



The Early Childhood
Initiative Foundation



Preliminary School Readiness and Early School Success System Scan

Miami-Dade County, Florida

March 2008

This project was funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) School Readiness and Success Initiative. We thank them for their support but acknowledge the findings and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of The Children's Trust, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation.

Preliminary School Readiness and Early School Success System Scan
Miami-Dade County, Florida
March 2008

Overview

This document provides an overview of school readiness and early school success data related to young children and their families in Miami-Dade County. It also identifies the numerous institutions involved in ensuring children are ready for school and early school success.

We have always known that children do better in school when they have strong families and communities behind them. Now there is an emerging consensus about the ways we can measure – and make better – the conditions that contribute to children's success in school. Tracking a comprehensive set of indicators related to school readiness enables the Miami-Dade community to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments and monitor trends over time.

Suggested school readiness indicators are organized according to the equation categories established by the national School Readiness Indicators Project and promoted by the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) project:

- *Ready Families*: demographics; family structure; births; foster care; child abuse;
- *Ready Services – Early Care and Education*: centers; family child care homes; Head Start; voluntary pre-k; child care subsidies;
- *Ready Services – Health*: prenatal care and low birth weight babies; breastfeeding; Medicaid, SCHIP and Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT); health insurance; lead poisoning;
- *Ready Schools*: total school enrollment; public elementary school enrollment;
- *Ready Communities*: children living in poverty; juvenile crime, school yards, parks and structures;
- *Ready Children*: kindergarten instrument to assess school readiness, literacy activities in the home.

These data points are listed under the heading CURRENT STATUS in each section.

Following each data summary is a section entitled SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT. This section provides an overview of who holds data related to each topic and outlines current efforts to coordinate services that address the data outlined.

Miami-Dade County is extremely fortunate to have significant resources and energy behind addressing the health and development needs of all children. The Children's Trust, a public funding stream enabled by voter referendum, generates around \$100 million a year that is invested in programs and services that meet the needs of children birth to age 18. The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) invests \$172 million annually in early care and education programs; child care subsidies are the most

significant part of this budget. The Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade County invests \$17 million annually to ensure pregnant women and young children get off to a healthy start. The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation oversees a multi-year, \$10 million Ready Schools grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to improve the quality of and create partnerships and seamless transitions between early childhood programs and the public schools.

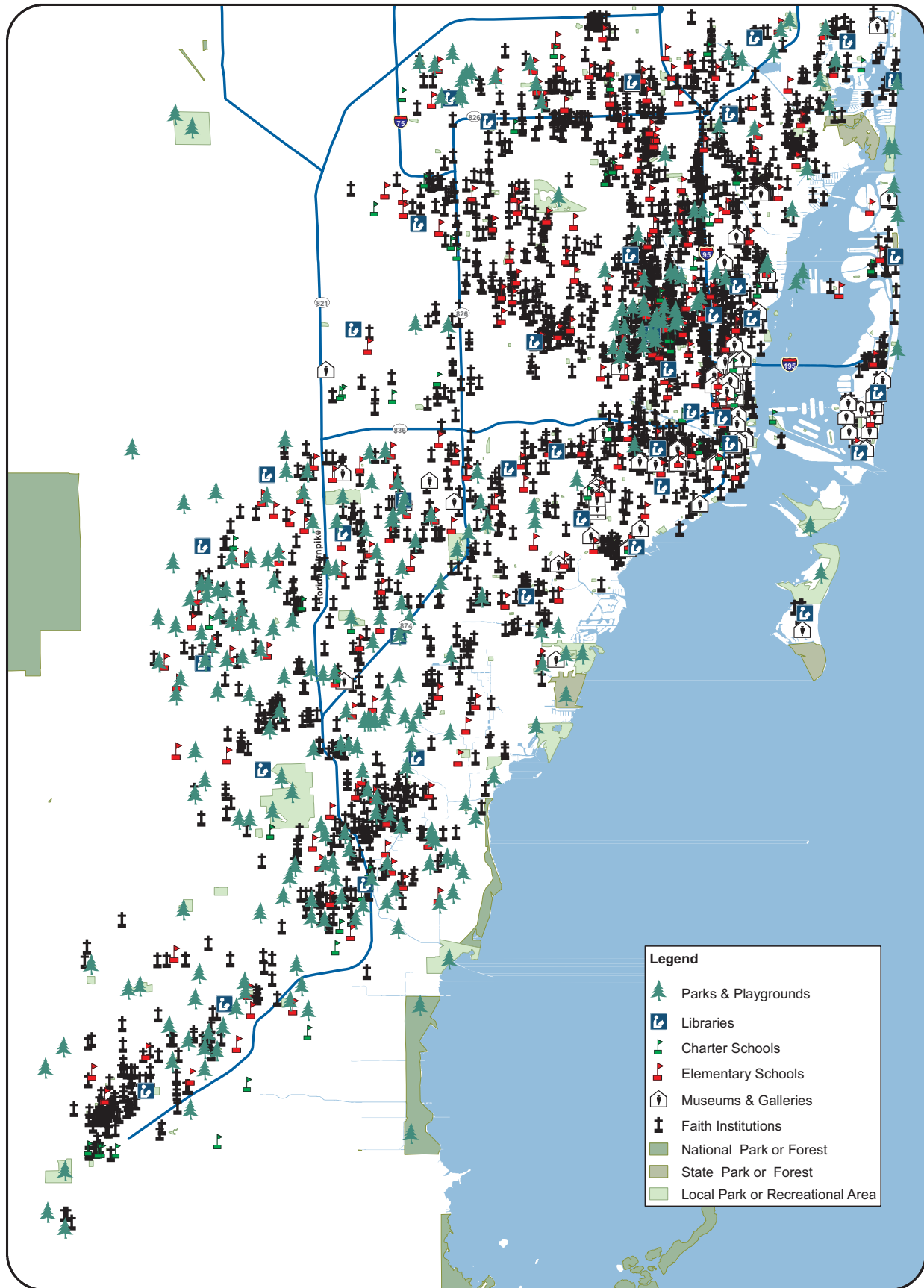
While The Children's Trust supports many programs that serve all children, there is particular interest in addressing the needs of children at high risk of school failure in Miami-Dade County; this commitment is shared by ELC, The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, and the Healthy Start Coalition. To this end, areas where children ages birth to 5 in low-income households have been identified, and selected data outlined in this document have been generated for each of Miami-Dade's 81 zip codes.

Key assets (including county parks and playgrounds, schools, libraries, museums, and faith institutions), as well as selected indicators from the school readiness categories, have been mapped to begin the process of geographically identifying strengths and gaps based on needs. For each of the maps the areas of darkest color tend to be the areas of greatest "need".

Next Steps

There are several data points and service information that were not accessible for the completion of this initial system scan. The missing data points and information are being sought to address these gaps.

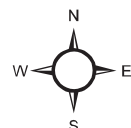
Key leadership organizations in the community are being convened during which time this information will be presented in an integrated manner, including identifying strengths and apparent gaps. This checking of perceptions and broader stakeholder reflection will enable our community to more fully round out this picture and ensure it is an accurate and comprehensive representation of the status of Miami-Dade's young children – as well as identify strengths and opportunities for improvement related to services for all children. From here, we will present this information to a broader audience and begin to narrow down a set of short- and medium-term priorities for coordinating and improving services to young children and their families in Miami-Dade County, with particular attention to the resource limitations and needs of children in the most economically distressed neighborhoods. This information, combined with the overall county scan, will be used to inform program and strategic direction planning of all of the lead organizations, as well as a local and state agenda for young children.



Miami-Dade County Assets Map

Data Sources:
 Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005
 Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006
 Water: USGS- 2006
 Schools: MDC Public Schools
 Assets Data: MDC, ESRI, The Miami Herald

January 2008



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Miami-Dade County is larger than 16 states and is one of the most diverse counties in the United States. The county has 2.4 million residents, more than half of whom were born in a country other than the United States (compared to the national average of 12.5%).

Ready Families

- Of all children under age six, 67% are either foreign born or have at least one foreign born parent (compared to 24% nationally).
- Among children age 5-17 in Miami-Dade County, 71% speak a language other than English at home (compared to a national average of just under 20%).
- About 192,000 children birth to age five live in Miami-Dade County; 22% live in poverty and 43% live at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.
- Approximately 56% of young children in Miami-Dade County are Hispanic/Latino, 24% are non-Hispanic black, 18% are non-Hispanic white, and 2% are Asian, Native American, or multi-racial.
- The rate of teen births (36 per 1,000 teens) is lower than that of the state and the nation, but the rate of births to unwed mothers (47%) is higher.
- There were 2,463 confirmed child abuse cases in 2006, or 13.1 victims per 1,000 children.
- In June 2006, there were 4,048 children 0-18 in the dependency system (foster care), of which 1,519 of the children were under the age of six.

