A. MISSION AND AREAS OF FOCUS

The mission of the FIU Professional Development Center (FIU/PDC) is to provide child protection professionals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to make decisions that provide Florida’s children with a safe and permanent home.

The Florida Legislature created the Child Welfare Training Act (Section 402.40, Florida Statutes) in 1986. This legislation instructed the Department of Children and Families (formerly the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services) to develop and maintain a systematic approach to staff development and training through a statewide training academy system for child welfare staff. Thus, the Professional Development Centers training system was created. The PDC training system consists of four regional training centers and a central office that is located in Tallahassee.

The PDC Central Office manages the PDC system for the Department of Children and Families. The executive director of the central office is directly responsible to the assistant secretary of the Office of Family Safety and Preservation. The directors of the training centers are responsible to the executive director of the central office. The regional centers are located at the University of South Florida/Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute in Tampa and the Castleberry Center in Orlando, Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, and Florida International University in Miami.

The PDC’s are responsible for the development and delivery of child protection training, testing, and certification. The PDC Central Office develops the curriculum and tests. Training is delivered in every district throughout the state. The certification process consists of classroom training, mentoring, a written test, field training with a training caseload, close supervision, and a field-based performance test.

B. ORGANIZATION, EXTERNAL TRENDS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Organizational Issues

Organizational Chart is attached.

2. Advisory Board Members

N/A

3. External Trends

Identify which trends may influence your programs or operations over the next five years. How do you intend on adjusting to these?

- The 1997 Florida Legislature approved an appropriation authorizing new competency-based job classifications tied to pay increases. To qualify for these classifications, new and incumbent employees underwent a certification process resulting in the successful completion of a written and field based performance assessment.

A competency-based, criterion referenced written test designed to measure the basic entry-level knowledge required for child protection professional employees was successfully implemented in fiscal year 1997/1998. A field based performance assessment to evaluate whether essential job responsibilities are performed to acceptable standards was successfully implemented in fiscal year 1998/99. Present trends place an emphasis
on increased guidance and individual attention given to trainees by utilizing mentors within the department in addition to PDC field trainers, to improve the quality of casework, increase staff retention, and ensure that the trainees are “job ready” at certification. The PDC system has restructured the training program to accommodate these requirements. A training program for mentors delivered by PDC field trainers was implemented last year.

- The 1998 Florida Legislature enacted legislation requiring the Department of Children and Families to develop a plan to privatize all child protection intervention services, phased-in over a three year period beginning January, 1, 2000.

Other states, when implementing corrective action plans for previously privatized child welfare systems, have recognized an increased need for statewide uniformity in training curriculum and delivery. The structure of the PDC successfully addresses this need for the state of Florida. The training delivery system has undergone major delivery system changes to more readily accommodate the needs of private providers. The previous training structure required trainees to travel to one of only three regional centers in Florida for twelve weeks. This structure required many trainees to endure lengthy stays away from their homes and families. In addition, trainees were sheltered from the harsh reality of this work, making it difficult to ascertain whether or not they were suited to it. The current training system is delivered on site in each district, and is divided into two phases. Phase One is six weeks in duration and consists of classroom and field training, mentoring, and a multiple choice test. Phase Two is nine months in duration and consists of classroom and field training, mentoring, a training caseload, and a field based performance assessment of applied skills and abilities. During this period, service providers and trainees can more readily determine suitability for the position.

- HomeSafenet Computer Training

The Department of Children and Families began rolling out Phase One of HomeSafenet, the first web-based automatic child welfare system in the country, last year. Additional phases will be rolled out over the next several years. The PDC’s are providing the training for all direct-service staff and contracted providers that utilize this system. PDC Computer training rooms were established and used in every district last year.

4. Strategic Directions and Areas of Emphasis

University Theme: III. Applied Problem Solving

Our vision for the PDC system over the next five years is to provide practical training and support to the staff of the Department of Children and Families and their contracted service providers, establishing the most effective child protection training program possible. Work in child protection is demanding and complex, requiring specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA’s). The child protection certification program is designed to ensure that child protection professionals have the KSA’s necessary to perform their duties and are provided with ongoing professional development. Continuous improvement to the training program has been implemented. Curriculum is routinely revised to incorporate law and policy changes and make improvements as indicated by a multi-level evaluation process.

We are committed to developing and delivering quality, experiential, competency based classroom and field training to child protection services staff. The services that we provide are designed to meet their professional development needs. These services are intended to have a positive impact on the quality of services provided by the Department of Children and Families, and contracted service provider staff, to improve the quality of life for children and families in South Florida.

C. 2000-2001 ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Goal 1: Intensive guidance and support provided during training in each geographical district

Assessment Criteria (Measurable Outcome): Number of training days provided, and the systematic implementation of training support services. Experiential, competency-based classroom and field training will be provided to child protection staff in each geographical district in accordance with regulations, policies, and procedures promulgated by the department. Processes will be continuously evaluated and revised when necessary to ensure maximum effectiveness.
Accomplishment:

Three PDC training sites were established in Dade and Broward County. Five computer labs were established across the PDC catchment area. Three thousand classroom and field training days were delivered this fiscal year. Field trainers accompanied trainees into the field to relate the content of the classroom instruction to actual casework to ensure transfer of learning. Field trainers systematically evaluated and provided feedback on each trainee’s progress on a regular basis.

Use of Results for Program Improvement:

Feedback indicates that the classroom training should include more hands-on skill development. The curriculum is currently being revised accordingly. Field trainers will complete assessments of trainees as skills are practiced and demonstrated in the classrooms.

Goal 2: Greater involvement of district staff in training delivery.

