.28
Columbia	22.62	17.89	14.39	7.58	8.65	9.45	6.79	4.95	6.20
Dixie	22.63	20.61	13.40	15.73	4.66	9.89	7.79	11.73	12.97
Gilchrist	11.09	10.78	7.62	10.11	7.23	6.14	5.51	9.75	4.93
Hamilton	16.73	13.26	8.45	6.99	6.59	7.64	4.41	4.42	5.06
Lafayette	9.56	8.25	8.20	2.03	3.69	4.71	5.01	8.13	3.43
Levy	12.93	10.22	12.66	15.85	11.58	4.87	5.51	8.78	9.09
Madison	14.47	9.70	8.45	1.14	6.35	8.53	4.15	2.78	4.66
Suwannee	15.36	11.83	13.65	8.59	6.37	4.95	7.14	5.47	5.11
Taylor	24.23	16.06	14.13	5.67	7.17	9.77	6.11	5.97	6.28
Union	7.93	20.03	13.48	2.77	4.79	4.24	3.12	1.20	5.76
Service Area									
SWAG FRC	40.49	27.14	23.26	16.64	23.41	23.00	14.00	24.23	21.68
LPRC and CPLRC Combined	45.51	32.49	24.13	14.74	14.54	13.23	12.02	14.47	12.02
Gainesville ALL FRC Areas	44.05	30.70	23.84	15.20	16.64	15.66	12.38	15.92	13.45
Alachua County Non-FRC Area	12.40	8.25	5.00	3.97	4.01	4.75	5.01	3.06	2.97
NorthStar FRC	82.58	45.16	40.96	36.46	27.71	22.64	13.55	11.55	13.79
Columbia County Non-FRC Area	10.79	12.32	8.63	3.90	4.42	6.24	5.00	3.30	4.26

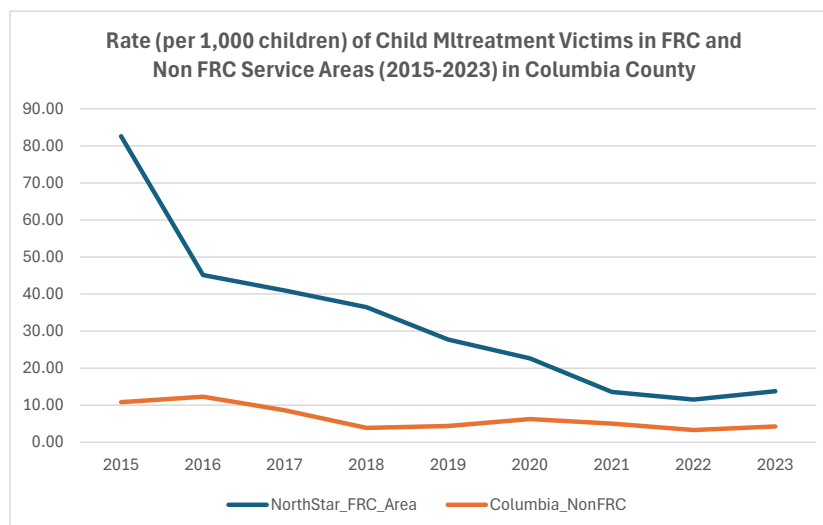
Data from the above table and figures below clearly suggest that the FRCs are placed in locations where need for primary child maltreatment initiatives are of paramount importance. With respect to FRCs in Gainesville (Alachua County) gauging the impact of FRCs (with these data) is limited as trend lines do not include data for years prior to the start of operations in the neighborhoods served (2009, 2012, and 2014 for LPRC, SWAG FRC, and CPLRC respectively). Subsequently, valid time series modelling is not possible; findings and interpretations of trends are qualified by this fact. Regardless, the rate of child maltreatment victims in the areas served by the FRCs (SWAG FRC, LPRC and CPLRC combined, and all Gainesville FRCs combined) is exponentially higher than the rate observed for all other areas of Alachua County (including Gainesville) not served by FRCs for all years. Between 2015 and 2018, there appears to be a step decline in the rate of child maltreatment victims in the areas served by SWAG FRC (from 40.49 to 16.64 per 1,000 children) and LPRC and CPLRC combined (from 45.51 to 14.74 per 1,000 children); however, concurrent reductions (in rates) are observed for areas in Alachua County not served by FRCs. When the ratio of child maltreatment rates in FRC areas to non-FRC areas (in Alachua County) is examined, there is notable fluctuation in these ratios when SWAG FRC data is considered. The SWAG FRC rate is 3.27 times larger (than Non FRC areas in Alachua County) in 2015 and gradually increases to 5.84 times larger in 2019 before reducing (after the funded project begins and concurrent with the COVID-19 outbreak) to only 2.80 times larger in 2021. The rate ratio/difference then spikes to 7.93 and 7.30 higher for SWAG FRC in 2022 and 2023 respectively. When the ratio of child maltreatment rates in areas served by LPRC and CPLRC to non-FRC areas (in Alachua County) is examined, there is greater stability with the rate fluctuating between 3.67 and 4.83 times higher for the FRC area served between 2015 and 2018. This rate difference gradually reduces to 2.40 times greater by 2021, and spikes to 4.73 and 4.05 higher for LPRC and CPLRC (combined) in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Verified Maltreatment Trends and Comparisons