Ready Services - Early Care and Education

- As of November 2007, there were 952 licensed child care centers and 365 licensed family child care homes:
 - 300 (31%) of the centers were accredited (156 accredited by NAEYC, 139 accredited by APPLE, and 5 accredited by other agencies). Sixteen of the family child care homes were accredited by NAFCC.
 - The centers had a licensed capacity to serve 89,294 children and the family child care homes had a licensed capacity to serve 3,715 children.
 - Over 65% of the centers have a licensed capacity for fewer than 100 children.
- 6,210 children are enrolled in Head Start, 394 children are enrolled in Early Head Start and 80 children are enrolled in Migrant Head Start.
- Early care and education usage:
 - 44% of young children (birth to 5) attend a child care center some part of the week
 - 13% of young children attend family child care homes some part of the week
 - 35% of children spend some time in home-based relative care some part of the week
- Approximately 12,500 of the 17,000 Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) participants receive VPK through 613 child care programs; approximately 4,500 children receive VPK through the public schools.

- 22% of the county's VPK providers fall below the minimal performance cut-off, compared with the statewide average of 14% of providers.
- In November 2007, 25,788 children (birth to 5) received child care subsidies:
 - 83,200 children under the age of six are estimated to be eligible for child care subsidies (they live at or below 185% of poverty), so that 31% of eligible children currently are accessing child care subsidies.
 - There were 4,986 children on the waiting list in November 2007, which was reduced to 3,006 by March 2008.

Ready Services – Health

- 84.8% of mothers began prenatal care within the first trimester of pregnancy in 2006.
 - Among teen parents, 93.5% received early prenatal care in 2006.
- 70% of children were ever breastfed and 30% of children were breastfed at least six months
- 87.4% of two-year-old children were fully immunized; among children entering kindergarten in 2006, 93.4% were fully immunized.
- Health insurance:
 - 51,901 children were enrolled in Florida KidCare (SCHIP) in November 2007; this represents 20% of the statewide KidCare enrollment even though Miami-Dade County has only 14% of the state's child population.
 - 20% of children ages birth to 5 had no consistent health insurance coverage over the previous 12 months;
 - 5% of children ages birth to 5 had no health insurance coverage at all over the previous 12 months;
 - 15% of children ages birth to 18 had no medical home, or a consistent place where they received medical care;
 - 33% of children ages 2 to 17 had not had a dental exam in the previous year.
- 11% of children ages birth to 18 (5% of children ages birth to 5) had not seen a medical provider in the last year.
- 129 confirmed cases of lead poisoning among children under age 7 were reported in 2006.

Ready Schools

- 140,597 children attend Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) in pre-kindergarten through grade 4.
 - Approximately 61% of young children who attend MDCPS are Hispanic, 28% are Black, 9% are Non-Hispanic White and 2% are Asian/ Indian/ Multiracial.
 - 68% of children in elementary school are eligible for free or reduced lunch.
 - A total of 16% have limited English proficiency.
- In 2007, 64% of 4th graders measured at or above grade level in reading compared with the statewide average of 68%.
- Parent involvement:
 - 12% reported attending no elementary school activities.

- Over half (55%) attended one to three activities and one-third of the parents participated in four or more school activities.
 - Parents in elementary charter schools were more involved by this measure than traditional elementary schools.
- Half of elementary charter school parents attended four or more activities and only 4% reported attending no events at all.

Ready Communities

- 42,000 children under the age of six were living at or below the federal poverty level in 2006.
- Among children birth to 18, 27% received some form of public assistance in 2006.
- In 2006-07 there were 6,950 unduplicated youth arrests.
 - This represents a delinquency rate of 26 youths arrested per 1,000 youth (compared with the state's rate of 48 youths arrested for delinquency per 1,000 youth);
 - Crimes perpetrated by youth as well as youth crime victims tend to be highly concentrated in specific neighborhoods.
- There are 714 parks and playgrounds, 45 libraries, 260 faith institutions, 116 museums and galleries.

Ready Children

- The accountability measure for voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) is the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS), which includes the ECHOS and the DIBELS.
 - In 2006, Miami-Dade County's scores on these tools were slightly below the statewide average
- The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe does developmental screenings and child assessments on thousands of children receiving child care subsidies. The weakest areas for preschoolers in poverty in Miami-Dade are language development, literacy, and behavior concerns as reported by parents, which suggest that these would be appropriate targets for future interventions.

Notable System Coordination Efforts

Ready Services - Early Care and Education

Quality Counts, Miami-Dade County's quality rating and improvement system for centers and family child care homes, will be implemented in 200 centers and 35 family child care homes in 2008. Quality Counts is being used as a tool to coordinate an early care and education system in the county that will promote high standards, raise quality, and empower consumers to demand higher quality programs.

Participating early childhood programs will have access to a variety of supports to assist them in improving program quality: on-site technical assistance and mentoring; scholarships for staff to complete training, credentials or degrees; wage incentives, and grants for materials and equipment.

Quality Counts is being coordinated by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, the community entity tasked by the state Office of Early learning to raise the quality of child care and disburse federal/state child care subsidy. The comprehensive Quality Counts initiative is designed and funded by The Children's Trust, the Coalition, and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami. It is being implemented by key community partners including Florida International University and Family Central, Inc (technical assistance to centers), University of Miami-Mailman Center (technical assistance to family child care homes), Devereux Florida (formal assessments), United Way - Center for Excellence in Early Education (training coordination and implementation), The Children's Forum – Quality Counts Career Center (career counseling, scholarships, wage incentives) and the National Institute for Innovative Leadership/Bluejean Software (data management).

Ready Services - Health

The Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade (HSCMD) serves as a prenatal and infant care coalition and coordinates care to pregnant women and children birth to age three.

The HSCMD consists of 100 maternal, infant and child health community stakeholders including consumers of maternal and child health services, migrant and community health centers, local hospitals, birthing centers and other providers of maternal child health services, local medical societies, local health planning organizations; local maternal and infant health advocacy interest groups; county and municipal governments; social service organizations; local education communities; and community organizations that represent or serve the target population.

Ready Schools

In collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation is coordinating Ready Schools Miami, an ambitious and comprehensive effort to create partnerships and alignment between early childhood programs and the 230 public elementary schools in Miami-Dade County by 2011; major support comes from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Ready Schools Miami:

- Will be scaled to all elementary schools over a four-year period. In 2007, 16 schools were selected and an additional 54 schools will be selected for implementation. About 70 schools will be added each subsequent year.
- Creates learning communities within elementary schools, supported by specific training and participation in University of Florida Lastinger Center activities and Master's degree programs
- Coordinates with the Quality Counts child care quality enhancement initiative, specifically working to align curriculum in pre-K programs with K-2 curriculum
- Encourages schools to fully integrate the activities of school health clinics provided by the Health Connect in Our Schools initiative of the Children's Trust
- Establishes data-sharing and analysis to support planned interventions

- Mobilizes and focuses resources and expertise within, across, and outside the school district to produce sustainable and widespread improvement in student learning and healthy child development.
- Is a comprehensive, systemic strategy that connects the school district, elementary schools, early learning centers and families with community-based organizations in support of improved child well-being and increased student academic achievement.

Ready Communities

The Parent Academy opened as an initiative of Miami-Dade County Public Schools to help parents become fuller partners in their children's education through the development of their skills, knowledge and confidence. Courses offered range from early childhood development to parenting skills, from health and nutrition to technology. For the 2005-06 school year 19,447 certificates of completion were issued; the following year, 55,023 certificates were issued, a 182% increase. Similarly, the number of Miami-Dade County public schools with active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) rose from 241 at the end of the 2005-06 school year to 265 at the end of the 2006-07 school year. For this same time period, PTA membership increased from 52,540 to 55,952.

Conclusion

When all the variables in the school readiness equation align: Ready Families + Ready Early Care and Education Services + Ready Health Services + Ready Schools + Ready Communities, the result is Ready Children for school and overall success.

Miami-Dade County and its many Ready Child proponents and institutions are positioned to build a seamless system to better understand and address the factors that could limit success for some children. This initial system scan indicates the current status and important strides taken in this regard. There are also a number of challenges:

- While a county-wide scan provides very useful data, the picture varies widely based on which part of the county one examines. As a next step, specific neighborhoods are being examined to identify service strengths and gaps, unmet needs, and opportunities for better system development and integration.
- The data collected through this scan has highlighted opportunities for better data-sharing arrangements to inform the big picture, rather than having to navigate multiple data systems that focus on pieces of children's needs.
- There are many examples of excellent service delivery to address a focused set of needs, as well as significant room for better service integration. These areas are being identified and strategies to address them will be developed.

FULL REPORT

READY FAMILIES

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Yet some parents struggle in providing the nurturing and development support their children need, and others struggle in providing basic economic support.

CURRENT STATUS

Demographics

From the 2006 ACS, about 192,000 children birth to age five live in Miami-Dade County; 22% live in poverty (42,000) and 43% (83,200) live at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. Approximately 56% of young children in Miami-Dade County are Hispanic/Latino, 24% are non-Hispanic black, 18% are non-Hispanic white, and 2% are Asian, Native American, or multi-racial.

