

**Eighth Judicial Circuit Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG)
Minutes of October 29, 2007**

The FLAG met on Monday, October 29, 2007 at the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center. Present were: Tyson Elliott, Pete Enwall, Bill Farley, Arlene Huszar, Sherry Kitchens, Myrna Neims, Leon Plympton, Nancy Wilkov, and Mark Williams.

The next brown bag lunch that the dependency folks have will be December 12 from 11:45 – 1:00. Upcoming topics include independent living, CPT, and the Child Advocacy Center.

Myrna Neims asked for nominations for next year's chairperson. There were no nominations so Myrna and Arlene Huszar will go over the membership list for possible candidates. Possible future topics for the FLAG were discussed including delinquency issues, domestic violence and custody evaluations.

Sherry Kitchens, director of the Child Advocacy Center, gave a presentation regarding the Center. She explained that the concept started in Huntsville, Alabama in 1984. It began because child abuse cases were not being prosecuted in part because the agencies involved did not communicate, abused children were not getting services, the system was not child friendly, children were being interviewed multiple times, and cases were staying in the system for a long time. The national agency now does training to teach agencies how to collaborate on these cases.

Our Center started in 1998 with its first director, DeeDee Smith. Its mission is to meet the needs of abused children in our community. The Center has been located in a building off Waldo Road for the past eight years.

In Florida, children can undergo a maximum of three formal interviews regarding an abuse incident. In addition to providing a safe place for the interviews and coordination with all the agencies involved in a case, the Center provides case management and therapy for the children and their siblings, if needed. The therapists are trained in trauma reduction. Direct services are also provided to caregivers. The Center only provides services in Alachua County.

For forensic interviews, the interviewer meets with representatives from the agencies to find out what information they need from the child and then conducts the interview one-on-one. The agency representatives observe by video and can communicate with the interviewer if they want follow up questions asked. Referrals to the Center come from Hotline reports and from law enforcement.

The Center also sponsors 10-week therapy groups for pre-teens and teens as well as ongoing groups for non-offending caregivers.

The next meeting of the FLAG will be Monday, December 3, 2007 in an effort to avoid conflicts with the holidays. That will be the last meeting of the year. Dr. Charles Hall will be speaking about truancy and other school-related issues.