County and FRC Trend Comparisons



As with the FRCs in Alachua County, NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) serves an area where the rate of verified child maltreatment is exponentially higher than the rate observed in all areas within Columbia County. Implementation planning for NSFRC began in 2020, with the facility beginning operations in 2021. Prior to the opening of NSFRC there was a gradual reduction of the rate of child maltreatment from 82.58 per thousand children (in 2015) to 22.64 per thousand children in 2020. This rate continued to decline after NSFRC opened to 11.55 in 2022 prior to a slight increase to 13.79 per thousand children in 2023. When the ratio of child maltreatment rates in areas served by NSFRC to non-FRC areas (in Columbia County) is examined, the rate varies from a low of 3.67 (in 2016) to a high of 9.35 (in 2018) times higher for the NSFRC area served between 2015 and 2019. This rate difference gradually reduces to 2.71 times greater by 2021, before slightly increasing to 3.50 and 3.24 times higher for NSFRC in 2022 and 2023 respectively.



Out-of-Home Placement Trends and Comparisons

County and FRC Trend Comparisons

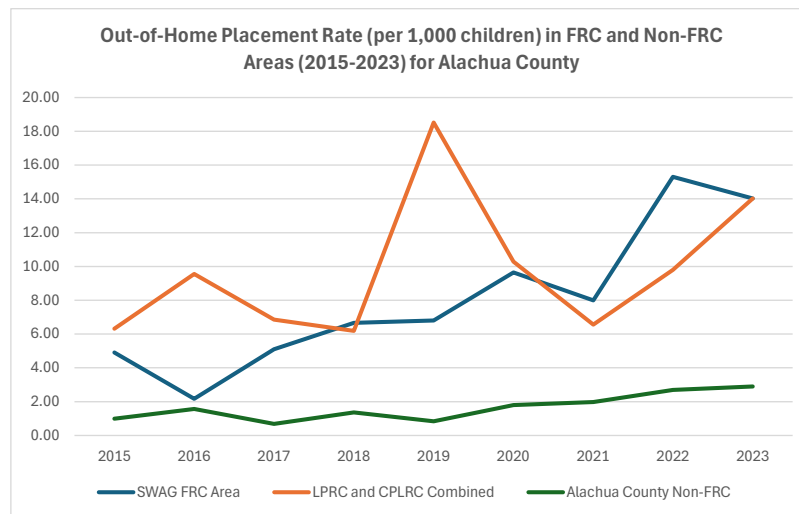
The table below displays the rate of out-of-home placements per 1000 children in the population (using FSFN and Census Bureau data) between 2015 and 2023 for the counties served by the Partnership for Strong Families and specific areas served by project FRCs. Rates for FRC service areas represent estimates given available FSFN and Census Bureau data⁶.