Family Structure

Among young children in Miami-Dade County, ACS reports 59% live in households with two parents, 22% live in single parent households headed by the mother, 8% live in single parent households headed by the father, and 11% live with grandparent(s). Among children under age 6 living in two parent families, 52% live in families where both adults work, 37% live in families where one adult works, and 11% live in families where neither adult works. Among children birth to 17 living with single parents, 70% of the parents work and 30% do not.

Language

According to the 2006 ACS, a significant proportion of households in Miami-Dade County - 71% - speak a language other than English at home (compared to the national average of 19.7%). Among these households, 87% speak Spanish and 49% report that they speak English 'less than very well'.

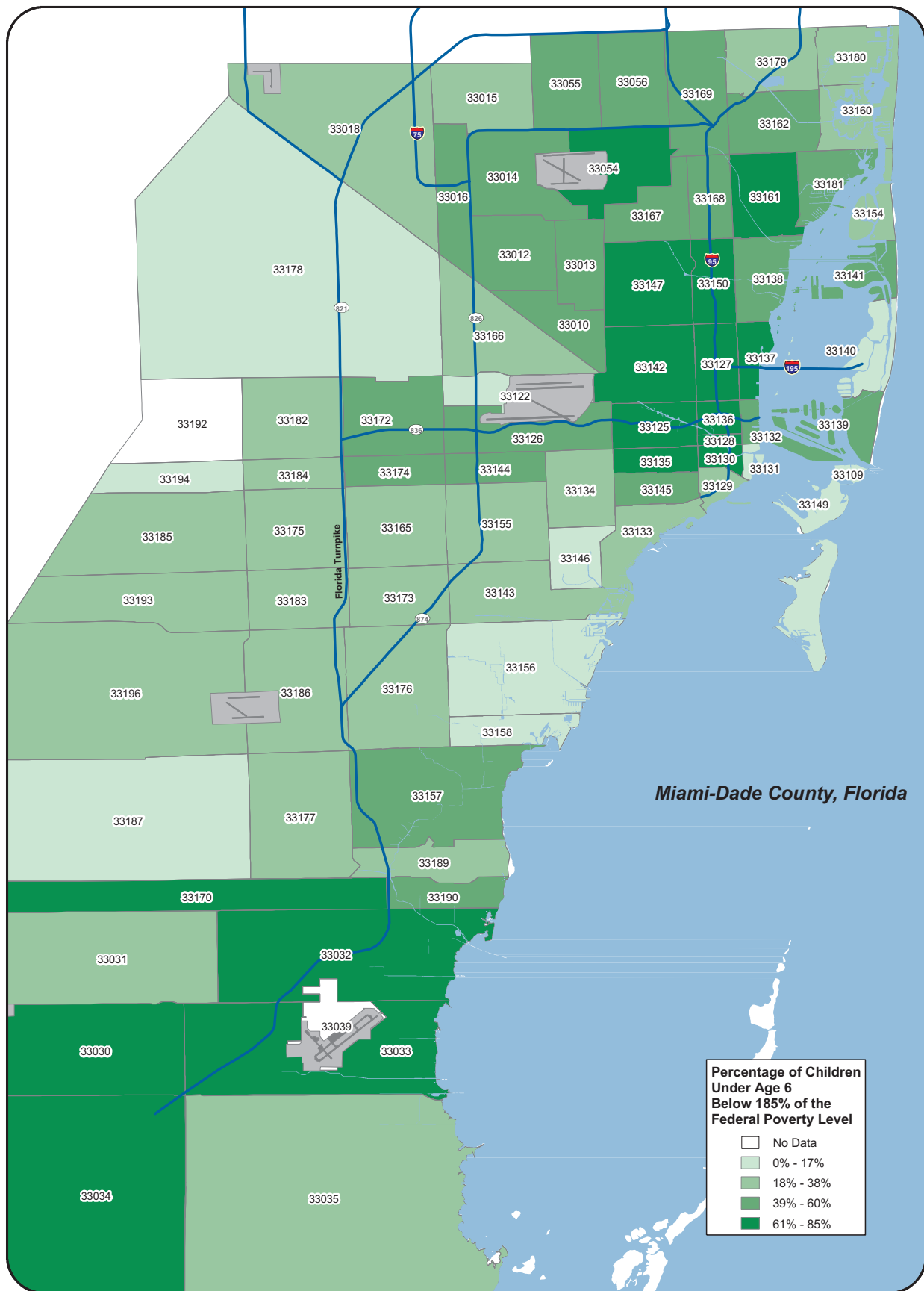
A total of 26% of households in Miami-Dade County are considered linguistically isolated. Among these linguistically isolated households, 37% speak Spanish, 28% speak other Indo-European languages, 18% speak Asian and Pacific Islander languages, and 17% speak other languages.



Births to Teen or Unwed Mothers

According to the Florida Department of Health, there were about 3,000 births to teen mothers in 2006, a rate of 36 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old girls; 12.7% of these 15-19 year olds had a repeat adolescent birth. Nearly 6,000 (18.6%) Miami-Dade County births were to mothers with less than a high school education.

A total of 47% of Miami-Dade births in 2006 were to unwed mothers.

Miami-Dade County's rate of teen births is lower than that of the state and the nation, but the rate of births to unwed mothers is higher.



	<p align="center">Child Population Under 6 Percentage below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (2000 Census Data)</p>	<p><small>Data Sources: Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005 Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006 Water: USGS- 2006 Child Population: US Census 2000 SF3</small></p> <p>January 2008</p>	
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Child Abuse

The Florida Department of Children and Families reports there were 2,463 confirmed child abuse cases in Miami-Dade County in 2006, or 13.1 victims per 1,000 children.

Foster Care

Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc, which administers foster care services in Miami-Dade County, states there were 4,048 children under protective supervision as of June 2006, of which 1,519 were under the age of 6. Of all children under age 6 under protective supervision, 1,185 children were in out-of-home care, and 334 were in in-home care. In 2006-07, 309 children in Miami-Dade County had finalized public adoptions; 155 of them were under the age of 6.

SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Foster Care

Florida's Child Welfare System underwent a comprehensive redesign beginning in 1996 when the Florida Legislature mandated the outsourcing of child welfare services through the use of a privatized lead agency design.

The goal is for comprehensive, community-based networks of providers to be equipped to manage and deliver all needed services and meet the needs of child victims and their families. While there is a strong desire to have local control and flexibility, the state provides oversight to ensure child victims are provided with a quality system that offers both equal access to care and an equal level of protection.

The goal of the redesign was to address common problems and challenges in the child welfare systems:

- Contracting with local Lead Agencies through competitive procurement should engage community stakeholders in designing their system of care and develop and maintain a service delivery network within each service area.
- Creating and supporting Community Alliances of local stakeholders, community leaders, client representatives, and those funding human services should facilitate coordination and maximization of resources. Community Alliances must address at least the following in their plans: joint planning for resource utilization, needs assessments and establishment of community priorities, determination of local outcome goals supplemental to state outcome requirements, and community education and advocacy.

Miami-Dade County transitioned to privatized foster care in 2004-05 under the leadership of Our Kids, Inc. Under Our Kids, there are seven full case management agencies in Miami-Dade County responsible for serving the 3,000 children in out-of-home care at any one time, of which approximately 1,200 are under the age of 6.

READY SERVICES – EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Many young children, particularly of working parents, spend a large part of their day in care away from their parents - in the care of a relative or friend, a child care center, or pre-school. These caregivers are, or could be, the child's second teacher.

CURRENT STATUS

Child Care Centers

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) indicates that in November 2007 there were 952 licensed child care centers in Miami-Dade County and 300 (31%) are accredited (156 accredited by NAEYC, 139 accredited by APPLE, and 5 accredited by other agencies). These centers have a licensed capacity to serve 89,294 children; over 65% of the centers have a licensed capacity for fewer than 100 children. A recently completed report, the *2007 Parent Survey on Child Well-Being in Miami-Dade County*, found that 44% of young children attend a child care center some part of the week, with 30% of children attending the center more than 20 hours a week and 14% of children attending a child care center fewer than 20 hours a week.

Data from one recent project sheds additional light on the quality of center-based care. In a baseline assessment of 55 centers that volunteered for a quality improvement project, programs were assessed using the Environment Rating Scales; they scored an average of 3.97 (on a seven point scale) for preschool classrooms and 4.02 for infant and toddler classrooms.