Assessment Criteria (Measurable Outcome): Implementation of joint training efforts and increased communication regarding trainee performance.

Accomplishment:

Training teams consisting of the trainee’s supervisor, mentor, and field trainers were instructed to guide trainees through the initial certification process. Monthly reports on trainee performance are completed by field trainers, supervisors, and mentors. Each district established a screening and selection process for choosing mentor candidates, and designated a mentor coordinator who assumed responsibility for program oversight. Although progress has been made, variability still exists regarding the quality of mentor programs across districts.

Use of Results for Program Improvement

The development of district mentor programs remains a priority, but the structure of the training program will be revised to make the training experience less dependent upon them while they continue to improve. Supervisory reinforcement of the training is critical to the transfer of knowledge and skills to practice in the field. Supervisors will be trained in Quality Case Management prior to the implementation of the revised training program.

Goal 3: Sponsor initiatives that enhance the public agency/university partnership and address critical social issues.

Assessment Criteria (Measurable Outcome): Conferences and in-services delivered; partnerships developed

Accomplishment:

The PDC is helping the Department of Children and Families implement the Domestic Violence Interagency Agreement. The focus is the development of a shared mission between child protection staff and domestic violence advocates that allow them to work together while at the same time allow each to perform their own roles. The safety of children will continue to be the Department’s primary mandate while assisting domestic violence victims remain the primary roles of the centers. However, by combining efforts, they can work together to assist both children and the victims of domestic violence. Domestic Violence center staff may attend PDC classroom training on a space available basis. They have also been invited to co-facilitate the domestic violence training with PDC field trainers.

The PDC began a foster parent training initiative, Essential Parenting Tools for Positive Behavior Change. This behaviorally focused course is designed to teach foster parents how to cope with the challenging behaviors of dependent children and improve their relationships with these children.

Center trainers acted as facilitators/participants at the Dependency Court Improvement Summit. The Dependency Court Improvement Project was funded to study the judicial management of child abuse and neglect proceedings.

The Center presented numerous workshops and in-service trainings that addressed topics pertaining to family safety and preservation and child welfare, including those listed below:
• Child Safety Assessment
• Decision Making for Child Safety
• Foster Parent In-service Trainings (offered in English, Spanish, & Creole)
• Reporting Child Abuse
• Writing Effective Case Plans
• Working with Child Welfare Legal Services & Court
• Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

Goal 4: Continued professional development of PDC staff to ensure the viability of training and recognition of the PDC as a state-of-the-art facility.

Assessment Criteria (Measurable Outcome): Certified and competent trainers

Accomplishment:

All PDC Field Trainers are required to complete a certification process within six months of employment. Initial certification consists of various assessments, required readings, and field requirements. Ongoing certification is maintained by annual classroom training and interpersonal skills observations and assessments made by the training manager or supervisor.

Use of Results for Program Improvement:

Professional development plans based on the results of these assessments as well as any other performance issues are created for each field trainer annually.

D. 2001-2002 ANNUAL GOALS

2001-2002 Goal 1: Revise the structure of the training program to decrease the time to certification to the extent possible without losing integrity. Provide training that is more skill-based and practice oriented. We expect that these goals will be attained with the implementation of the revised pre-service curriculum. (Addresses University Goal III, Applied Problem Solving)

Measurable Outcome: Time to certification decreased; increased use of realistic training simulations in the classroom; more use of actual cases including ongoing assessment of training skills such as interviewing, assessments, decision making and case analysis.

2001-2002 Goal 2: Improve supervisory reinforcement of information taught in the pre-service curriculum to practice in the field. We expect the number of failures on the field based in performance assessment to increase initially, followed by a decrease. (Addresses University Goal III, Applied Problem Solving)

Measurable Outcome: Delivering quality case management training to supervisors will decrease the failure rate on the field based in performance assessments. Evaluations completed by field trainers, supervisors, mentors, and trainees reflecting an improvement.

2001-2002 Goal 3: Continued professional development of PDC staff to maintain credibility and gain in recognition as a valuable and effective training program. (Addresses University Goal III, Applied Problem Solving)

Measurable Outcome: Percentage of field trainers who complete the required certification process. Professional development plans show a positive progression of competency.

2001-2002 Goal 4: Sponsor initiatives that enhance the public agency/university partnership and address critical social issues. (Addresses University Goal III, Applied Problem Solving)

Measurable Outcome: Conferences and in-services delivered; partnerships developed
E. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1-2 page Summary)

1. Major Activities - Prior Year

The FIU/PDC had a productive year, and met all contractual obligations.

Our mission is to provide child protection professionals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to make decisions that keep children safe. The child protection certification program is designed to fulfill the Department of Children and Families’ responsibility to ensure that child protection professionals have the KSA’s necessary to perform their duties and are provided with ongoing professional development.

“Job readiness” is the goal of initial certification. The initial certification process is divided into two phases and consists of classroom training, mentoring, a written test, field training with a training caseload, close supervision, and a performance test. It requires up to ten and one-half months to complete. The trainee is able to develop a frame of reference from work in the field that enhances learning, there is a significant experiential component and it is easier for a new employee to learn the difficult KSA’s over time.

2. Major Activities - Coming Year

The training program is being revised to become even more skill based and practice oriented. This means that there will be an increased use of realistic simulations and actual cases in the classroom. Ongoing assessments of training skills such as interviewing, decision making, and case analysis will be incorporated. The training will be shorter but more intense. Trainees will prepare court and other required documents in class. Formal classroom training will be completed before receiving a caseload.

Supervision and reinforcement of learning are critical to the transfer of knowledge and skills to practice in the field. Supervisors will be required to complete training designed to facilitate the trainee’s application of what has been taught in the classroom to the field.