County	Rate of Out-of-Home Placements Per 1000 Children								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alachua	1.58	2.20	1.31	1.99	2.56	2.74	2.50	3.54	4.06
Baker	2.21	2.24	1.19	3.88	5.94	1.95	2.86	6.84	6.46
Bradford	1.85	3.19	2.93	1.46	1.66	4.44	2.91	6.58	8.93
Columbia	4.67	2.24	2.76	3.07	3.49	2.80	4.61	8.62	11.29
Dixie	0.00	2.66	4.25	5.90	2.33	5.27	4.22	12.73	29.17
Gilchrist	0.85	0.28	0.85	0.28	1.34	1.28	2.20	4.18	5.97
Hamilton	2.91	1.47	1.10	0.74	1.46	1.46	0.37	10.32	6.14
Lafayette	1.06	3.85	3.83	4.58	3.16	1.77	0.63	6.78	11.68
Levy	0.87	1.37	1.13	3.02	1.89	2.12	3.83	4.39	8.75
Madison	1.32	3.77	1.13	0.85	1.16	2.65	2.07	4.94	8.39
Suwannee	1.49	2.02	1.27	2.09	2.93	2.74	2.77	8.26	10.22
Taylor	3.46	6.88	2.55	2.83	1.85	9.06	4.70	17.67	18.85
Union	2.76	1.38	2.07	1.39	2.05	3.18	2.50	5.38	4.24
Service Area									
SWAG FRC	4.91	2.17	5.10	6.66	6.80	9.64	8.00	15.31	14.03
LPRC and CPLRC Combined	6.32	9.56	6.85	6.19	18.52	10.29	6.56	9.79	14.02
Gainesville ALL FRC Areas	5.91	7.08	6.28	6.31	15.75	10.13	6.82	10.61	14.02
Alachua County Non-FRC Area	0.99	1.56	0.68	1.36	0.84	1.80	1.97	2.70	2.90
NorthStar FRC	12.74	5.60	6.27	15.63	10.66	5.00	8.82	17.96	27.58
Columbia County Non-FRC Area	3.08	1.55	2.00	1.47	1.89	2.27	3.50	6.27	7.13

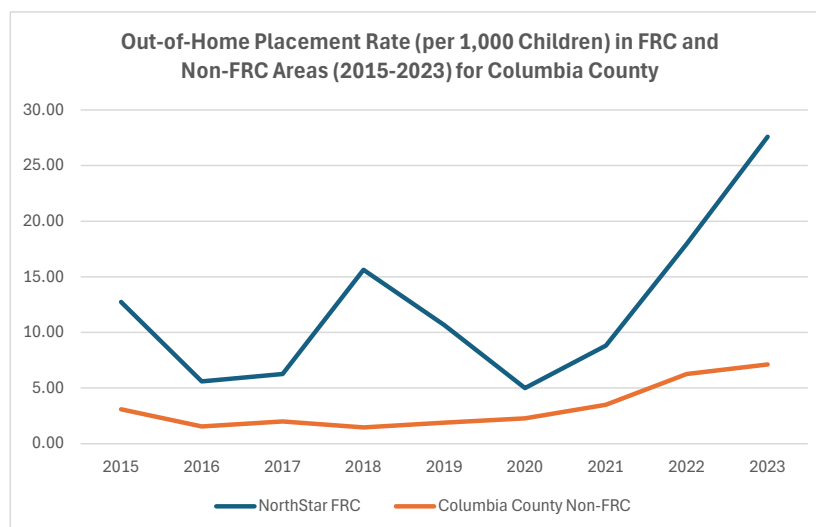
As with data related to verified child maltreatment rates, valid time series modelling related to the rate of out-of-home placements is not possible for FRC service areas within Alachua County. Regardless, the rate of out-of-home placements in the areas served by the FRCs (SWAG FRC, LPRC and CPLRC combined, and all Gainesville FRCs combined) is exponentially higher than the rate observed for all other areas of Alachua County (including Gainesville) not served by FRCs for all years. However, apart from a decline in rate between 2015 to 2016 (from 4.91 to 2.17 per 1000 children) for the area served by SWAG FRC, there is a steady increase in the rate of out-of-home placements (with minor fluctuations) between 2017 through 2022 (to 15.31 per 1000 children) followed by a slight decline in the rate (to 14.03 per 1000) in 2023. This pattern of steady increase in the rate of out-of-home placements for children is observed for non-FRC areas in the remainder of Alachua increasing from 0.84 (per 1000 children) in 2019 to 2.90 (per 1000 children) in 2023. There is notable fluctuation across individual years in the ratio of SWAG FRC to Alachua County Non-FRC areas rates of out-of-home placement from a low (in 2016) of 1.39 times to a high (in 2019) of 8.08 times greater for SWAG FRC (in contrast to non-FRC areas in Alachua County). There seems to be less predictability in the trend lines and ratio of out-of-home placement in areas served by LPRC and CPLRC to non-FRC areas (in Alachua County) is examined. The out-of-home placement rates varies from a low of 6.19 (in 2018) to a high of 18.52 (in 2019) per 1000 children with the ratio of rate difference fluctuating between a low of 3.32 times higher (in 2012) to a high of 22.06 times greater (in 2019) in areas served by LPRC and CPLRC in contrast to non-FRC areas in Alachua County.