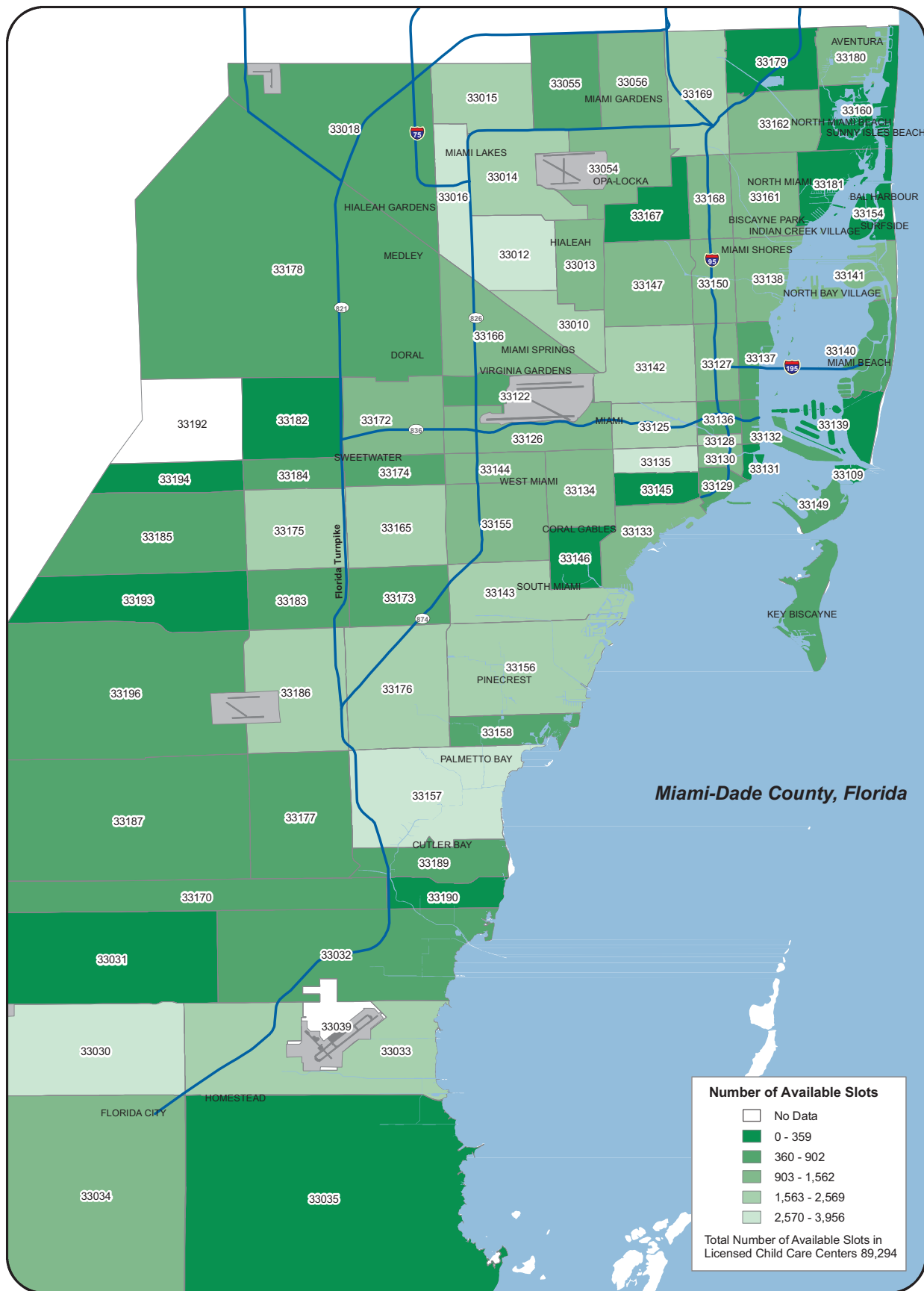
Family Child Care Homes



The Department of Children and Families database indicates that as of November 2007 there were 365 licensed family child care homes in Miami-Dade County with a collective licensed capacity of 3,715 children. Of these, 237 family child care homes are licensed to serve up to 6 children birth to age 5 and up to 10 children including school-age children; these homes have a collective licensed capacity of 2,181 children. There are an additional 128 large family child care programs that are licensed for up to 12 children with a second staff person; these large family child care homes have a licensed capacity of 1,534 children. According to the National Association for Family Child Care website, there were 16 nationally accredited family child care homes in November 2007. The *2007 Parent Survey on Child Well-Being* indicates 13% of children birth to age 5 spend some time in home-based non-relative care each week.

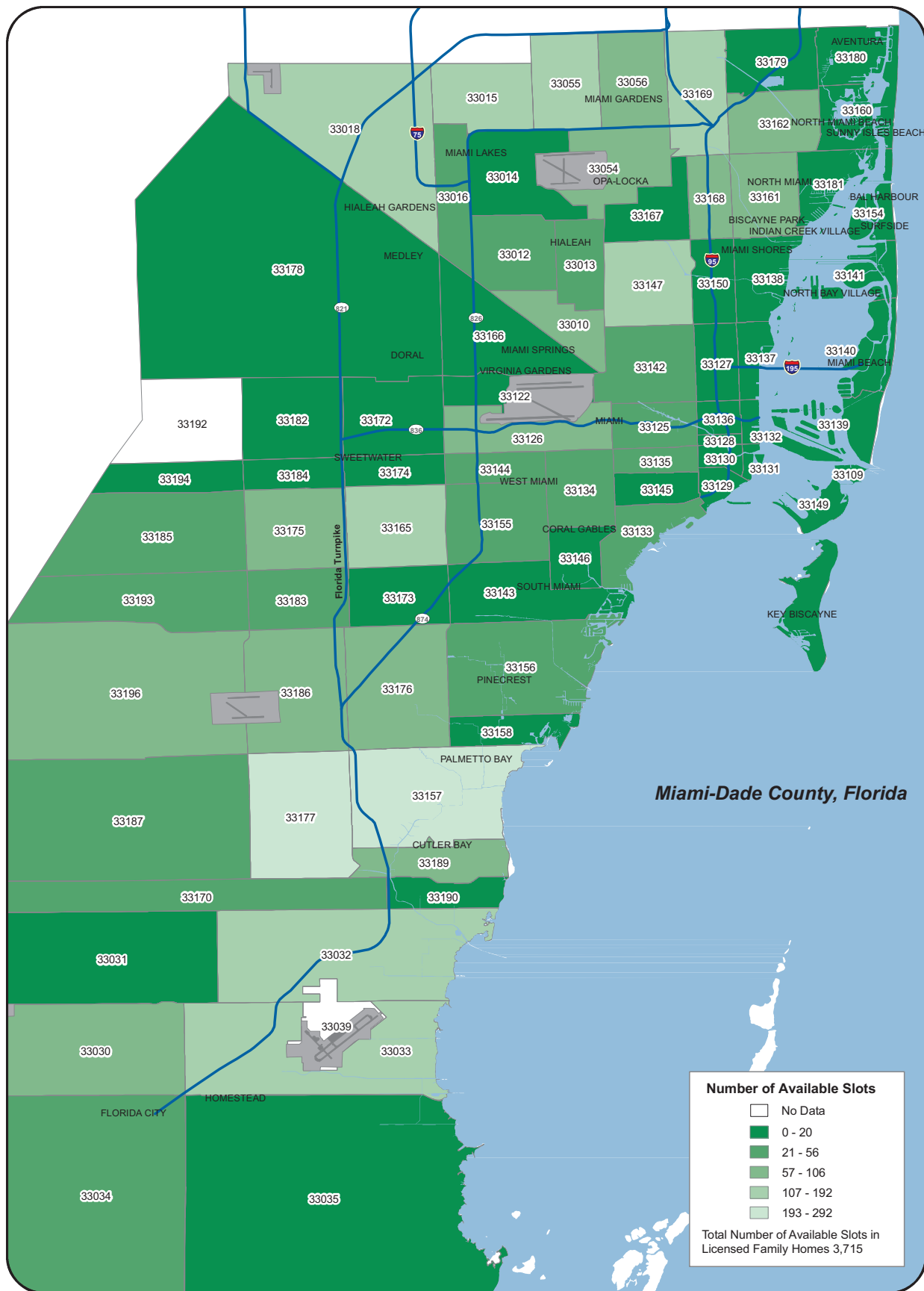
There are four active Family Child Care Associations in Miami-Dade County. The leaders of the four Associations also meet regularly as the 'Council of Presidents' with support from a Quality Counts-funded project at Univ of Miami Mailman Center.


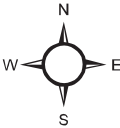
Head Start and Early Head Start

There are 84 Head Start sites in Miami-Dade County; 43 of these are directly-operated grantee sites and 39 are subcontracted delegate sites. The total capacity of these sites is 6,604 children. This includes 6,210 children in Head Start and 394 children in Early Head Start. The Head Start delegate subcontract rate is approximately \$6,700/child for



	<p>Licensed Child Care Centers Miami-Dade County Capacity by Zip Code</p>	<p>Data Sources: Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005 Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006 Water: USGS- 2006 Child Care Facility Data: FL Dept of Families and Children January 2008</p>	
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



 <p>The Children's Trust</p>	<p>Licensed Family Day Care Homes & Large Family Child Care Homes</p> <p>Miami-Dade County</p> <p>Capacity by Zip Code</p>	<p>Data Sources:</p> <p>Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005</p> <p>Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006</p> <p>Water: USGS- 2006</p> <p>Child Care Facility Data: FL Dept of Families and Children</p> <p>January 2008</p>	
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

175 days/year (approximately \$190/week); the Early Head Start delegate subcontract rate is approximately \$13,000 for 230 days/year (approximately \$230/week).

The Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) has six NAEYC-accredited sites in Homestead and Florida City (agricultural areas of the county) and serves approximately 800 children, including 80 children who receive migrant Head Start funds. RCMA receives federal-state child care block grant funds directly from the Office of Early Learning, and directly-operates the 6 centers for migrant children.

Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

The 2007 *Parent Survey on Child Well-Being* indicates 35% of children spend some time in home-based relative care. Currently there are no organized initiatives or strategies in place to further measure or address family, friend and neighbor care.

Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)

Enacted in 2004 following adoption of a constitutional amendment, Florida has one of the few universal pre-k programs in the nation. Voluntary PreK (VPK) is open to any child who turns 4-years of age before September 1st.

There are approximately 17,000 4-year-olds enrolled in the VPK program in Miami-Dade County; funding for VPK locally is administered by the ELC.

- Child care centers and family child care homes are eligible to be VPK providers and serve approximately 12,500 of the 17,000 VPK participants in Miami-Dade County. In December 2007, there were 613 child care programs certified to provide VPK in Miami-Dade County; to be a VPK provider, at least 4 VPK children must be served. Child care subsidies through the ELC are accessed by many families to help pay for wrap-around care to cover their full-time child care needs.
- Approximately 4,500 children in VPK are served by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools in 195 sites. These sites provide programs from 8:30AM-2PM with Title I or private pay funding the additional hours of care.

The VPK program provides 540 hours of pre-k per year (approximately 3 hours a day) and is funded at approximately \$2,500/child annually, adjusted up in Miami-Dade County by the district cost differential. There is also an alternate summer program of 300 hours at the same funding level.

VPK requires relatively minimal standards:

- Lead teacher with Child Development Associate (CDA), 120-contact hour certificate; summer programs must have a teacher state-certified in any field
- Ratio of 1:10, group size of 18
- Declared intention to use curriculum that covers the domains of the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Standards

The accountability measure for VPK is the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS), administered by Department of Education/local school system. The FLKRS is

administered to children entering kindergarten in the first 30 days of the school year (see description under Ready Children for more information on kindergarten readiness assessments). FLKRS scores for a program's VPK "graduates" are aggregated to produce a program score or "readiness rate" for each VPK provider. The statute provides for sanctions for low-performing providers: after one 'failure year' the VPK provider must use a state-approved curriculum (chosen from a list that currently numbers 17); if still failing after another year, the program may become ineligible to provide VPK. In the 2006-2007 school year, Miami-Dade County had 22% of its VPK providers fall below the cut-off, compared with the statewide average of 14% of providers.

Child Care Subsidies

The Office of Early Learning of the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation oversees the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds, including funding for child care subsidies. The child care subsidies are implemented by the 31 Early Learning Coalitions across the state of Florida. These Coalitions are overseen by 30-member boards, with the chair of each board and an additional member appointed by the Governor. A total of 70% of funds disseminated to the local Coalitions must be spent for financial aid; the remainder may be used for administrative expenses and quality improvement activities.

The current preschool rate in Miami-Dade County is \$93/week and the current infant reimbursement rate is \$117/week.

Child care subsidy eligibility in Florida is up to 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Families up to 200% FPL can receive child care subsidies if their employer participates in the Florida Executive Partnership program, either through the "Purchasing Pool" funded by entities like county governments, United Ways and Children's Services Council, or the "Employee Benefit Program" which incentivizes employers to help underwrite the cost of employees' child care costs. Families pay an average of 10% of family income as a co-payment for these child care subsidies.

Child care programs can receive up to a 20% rate increase for holding a Gold Seal Accreditation, which means the program is accredited by one of 14 approved accrediting organizations; Miami-Dade County pays a 20% differential to Gold Seal programs. As mentioned earlier in this memo, the vast majority of 300 Gold Seal centers are accredited by NAEYC (156 of the 300) or APPLE (139 of the 300).

The ELC states that a total of 25,788 children birth through age 5 received child care subsidies in November 2007. Child care programs received \$7.8 million in child care subsidy payments in November 2007.

As of November 2007, the ELC estimates there were 135,686 children eligible for child care subsidies, indicating that 19% of eligible families currently have access to child care subsidies. There are currently 4,986 children on the waiting list to receive child care subsidies.

SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) has an extensive database on early care and education services in Miami-Dade County and oversees the voluntary pre-k (VPK) program, child care subsidies, and will manage the new Quality Counts quality rating improvement system that will invest significant resources into centers and family child care homes starting in 2008 (see description below).

Quality Rating and Improvement System

Quality Counts, Miami-Dade County's quality rating and improvement system for centers and family child care homes, will be implemented in 200 centers and 35 family child care homes in 2008 with the goal of 600 centers and 100 family homes within 3 years. Quality Counts is being used as a tool to coordinate an early care and education system in the county that will promote high standards, raise quality, and empower consumers to demand higher quality programs.

Quality Counts is a 5 star rating system computed from points based on a program's learning environment, staff qualifications, ratios-group sizes, curriculum, family engagement and program administration. After being competitively selected, programs complete a self-study, have a formal assessment of their program, and receive technical assistance to help create a quality improvement plan.

Based on the needs identified in the quality improvement plan, programs are eligible for a variety of support services. These include training about the Environment Rating Scales and other topics, help with the self-study, technical assistance to meet quality improvement goals, educational scholarships, WAGE\$ stipends, grants for materials, and awards for achieving high quality. The amounts for support grants and achievement awards increase for programs serving the most low-income children.

The major funders of Quality Counts are The Children's Trust, the ELC and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami. The Children's Trust and ELC funds are being used to subcontract with the following agencies to construct and implement Quality Counts activities:

- *Florida International University and Family Central, Inc:* technical assistance to centers
- *University of Miami-Mailman Center:* technical assistance to family child care homes
- *Devereux Florida:* formal assessments
- *United Way - Center for Excellence in Early Education:* training coordination and implementation;
- *The Children's Forum – Quality Counts Career Center:* career counseling
- *National Institute for Innovative Leadership/Bluejean Software:* software development and data management

Professional development of early learning practitioners

Professional development activities are critical complements to the child care quality rating improvement system, and cannot be viewed in isolation from the larger initiative.

As of January 2008, education levels of the approximately 7,800 early child care professionals working directly with children in centers were:

- 2% with no high school degree;
- 45% with a high school degree or GED;
- 37% with a child development associate (CDA) or equivalent (CDAE) certificate;
- 5% with an Associate degree;
- 9% with a Bachelor's degree; and
- 1% with a Master's degree or higher.

Career advising: The Quality Counts Career Center provides career advisors to support continued professional development of child care practitioners. The Career Center is funded by The Children's Trust and operated by The Children's Forum.

Scholarships: The Children's Trust has dedicated \$1 million annually for a scholarship initiative for teachers, directors, technical assistance providers, or trainers working in child care programs; this funding is primarily dedicated to funding scholarships for participants in Quality Counts. Scholarship funds are available for a range of educational activities, including GED preparation and testing, English proficiency courses, evaluation of foreign educational credentials, the 120-contact hour CDA-Child Development Associate and the Florida Child Care Professional Certificate. For persons seeking Associate degrees funded by The Children's Trust scholarships, the Florida TEACH model is used, requiring sponsorship by the employer and participant co-pays.

WAGE\$: WAGE\$ provides bi-annual stipends to child care teachers based on educational level achieved and stability in a child care program; WAGE\$ is dedicated to participants in Quality Counts. The Children's Trust is providing \$750,000 and ELC is providing \$250,000 annually to WAGE\$, which is administered by The Children's Forum.

READY SERVICES – HEALTH

Children's health begins even before birth, and thereafter they have a variety of needs for health services – to respond to injuries and illnesses, to be immunized from infectious diseases, to be checked for potential health problems, and to be treated when health needs are identified.

CURRENT STATUS

Prenatal Care and Low Birth Weight Babies

According to the Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade County, 84.8% of mothers began prenatal care within the first trimester of pregnancy in 2006; this is a decrease from 2002 to 2004 when 88.5% of Miami-Dade mothers received early prenatal care. Disparities in access to prenatal care between white, black and Hispanic mothers have narrowed since 1989. The percentage of non-Hispanic black mothers who initiated first trimester prenatal care was 80.2% from 2002 to 2004, compared to 91.4% for non-Hispanic white mothers and 90.9% for Hispanic mothers. Among teen parents, 6.5% received no early prenatal care in 2006.

There are approximately 32,000 births annually in Miami-Dade County. According to the Florida Department of Health, 2,703 (8.4%) of babies in Miami-Dade County were low-birthweight in 2006.

Breastfeeding

The 2007 *Parent Survey on Child Well-Being* report indicates 70% of children in Miami-Dade County were ever breastfed and 30% of children were breastfed at least six months. There are disparities by race related to breast-feeding: 24% of Black, non-Hispanic, 31% of Hispanic and 37% of White, non-Hispanic babies were breastfed six months or more. Children who were born outside of the United States were more likely to be breastfed six months or more (45%) than children born in the United States (28%).

