

# Keeping Families Together

## CSCA's In-Home Treatment Program Helps Reduce Foster Placement

Christian Services for Children in Alabama (CSCA) is very proud of the role it has played in helping to decrease the number of children and youth entering the Alabama Foster Care System. CSCA provides treatment and care to children and youth who come to attention of the State due to exposure to and risk of abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) and neglect.



As part of Alabama Statewide Initiative to help children remain safely with their families, CSCA

provides an array of services within the family environment designed to improve parenting and family's overall functioning. Numerous studies done nationwide reflect the success of programs such as CSCA's FOCUS (Family Outcome Centered Unification Services) Program. Although results vary slightly, they consistently show that the majority of children and youth who are part of family preservation programs stay in their own homes; whereas the results for those who do not have assistance and support while in significant crisis is out of home placement .



CSCA's FOCUS Program accepts referrals from six surrounding counties. From the moment a family enters the program until the crisis is resolved, CSCA's program staff provides brief intensive services aimed at helping families assess

their strengths and resources. While the family remains at the center of this process, the child's safety is the number one priority. FOCUS staff are there to help the family work together to identify and build from their inherent strengths, learn to make good decisions and all while keeping the kids with their own family.

CSCA's family specialists, under the guidance of the FOCUS coordinator and with support from the administrative staff, intervene with families in an effort to help develop skills in direct relationship to their needs. The collaborative effort between the referring agents and CSCA's family preservation program is critical to the successful outcomes for each family. Depending upon the individual family assessment, services range from four to twelve weeks.

The following scenario shows some aspect of the intensity of need and the quick response to meeting the needs of children and families in crisis situations:

It's the end of the day on Friday when the FOCUS Coordinator takes a call from the Alabama Department of Human Resources. There's a child at risk of being removed from her family and placed into "the system." The mother is barely more than a child herself and has difficulty giving her

daughter the kind of parental care and support that she needs. DHR believes the family unit is about to become undone and contacts FOCUS to intervene. Despite the late hour, the FOCUS Coordinator thoroughly reviews the referral and determines that there must be immediate intervention. A meeting is scheduled for the Family Specialist to meet with the family the following morning. DHR is notified and an effective plan is put in motion that can keep this family intact.

CSCA's mission of serving abused and neglected children extends beyond the family specialists and other organization staff. Through our therapeutic foster care services, we also diligently seek and train families that feel called and have the capacity to serve children within their own homes. CSCA understands the needs of families whose children are in out-of-home care. Being separated from his/her family can be extremely traumatic for a child, and the effects can be long lasting not only on the child, but also on the parents. Even though the families are ill prepared to meet their child's needs, the child stills sees the family as their roots with a strong emotional connection. Once a child or youth enters CSCA's therapeutic foster care, we believe we have an obligation to invest in the family. We use every opportunity available to help the family members build upon their strengths and improve family functions. We make it our mission to help create an improved family situation for the child to return to.

CSCA has been serving children and families in Alabama since 1991.

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