Out-of-Home Placement Trends and Comparisons

County and FRC Trend Comparisons



As with the FRCs in Alachua County, NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) serves an area where the rate of out-of-home placements is exponentially higher than the rate observed in all other areas within Columbia County. Implementation planning for NSFRC began in 2020, with the facility beginning operations in 2021. Prior to the opening of NSFRC there was fluctuation in the out-of-home placement rate between 2015 through 2020, from a low of 5.00 per thousand children in 2020 (during the first year of the COVID pandemic) and 5.60 in 2016 to a high of 15.63 (per 1000 children) in 2018. Beginning in 2021 the rate increased dramatically from 8.82 to 27.58 out-of-home placements per thousand children in 2023. Parallel trends in rate increase (at much lower levels) were observed (between 2020 and 2023) for areas of Columbia County not served by NSFRC. When the ratio of out-of-home rates in areas served by NSFRC to non-FRC areas (in Columbia County) is examined, the rate reduces from 4.13 times higher in 2015 to 3.14 times higher in 2017, before spiking at 10.61 times higher in 2018, followed by a gradual reduction to 2.2 times higher in 2020. This rate difference gradually increased from 2.52 to 3.87 times higher for NSFRC in 2021 through 2023.



Child Welfare Outcomes Among Known FRC Patrons

The above analyses utilize aggregate data from secondary data sources and identify general trends on outcome measures within the broader community and neighborhoods served by Partnership for Strong Families' FRCs. It is not known (from these data) how many individual cases (or family members) within the general population over time were patrons of any FRC. Thus, the impact of each FRC within the broader community may not be fully understood or muted should there be a notable portion of the population, with past involvement with the child welfare system, that have not utilized services and supports of an FRC. A more specific examination of child welfare system engagement among known patrons (and their family and children) over time could provide a more meaningful understanding of potential direct influence or association of FRC involvement on child welfare outcomes.

There was a total of 245 patrons that agreed to participate in primary data collection related to a variety of outcome measures over the course of the funded project. Among these individuals, 169 patrons gave consent for the evaluation team to access and review any history of involvement with the child welfare system (in Florida) using the statewide child welfare information system known as the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). These 169 consenting patrons were matched with information within FSFN to determine level and type of past involvement with any case that involved a call to the Florida Abuse Hotline and subsequent child maltreatment investigation where the patron was identified as an alleged perpetrator. Among the 169 individuals who gave consent to access any history of involvement with the child welfare system using FSFN, 76 patrons (45% of consenting patrons) were involved (as an alleged perpetrator in at least one case reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline in the past, the earliest taking place in 2006 and latest in 2023⁷. Analyses of child welfare system involvement data, along with FRC involvement for these 76 patrons, may help with an examination of the potential influence of FRCs in mitigating child welfare system involvement in the future⁸.

Distribution of Frequency of Hotline Calls Across Patrons (N=76)

Number of Hotline Calls	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	22	28.9	28.9
2	13	17.1	46.1
3	11	14.5	60.5
4	5	6.6	67.1
5	7	9.2	76.3
6	2	2.6	78.9
7	4	5.3	84.2
8	2	2.6	86.8
9	4	5.3	92.1
10	2	2.6	94.7
11	1	1.3	96.1
12	2	2.6	98.7
13	1	1.3	100
Total	76	100	100

Child Welfare Outcomes Among Known FRC Patrons

There was a total of 297 Florida Abuse Hotline calls linked to these 76 patrons, of which 225 were screened in for investigation that involved 487 children and 757 maltreatment allegations⁹. The number of abuse hotline calls (see above table) ranged between 1 and 13 across all patrons between 2006 and 2023 with 35 (46.1%) being a subject of 1 or 2 calls. An additional 23 patrons (30.3%) were subjects of 3 to 5 calls, 14 (18.1%) were affiliated with 6 to 10 calls, and 4 (5.2%) patrons were a party to 11 to 13 calls. The average number of abuse hotline calls associated with each consenting patron was 3.89 (S.D.=3.21). Among the 76 patrons, there were 4 patrons (associated with six abuse hotline calls) for which no abuse hotline call was screened in for investigation, resulting in 72 patrons affiliated with at least one child maltreatment investigation.

When only screened in calls are considered (n=72 patrons), 40 (55.5%) patrons (as alleged perpetrators) were affiliated with 1 or 2 investigations, 19 (26.4%) were involved in 3 to 5 investigations, 11 (15.3%) were associated with 6 to 10 investigations, and 2 patrons (2.8%) were linked to 11 investigations. The average number of screened in hotline calls associated with these 72 consenting patrons was 3.12 (S.D.=2.55).