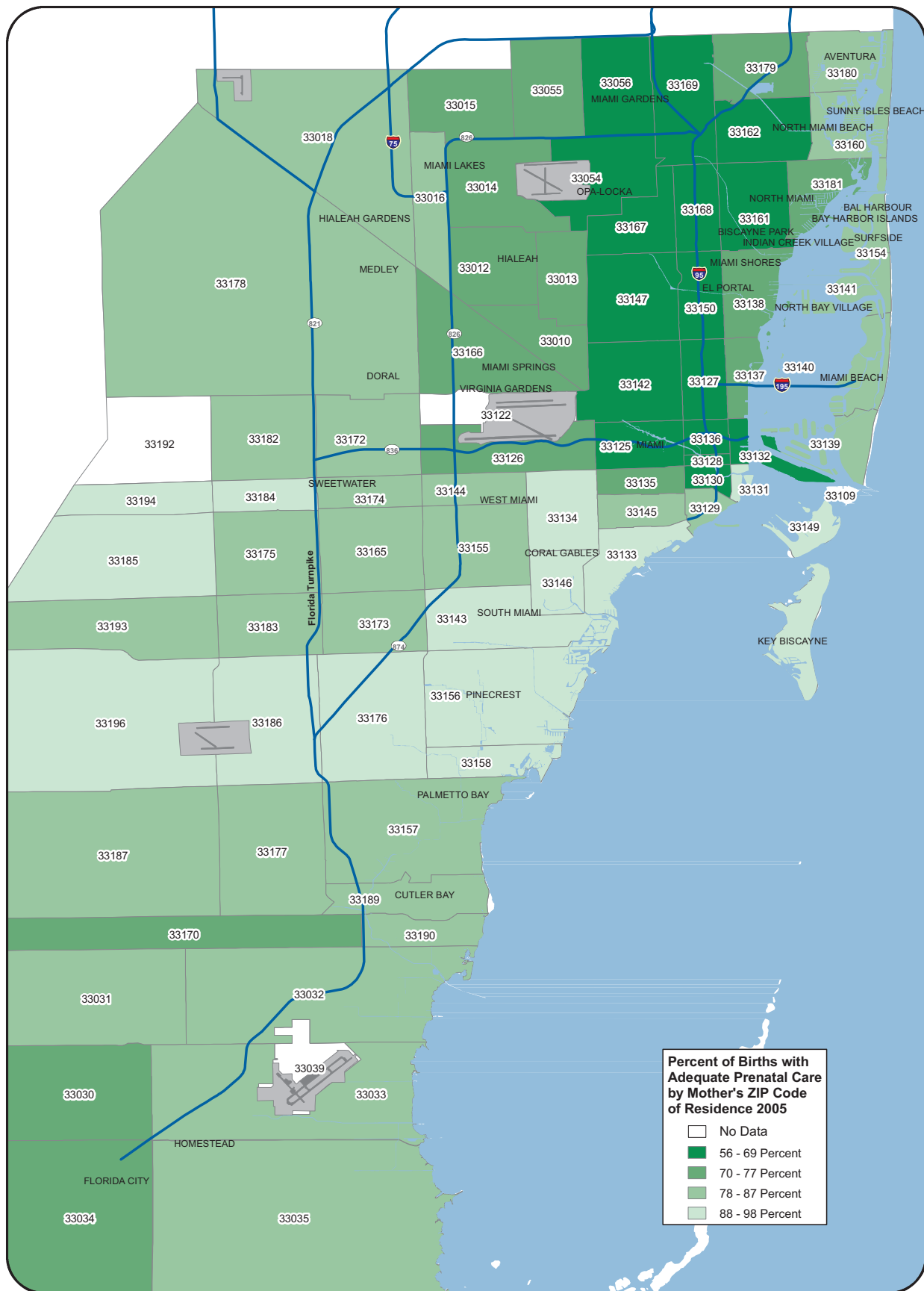
Immunizations

The Florida Department of Health reports that in 2006, 87.4% of two-year-old children were fully immunized in Miami-Dade County. Among children entering kindergarten in 2006, 93.4% were fully immunized.

Medicaid, SCHIP, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)

In Florida, Medicaid is administered by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). The Florida Department of Health reports that Miami-Dade County has 141,120 children under age 11 eligible for Medicaid as of November 2007.

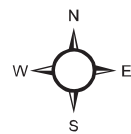
The 1998 Florida Legislature created the Florida KidCare Program, which is the state's children health insurance program (SCHIP) for uninsured children and provides health care coverage to children in families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Most families pay a monthly premium of \$15 or \$20 for KidCare coverage; families with children on Medicaid pay no monthly premium.



Percent of Births with Adequate Prenatal Care by Mother's ZIP Code of Residence in 2005

Data Sources:
 Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005
 Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006
 Water: USGS- 2006
 Birth Data: Florida Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics

January 2008



A total of 51,901 children were enrolled in Florida KidCare in Miami-Dade County as of November 2007; this represents 20% of the statewide KidCare enrollment even though Miami-Dade County has only 14% of the state's child population.

KidCare consists of four programs:

KidCare Partners	Responsibility
MediKids	Provides health care coverage for children ages 1 through 4, administered by the Agency for Health Care Administration.
Florida Healthy Kids	Provides health care coverage for children ages 5 through 18, administered by the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation.
Children's Medical Services Network	A health care plan for children from birth through age 18 with special health care needs, administered by the Department of Health for physical health services and the Department of Children and Family Services for behavioral health.
Medicaid for Children	Provides medical coverage for children from birth through 18 who qualify for the program's low-income eligibility requirement. The Agency for Health Care Administration administers the Medicaid program and the Department of Children and Family Services determines eligibility for Medicaid.

Health Insurance

The 2007 *Parent Survey on Child Well-Being* found the following:

- 25% of children ages birth to 18 (20% of children ages birth to 5) had no consistent health insurance coverage over the previous 12 months;
- 10% of children ages birth to 18 (5% of children ages birth to 5) had no health insurance coverage at all over the previous 12 months;
- 15% of children ages birth to 18 had no medical home, or a consistent place where they received medical care;
- 33% of children ages 2 to 17 had not had a dental exam in the previous year;
- 11% of children ages birth to 18 (5% of children ages birth to 5) had not seen a medical provider in the last year.

Lead Poisoning

According to the Florida Department of Health, there have been approximately 300-400 confirmed cases of lead screening in Miami-Dade County annually since 1999. An article in the American Journal of Public Health reported 279 confirmed cases of lead poisoning in Miami-Dade County in 2002; in 2006 there were 129 confirmed cases of lead poisoning among children under age 7. In 2002, there were over 14,000 lead

screenings completed; 75.5% of the screenings were on children 6 and younger. Among one and two year old Medicaid recipients, 22% had lead screenings completed.

Among children processed through the MDCHD Refugee Health Assessment Center (RHAC), the prevalence of lead poisoning in children 6 months to 6 years of age was 7% (compared to the national average of 2.2%)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services

Part C of IDEA defines services for children ages birth to 3. These services in Florida are coordinated by the Department of Health through Children's Medical Services-CMS, under the name Early Steps. There are 17 designated Part C Early Steps agencies in Florida that conduct screening and assessment and service coordination. The Miami-Dade area providers are the University of Miami—Department of Pediatrics Mailman Center (North) and the Miami Children's Hospital (South).

Within Florida, there are 19 associate Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Centers coordinated through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services in the Florida Department of Education. FDLRS-South, operating through the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Division of Exceptional Student Education, is the local special education support system for educators, parents, and professionals who work with exceptional children. <http://fdlrs-south.dade.k12.fl.us/>

FDLRS-South provides the following services for children birth to age 5 (and up to 21) and their families:

- Child Find
- Human Resource Development
- Parent Services
- Technology

There is also a 20-year old council of the special needs providers, the Young Children with Special Needs and Disabilities Council -YCSNDC (affectionately called Yucks and Ducks). This is headquartered at University of Miami Department of Pediatrics. YCSNDC is an organization of families and professionals whose mission is to conduct and support activities that provide a comprehensive, coordinated delivery system for children birth through five with special needs or disabilities and their families. This system is to be culturally sensitive, family centered and inclusive of best practices. Monthly meetings are open to the public. The Children's Trust funds a Service Partnership through YCSNDC called Early Discovery to identify and provides services to children birth to 5 who fall below the eligibility cutoff for Part C.

SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

The Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade (HSCMD) was incorporated on April 1, 2001, and serves as a prenatal and infant care coalition. HSCMD is responsible for the establishment and oversight of the Miami-Dade Healthy Start system, which includes

directing funds for continuous care coordination to pregnant women and children birth to age three, evaluating services, and quality improvement and assurance responsibilities.

The primary goals of HSCMD are to:

- reduce infant mortality
- reduce the number of low birth weight and pre-term birth
- improve maternal and child health developmental outcomes.

The HSCMD consists of 100 maternal, infant and child health community stakeholders including consumers of maternal and child health services, migrant and community health centers, local hospitals, birthing centers and other providers of maternal child health services, local medical societies, local health planning organizations; local maternal and infant health advocacy interest groups; county and municipal governments; social service organizations; local education communities; and community organizations that represent or serve the target population.