With screened in calls, a formal child abuse investigation commences. Findings related to each investigation outcome (for each maltreatment type allegation; there can be multiple per child, per investigation) are classified in one of three ways. These include a determination that the alleged maltreatment was: “Verified”, “Not Substantiated”, or “No Indicators.” Verified is a determination that there is a “...a preponderance of the credible evidence results in a determination the specific harm or threat of harm was the result of abuse, abandonment or neglect.” Not Substantiated “...is used when there is credible evidence which does not meet the standard of being a preponderance to support that the specific harm was the result of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.” A finding of No Indicators suggests there “...no credible evidence to support the allegations of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.”¹⁰ Definitions of harm and classification of forms of maltreatment (for which investigation findings relate) are denoted in the Florida Child Maltreatment Index.¹¹

Distribution of Maltreatment Allegations (N=757) by Investigation Finding Among Screened In Hotline Calls for Consenting Patrons (n=72)

Maltreatment Type Investigated	Verified	Not Substantiated	No Indicators	Missing / Unknown	Type Totals
Abandonment	0	1	0	0	1
Asphyxiation/Suffocation/Drowning	0	0	1	0	1
Bizarre Punishment	0	0	3	0	3
Burns	0	1	1	0	2
Death	1	0	0	0	1
Environmental Hazards	10	22	95	5	132
Failure to Protect	2	6	0	0	8
Household Violence Threatens Child	26	39	35	0	100
Inadequate Food	1	0	5	0	6
Inadequate Shelter	1	0	0	0	1
Inadequate Supervision	18	41	135	6	200
Medical Neglect	1	5	4	0	10
Mental Injury	1	2	4	0	7
Physical Injury	2	8	48	0	58
Sexual Abuse	0	2	14	0	16
Substance Misuse	29	19	19	0	67
Substance Misuse (Alcohol, Drugs)	6	49	41	17	113
Substance-Exposed Newborn	0	5	0	0	5
Threatened Harm	9	6	11	0	26
Totals	107	206	416	28	757

Child Welfare Outcomes Among Known FRC Patrons

Findings in the table above suggest that a total of 107 (of 757) or 14.1% of all allegations of maltreatment were verified, 206 (27.2%) were not substantiated, and 416 (55%) allegations were determined to have no indicators of maltreatment. There were an additional 28 maltreatment allegations for which an investigation outcome was missing or not known from a review of FSFN data.

Information related to the date of first service/support received from any FRC by each consenting patron was obtained from the Community Module database (a data management system used at the FRCs). The initial FRC service date was integrated with data documenting the date of the initial screened-in abuse hotline call, all subsequent hotline call dates (through December 31, 2023), along with additional FSFN data/child welfare system and investigation data (e.g., number and type of allegations, number of children subject to an investigation, investigation outcomes, number of out-of-home placements) that allowed documentation of the history of child welfare system involvement prior to and following initial engagement of the patron with a FRC affiliated with the Partnership for Strong Families.

The table below details the results of a series of statistical analyses conducted to determine if there was any meaningful change in child welfare system metrics for patrons (with a history of involvement with Florida DCF as an alleged perpetrator) prior to and following the start of their engagement/receipt of services and supports from FRCs.

Distribution of Child Welfare System Metrics for Patrons and Significance of Change Prior to and Following Engagement with Family Resource Centers					
Indicator of Child Welfare System Involvement (Number of Patrons)	Patron Average Prior to FRC Service Engagement (Standard Deviation)	Patron Average After FRC Service Engagement (Standard Deviation)	t value	Degrees Freedom	2-Tailed Significance
Number of Calls to the Abuse Hotline (n=76)	2.59 (2.55)	1.3 (2.20)	3.19	75	0.002
Number of Screened In Abuse Hotline Calls (n=76)	2.18 (2.12)	0.78 (1.38)	4.94	75	<.001
Number of Children Subject to Maltreatment Investigations (n=72)	4.89 (6.53)	1.88 (3.22)	3.82	71	<.001
Number of Alleged Maltreatments Investigated (n=72)	7.78 (10.25)	2.74 (4.89)	3.94	71	<.001
Number of Child Out-of-Home Placements (n=72)	0.71 (1.42)	0.01 (0.12)	4.15	71	<.001

There was a statistically significant improvement in ALL child welfare system engagement and outcome metrics among patrons following their involvement with FRCs. Using a series of paired sample t-tests with the panel of patrons with past involvement with the Florida child welfare system, the following was found:

- The average number of **abuse hotline calls** per patron reduced from 2.59 (SD=2.55) to 1.30 (SD=2.20) following FRC involvement, **a 50% reduction that was statistically significant** ($t=3.19$, $df=75$, two-sided $p=.002$). There was a total of 197 abuse hotline calls associated with 66 patrons prior to FRC service engagement and 99 abuse hotline calls associated with 33 patrons after FRC service engagement.
- The average number of **screened in abuse hotline calls** per patron reduced from 2.18 (SD=2.12) to 0.78 (SD=1.38), **a 64% reduction that was statistically significant** ($t=4.94$, $df=75$, two-sided $p<.001$). There was a total of 166 screened in abuse hotline calls associated with 65 patrons prior to FRC service engagement and 59 screened in abuse hotline calls associated with 28 patrons after FRC service engagement.

Child Welfare Outcomes Among Known FRC Patrons

- The average number of **children subject to a maltreatment investigation** (among screened in calls) for which the patron was an alleged perpetrator reduced from 4.89 (SD=2.12) to 1.88 (SD=3.22) following FRC involvement, **a 62% reduction that was statistically significant** ($t=3.82$, $df=71$, two-sided $p<.001$). There was a total of 352 children subject to a maltreatment investigation associated with 65 patrons (as alleged perpetrators) prior to FRC service engagement and 135 children subject to a maltreatment investigation associated with 28 patrons after FRC service engagement.
- The average number of **alleged maltreatments investigated** (among screened in calls) per patron reduced from 7.78 (SD=10.25) to 2.74 (SD=4.89) following FRC involvement, **a 65% reduction that was statistically significant** ($t=3.94$, $df=71$, two-sided $p<.001$). There was a total of 560 alleged maltreatments investigated associated with 65 patrons (as alleged perpetrators) prior to FRC service engagement and 197 alleged maltreatments investigated associated with 28 patrons after FRC service engagement.
- The average number of **out-of-home placements** (following maltreatment investigations)¹² per patron reduced from 0.71 (SD=1.42) to 0.01 (SD=0.12), **a 98.6% reduction that was statistically significant** ($t=4.15$, $df=71$, two-sided $p<.001$). There was a total of 51 child removals/out-of-home placements associated with 20 patrons (as alleged perpetrators) prior to FRC service engagement and 1 child removal/out-of-home placement associated with 1 patron after FRC service engagement.

When the distribution of investigation findings is examined (see table below) involving consenting patrons, there is a statistically significant reduction in the average number (per patron) of maltreatment findings classified as “Verified” ($t = 4.22$, $df=71$, $p<.001$) and “No Indicator” ($t=2.08$, $df=71$, $p=0.04$). In fact, among the 107 verified cases of maltreatment associated with the study sample, 104 were documented prior to FRC engagement and only 4 afterward. Given that there were 166 screened-in calls/investigations prior to FRC engagement and 59 screened-in calls/investigations after FRC engagement, the likelihood of a verified maltreatment finding per investigation (using aggregate data) was 62.7% (104 of 166) prior to patron engagement with an FRC versus 6.8% (4 of 59) following engagement with an FRC.

Child Welfare Investigation Finding Category (Number of Patrons)	Patron Average Prior to FRC Service Engagement (Standard Deviation)	Patron Average After FRC Service Engagement (Standard Deviation)	t value	Degrees Freedom	2-Tailed Significance
Number of Not Substantiated Findings (n=72)	1.79 (3.37)	1.07 (2.24)	1.64	71	0.106
Number of No Indicator Findings (n=72)	3.79 (6.13)	1.99 (4.21)	2.08	71	0.041
Number of Verified Findings (n=72)	1.44 (2.78)	0.04 (0.26)	4.22	71	<.001

Child Welfare Outcomes Among Known FRC Patrons

The date of initial visit/engagement with an FRC varied across years (between 2013 and 2023) for the 76 patrons (with involvement with the child welfare system as alleged perpetrators), with the smallest number of patrons observed in the 2023 cohort (n=2) and the largest in 2021 cohort (n=18). The table below details information regarding the consistency of engagement for each cohort of patrons (based on the year of first visit) for years that followed in terms of number of cohort members that had at least one visit and the average amount of visits for applicable cohort members each year.

Apart from the 2013 cohort of patrons, the majority of patrons for remaining cohorts continued to visit FRCs for the majority of years that followed the year of initial engagement. Please note that (within the table below) the average amount of visits per patron (in each cohort) increases notably beginning in 2020 through 2023 when contrasted to figures prior to 2020. This trend is a byproduct of procedural changes at FRCs (following the commencement of the funded project) for ensuring more valid documentation (with fidelity checks by staff) of the identity of each patron visiting, allowing a more effective longitudinal monitoring of trends in service delivery linked to each patron visiting an FRC over multiple years. Subsequently, it is possible (or most likely) that figures (in the table below) related to the number of cohort members and/or average number of visits for each year (prior to 2020) are underestimations. In sum, it appears there was consistency following an initial visit, in continued visitation to FRCs by patrons in subsequent years.¹³

Number of Patrons with Visits (N) and Average Number of Visits (\bar{X}) by Applicable Cohort of Patrons Across Years											
Cohort Year of First Service / Engagement	2013 N \bar{X}	2014 N \bar{X}	2015 N \bar{X}	2016 N \bar{X}	2017 N \bar{X}	2018 N \bar{X}	2019 N \bar{X}	2020 N \bar{X}	2021 N \bar{X}	2022 N \bar{X}	2023 N \bar{X}
2013	5 1.8	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 1.5	2 2.0	2 1.5	2 8.5	3 20.0	4 11.0	4 34
2014		4 3.0	2 1.5	2 2.5	3 9.3	3 11	3 4.3	4 33.8	4 18	4 20.5	4 15.5
2015			5 6.4	2 12.0	3 11.3	3 13.3	3 3.3	5 19.0	4 23	5 16.6	5 15.2
2016				4 2.5	1 6.0	2 2.3	3 9.3	4 15.3	4 37.8	4 26.8	4 33.0
2017					6 4.2	5 9.8	4 6.5	6 11.3	6 17.2	6 20.7	6 27.7
2018						15 5.1	6 6.7	11 8.0	14 16	14 18.7	14 12.8
2019							2 5.0	2 23.5	2 30.5	2 19.5	2 17.5
2020								7 18.8	7 17.4	6 26.8	5 20.8
2021									18 7.9	17 5.6	13 10.5
2022										8 4.0	7 5.3
2023											2 9.0

Conclusion

Examination of available secondary general population (Census Bureau) and FSFN (child welfare system involvement and outcome) data for the geospatial areas served and not served by FRCs within Alachua and Columbia County, reinforce that all FRCs are situated in neighborhoods and serve patrons and families in geospatial areas with historically high levels of child welfare system involvement. Although some desired trends in child welfare system metrics in areas served by FRCs are observed over time, impact findings are inconclusive given the lack of data on trends for years prior to the start of FRC service and support delivery in Gainesville (Alachua County) FRCs, and concurrent trends (at lower levels) within areas not served by FRCs—suggesting the possible influence (individual or compounded) of other environmental and systemic factors on observed changes in select metrics.

Since it is not known (using secondary data) what proportion of the general population within geospatial areas has utilized FRC services/supports as well as has a history of child welfare system involvement, more meaningful analyses of the potential impact of FRC involvement on child welfare outcomes comes from a specific analysis of a panel of patrons matched to FSFN and FRC service data. Among the 169 patrons that gave consent for a review of FSFN data for which they were a subject, 76 were involved with Florida DCF (as an alleged perpetrator) between 2006 (prior to the operation of any FRC) and 2023. Findings from a series of analyses confirm that following initial commencement of receipt of services and supports from FRCs (with continued engagement thereafter), patrons with a historical record of involvement with Florida DCF had statistically significant reductions (of notable magnitude) in the average number of: 1) child abuse hotline calls, 2) screened in hotline calls for maltreatment investigations, 3) children subject to maltreatment investigations, 4) alleged maltreatments investigated, and 5) out-of-home placements affiliated with the patron. Although additional study is warranted, these findings are very promising and highlight the importance of FRCs as a potential long-term solution in strengthening families and reducing the likelihood of continued involvement of families with Florida DCF and rates of child maltreatment.

Footnotes and References

¹ This project is IRB approved (Advarra IRB: Children's Bureau, Protocol Number PSF-2021-CB). For more detailed information regarding the evaluation protocol and study methodology, please see Perry, R. (2021). *Family Resource Center Model Evaluation*, Protocol Number PSF-2021-CB. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

² For more information regarding the Protective Factors Framework utilized by FRCs, the category of services and supports offered in response to identified needs in the neighborhoods served, and scope and frequency of services utilized by patrons, see the most recent yearly reports (2023) for each FRC available at: <https://www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters/evaluationandexpansion/evaluation/>

³ The initial evaluation plan included an examination of trends associated with the number of hotline calls. Since not all hotline calls are investigated or “screened in” and not all investigated calls result in a verified maltreatment, it was determined that address data in FSFN (for all hotline calls) was not sufficiently reliable and valid, as address corrections/verifications within FSFN are typically done only for calls that are investigated with a finding determination. Since consistently reliable and verified address data was needed to identify whether each hotline call was within an established FRC geospatial service area, analyses on this data element were not conducted.