There has been significant work to coordinate and streamline the maternal and child health services in Miami-Dade County. There are a couple of primary health programs for pregnant women and young children in Miami-Dade County; these are overseen by the HSCMD and its partners:

- *Healthy Start*

Implemented April 1, 1992, Healthy Start legislation provides for universal risk screening of all Florida's pregnant women and newborn infants to identify those at risk of poor birth, health and developmental outcomes. The Healthy Start Program is funded by the State of Florida Department of Health. All pregnant women and infants up to age 3 are eligible receive a free Healthy Start Risk Screen regardless of their marital, economic or immigration status. Healthy Start services include: outreach, care coordination to assure access to needed services, childbirth education, parenting education and support, nutrition counseling, psychosocial counseling, tobacco education and cessation counseling, breastfeeding education and support and interconceptional education and counseling. In FY 2007, 15,755 women and 5,740 infants received services through Healthy Start.

- *MomCare*

Clients referred to the MomCare Program are pregnant women who qualify for SOBRA. SOBRA (Sixth Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) is a special Medicaid waiver from the Federal Government that provides insurance coverage to pregnant women whose household income is between 150% and 185% of the poverty guidelines - the uninsured working poor. Once accepted into the program clients will receive guidance selecting a prenatal care provider, assistance scheduling initial prenatal visits, and information about state programs for which they may be eligible. The goal of Florida's MomCare program is to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality rates through a simplified application, guidance, education and care coordination services. In FY 2007, 19,084 women received services through Momcare.

READY SCHOOLS

Schools have a responsibility to educate all children, regardless of what children know and can do at the time of school entry.

CURRENT STATUS

Total School Enrollment

The Miami-Dade public school system is the fourth largest in the nation. According to 2006 ACS, 423,913 children in Miami-Dade County were enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade; 366,085 were enrolled in public schools and 57,828 were enrolled in private schools.

Information on Children Attending Public Elementary School

For the 2006-2007 school year, 140,597 children attended Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) in pre-kindergarten through grade 4. Approximately 61% of young children who attend MDCPS are Hispanic/Latino, 28% are Black, 9% are Non-Hispanic White and 2% are Asian/Indian/Multiracial. Among children attending the public schools, 68% of children in elementary school and 59% overall are eligible for free or reduced lunch. A total of 16% have limited English proficiency.

Over three-quarters of children in elementary school (80%) missed ten or fewer days of school in the 2006-2007 school year; 6% missed more than 20 days of school. The following percentages of children were retained in each grade in the 2006-2007 school year:

- Kindergarten: 6%
- First grade: 6%
- Second grade: 5%
- Third grade: 12%
- Fourth grade: 1.5%

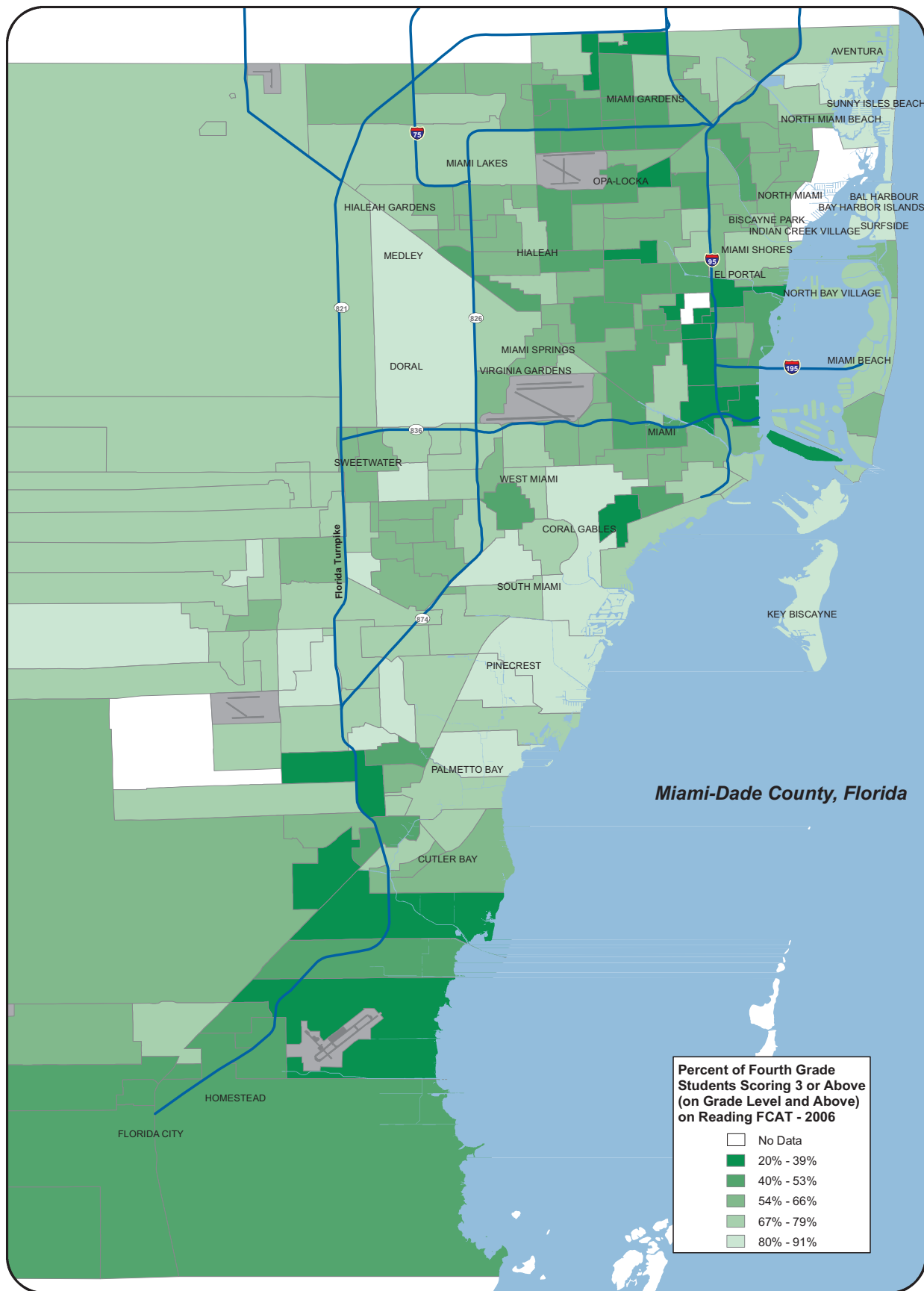
In 2006-2007, 4,175 children in elementary school received outdoor suspensions and 724 received indoor suspensions.

Of the 17,350 children identified as having delays or handicaps, 1,129 children were identified as emotionally handicapped, or behavior disordered.

The average class size for kindergarten classrooms was 19.6 and the average class size for first grade classrooms was 19.7.

4th Grade Reading Proficiency

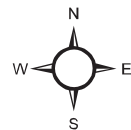
The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards. The FCAT Reading test measures selected benchmarks from Florida's curriculum framework, the Sunshine State Standards (SSS). In 2007, 64% of Miami-Dade 4th graders measured at or above grade level in reading compared with the statewide average of 68%.



Percent of Fourth Grade Students Scoring 3 or Above (on Grade Level and Above) on Reading FCAT - 2006 by Elementary School Boundary

Data Sources:
 Urban: Miami Dade County- 2005
 Roads: Tele Atlas- 2006
 Water: USGS- 2006
 FCAT Data: FL Dept of Education

January 2008



Parent Involvement

In 2004-05, about 60% of elementary school parents responded to a survey question about their involvement in schools. Of the parents who answered, about 12% reported attending no elementary school activities. Over half (55%) attended one to three activities and one-third of the parents participated in four or more school activities. Parents in elementary charter schools were more involved by this measure than traditional elementary schools. Half of elementary charter school parents attended four or more activities and only 4% reported attending no events at all.

SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Miami-Dade is embarking on one of the most ambitious and comprehensive plans in the nation to create partnerships, curriculum alignment, and transition support from early childhood programs and all of the public elementary schools in the county. In 2002 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation selected The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF) and Miami-Dade County as one of eight sites across the country to receive a five-year grant to develop linkages between early childhood programs and elementary schools to ensure children arrive at school prepared for success and have a smooth transition into elementary school.

Called SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids), the initiative serves as a catalyst or "spark" to help children transition to school ready to learn and to help schools get ready for children to succeed. The key neighborhoods of focus in Miami-Dade County for SPARK are Allapattah-Model City and Florida City-Homestead. A total of 66 child care centers and 8 schools were involved in the first phase of this project. The major activities included:

- Significant training and quality improvement support in the 66 child care centers (63 of which are now accredited);
- Parent skill building, using the Parents as Teachers curriculum as a model;
- Professional development for K-3 teachers through a job-imbedded, on-site master's degree program. Offered through the University of Florida, teachers can complete the degree within 2.5 years free of charge (except for books) in exchange for staying at their school for at least 5 years.