⁴ PSF directly contracted with Community Attributes Incorporated (CAI) for use of their geospatial mapping software/platform to aid in determining the specific geospatial service area for each FRC using available address data/markers on patrons served (in 2020 and 2021). These processes resulted in a unique/custom geospatial area for each FRC, that could be linked to specific Census Bureau block and tract identifiers and allow for population estimates (including children) within each area using American Community Survey data available from the Census Bureau. Address markers associated with verified maltreatment data within FSFN could then be matched with the parameters (Census tract and block identifiers) affiliated with each unique FRC service area, as well as select city and county areas/identifiers.

⁵ Address markers for verified maltreatment counts were utilized within the CAI platform to identify those that were affiliated with each county and FRC service area. Fidelity checks by PSF data specialists (using county identifiers which were available within FSFN) identified variance or errors in counts within the CAI platform for select counties over select years. FSFN does not utilize Census tract or block data elements; subsequently, fidelity checks on FRC service area counts of verified maltreatments could not be made. Given such, a series of statistical weights were assigned to verified maltreatment counts (within the CAI platform) for each FRC service area for each year that represented a correction for variance error observed when CAI county estimates were contrasted against FSFN county estimates. These estimates were used in calculations of rates per 1000 children in the general population for each applicable geospatial area. This procedure assumes that the type and level of error observed with county estimates for a specific year within the CAI platform would be manifested in the same manner for each FRC service area. Findings and interpretations are qualified by this fact.

Footnotes and References

⁶The same data estimation procedures and qualifications associated with verified child maltreatment findings apply to data associated with out-of-home placements.

⁷A total of 93 patrons (55% of those consenting to the review) had no documented history within FSFN. Given available data, it is not known (nor estimated) among these patrons the extent to which FRC involvement had a primary prevention influence in reducing the likelihood of child welfare system involvement.

⁸These 76 patrons included 44 (57.9%) that were associated with SWAG FRC, and 13, 10, and 9 that primarily received services from NSFRC, LPRC, and CPLRC respectively. Given variation in the size and representative nature of these patrons for each FRC, data across all FRCs are aggregated for analyses.

⁹The number of children represent an aggregate number across all investigations. Should there be multiple investigations involving the same household and child(ren) over time, there may be duplicate counts of an individual child. Identifying information on children involved in investigations was not made known to the evaluation; however, individual maltreatment allegations were identified to be associated with select children denoted numerically (e.g., as “Child 1,” Child 2”, etc. for each investigation). A count of a child represents an individual/unique child per investigation. Some investigations involve multiple children. For each investigation, there may be multiple allegations associated with each child.

¹⁰Source: State of Florida Department of Children and Families (2024). *CF Operating Procedure NO. 170-5 Child Protective Investigations*. Tallahassee: Author. Available at: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/resources/policies-procedures/cfop-170-child-welfare>

¹¹Source: State of Florida Department of Children and Families (2024). *CF Operating Procedure NO. 170-4 Child Maltreatment Index*. Tallahassee: Author. Available at: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/resources/policies-procedures/cfop-170-child-welfare>

¹²The initial removal/out-of-home placement of a child following an investigation represents this metric. Any subsequent placements/replacements of the child following initial removal are not counted in this analysis.

¹³Prior to procedural changes (which took effect in June 2020 following a brief shut down of in-person activities given the COVID pandemic), there was a greater likelihood of patrons not providing identifying information when checking in (via a self-check-in method) using a computer kiosk or tablet at FRCs. Procedure changes involved staff entering patron and service request information into the Community Module Data Management System using information provided by the patron directly or via a “Getting to Know You” paper form. Information related to these procedural changes and data limitations/considerations associated with linking patrons to select service utilization trends (prior to 2020) are denoted in the following reports:

Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022). *Service Utilization Trends at the Cone Park Library Resource Center (2016-2020)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

Perry, R., David-John, M., Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022). *Service Utilization Trends at the SWAG Family Resource Center (2016-2020)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

Perry, R., Snow, E., & Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022). *Service Utilization Trends at the Library Partnership Resource Center (2016-2020)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



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