While this is an ambitious project on its own, the superintendent of the Miami-Dade public schools challenged the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation to provide support and partnerships at all 230 elementary schools in the district. The community is on track to achieve this goal by the end of 2011 with major support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Now called Ready Schools Miami, the initiative:

- Will be scaled to all elementary schools over a four-year period. In 2007, 16 schools were selected and an additional 54 schools will be selected for implementation. About 70 schools will be added each subsequent year.

- Creates learning communities within elementary schools, supported by specific training and participation in University of Florida Lastinger Center activities and Master's degree programs
- Coordinates with the Quality Counts child care quality enhancement initiative, specifically working to align curriculum in pre-K programs with K-2 curriculum
- Encourages schools to fully integrate the activities of school health clinics provided by the Health Connect in Our Schools initiative of the Children's Trust
- Establishes data-sharing and analysis to support planned interventions
- Mobilizes and focuses resources and expertise within, across, and outside the school district to produce sustainable and widespread improvement in student learning and healthy child development.
- Is a comprehensive, systemic strategy that connects the school district, elementary schools, early learning centers and families with community-based organizations in support of improved child well-being and increased student academic achievement.

The core elements of Ready Schools Miami include:

- *School Readiness/high quality early learning:* Works to improve quality of Early Learning System to ensure that children start school with requisite readiness skills; the Quality Counts quality rating improvement system (described earlier) is a key element of this strategy.
- *Transition from home to school:* Establishes strong learning partnership between parents and teachers to ensure children's successful transition to school.
- *Align standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment* within and across grades from pre-kindergarten through elementary school.
- *Engaging and supporting parents and families:* Embeds parent engagement within the teaching and learning context to create strong learning partnerships among early learning teachers, elementary school teachers and parents.
- *Builds school-based learning communities* where educators work collaboratively to expand their understanding of child learning and development, improve their understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, and improve their practice to produce sustained levels of student achievement and strong social competence; this includes the job-imbedded master's degree for K-3 teachers described earlier, as well as a new job-imbedded master's in early childhood education for professionals providing TA and other supports to early childhood programs.
- *Provide services essential to healthy child development:* Connects families with community partners to ensure that all children have access to basic services (health, including oral health, early learning, after-school) that are critical to child well-being.
- *Metrics of Child Development:* Measures improvements in school readiness skills, student learning and child well-being; produces a regular report on community progress toward the goals.

READY COMMUNITIES

Families need a nurturing community that looks out for them and provides a range of developmental opportunities.

CURRENT STATUS

Children Living in Poverty

According to the 2006 ACS, 83,200 children under the age of six in Miami-Dade County were living at or below 185% of the federal poverty level; 42,000 of them were living at or below the federal poverty level. Among children birth to 18 in Miami-Dade County, 27% received some form of public assistance in 2006 (SSI, Medicaid, Food Stamps, etc.).

Crime Data

The number of unduplicated youths under the age of 18 in Miami-Dade County arrested for a delinquent offense was 6,950 in 2006-07. This represents a delinquency rate of 26 youths arrested per 1,000 Miami-Dade youth (compared with the state of Florida's rate of 48 youths arrested for delinquency per 1,000 youth); crimes perpetrated by youth as well as youth crime victims tend to be concentrated in specific neighborhoods.

School Yards and Structures

There are 714 parks and playgrounds in Miami-Dade County, 45 libraries, 260 faith institutions, 116 museums and galleries, 208 public schools (PK-8) and 30 charter schools (PK-8).

SERVICE COORDINATION AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Family Support/Parent Counseling Programs

A query into Miami-Dade County's 211 system yielded over 600 options for parent support and education. The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation has commissioned a comprehensive assessment of the parent support and education programs in the county; this will be completed in 2008.

There are a number of home visiting/family support/parent counseling programs in Miami-Dade County (beyond Healthy Start mentioned earlier under Ready Children – Health) that are particularly prevalent and/or are piloting national models. Two are highlighted here.

- *The Parent Academy*

The Parent Academy (TPA) of Miami-Dade County Public Schools ® is a year-round initiative designed to help parents become full partners in their children's education. Parents have the opportunity to enroll in classes that interest them most, including effective discipline, nutrition, financial management, the A,B,C's of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, helping children with homework, child development, how to write a resume, literacy skills, and many other topics. The Parent Academy is spread

throughout every corner of this community, and is offered in schools, in private business, public libraries and even on-line.

Partnering with higher education academicians, K-12 practitioners, actively engaged parents, and the public and private sectors, TPA offers parents the opportunity to enjoy an academic collegiate environment and learn how to help their children succeed.

In 2005, The Parent Academy opened as an initiative of Miami-Dade County Public Schools to help parents become fuller partners in their children's education through the development of their skills, knowledge and confidence. Courses offered range from early childhood development to parenting skills, from health and nutrition to technology. For the 2005-06 school year, 19,447 certificates of completion were issued. For the following year, 55,023 certificates were issued, a 182% increase. Similarly, the number of Miami-Dade County public schools with active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) rose from 241 at the end of the 2005-06 school year to 265 at the end of the 2006-07 school year. For this same time period, PTA membership increased from 52,540 to 55,952.

- *HIPPY: Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)*
HIPPY is a home-visiting family literacy program which focuses on child development; and increasing the parent's capacity to provide early literacy training to their young children to promote the child's success in school. This early intervention/prevention program is needed because so many children in Miami-Dade County Schools are scoring poorly on their F-CAT exams. Many reading problems can be prevented by fostering early literacy. Additionally, many children in the targeted communities are at risk of abuse/neglect, and the HIPPY model, which strengthens parenting skills and facilitates positive parent/child interactions and bonding can serve as an important program to prevent abuse/neglect.

126 families are receiving services through HIPPY, predominantly in Northern Miami.

READY CHILDREN

Ideally, indicators are available to describe and measure what children know and can do in each of the domains of child development including physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and literacy, and cognition and general knowledge.

CURRENT STATUS

Kindergarten Instrument to Assess School Readiness

The accountability measure for voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) is the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS), administered by the Florida Department of Education with the local school system to entering kindergarten children within the first 30 days of the school year.

FLKRS consists of several components:

- ECHOS – Early Childhood Observation System: a general developmental assessment that goes up to 2nd grade and covers the domains of the FL Performance Standards for VPK. The tool can be scored with PDAs and is published by Harcourt Brace. (www.harcourtassessment.com)
- DIBELS –Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills: literacy screen designed to go through 2nd grade. At kindergarten entrance only the first two items are used : 1) Letter naming: Name alphabet letters given in random order mixing upper and lower case and 2) Initial Sound Fluency: testing ability to identify the beginning sound of words. (www.dibels.uoregon.edu)

To be considered "ready" on the ECHOS measure, the student must score Consistently Demonstrating or Emerging/Progressing. To be considered "ready" on the two probes of the DIBELS measures, the student must score Above Average or Low Risk.

In 2006, Miami-Dade County's scores on these tools were slightly below the statewide average:

- ECHOS
 - Consistently Demonstrating and Emerging/Progressing: 84% (State average: 86%)
 - Not yet demonstrating: 16% (State average: 14%)
- DIBELS Letter Naming
 - 67% Above average/low risk (State average: 70%)
 - 33% Moderate/high risk (State average: 30%)
- DIBELS Initial Sound
 - 56% Above average/low risk (State average: 63%)
 - 44% Moderate/high risk (State average: 37%)

Assessment of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe has a three pronged assessment strategy:

- Developmental Screenings: using the ASQ and LAP-D Screen

- Child Assessments: using the DECA and LAP-D
- Environmental Assessments: ITERS-R, ECERS-S and SECA

Multiple cohorts of children have been assessed using the child assessment measures since 2002. In the 2005-2006 school year, the following number of children will be assessed:

- 2,850 3-year olds and 3,091 4-year olds receiving subsidized child care
- 4,268 MDCPS Pre-K 4-yr-olds
- ≈1,500 MDCPS 3-4 yr-olds with special needs

The following results came from these assessments:

- 37% of 4 year olds in subsidized care were in a 'red flag' category based on the LAP-D and DECA.
- In the Miami-Dade County Public Schools
 - significant gains were made between pre and post test assessments for 4-year old children in fee-supported pre-k on fine and gross motor, cognitive, and language skills (measured by the LAP-D);
 - pre-test scores for 4-year old children receiving Title I funds were significantly lower (ranging from 34-67), and the gains after one year of pre-k were even more significant (ranging from 68-82 on the post-test)
- Children participating in an ELC-supported and CDS implemented intervention program show greater gains from Pre to Post in social-emotional skills and behavior according to teachers and parents, compared to children receiving no intervention
- Children participating in IMPACT (an initiative to improve the quality of child care) show greater gains from pre to post in cognitive, language, and motor development, and in social-emotional skills according to teachers, compared to no intervention
- Children participating in SPARK (the pre-cursor to Ready Schools) show greater gains from pre to post in cognitive, language, and motor development, and in social emotional skills and behavior according to teachers and parents, compared to children with no intervention
- The weakest areas for preschoolers in poverty in Miami are language development, literacy, and behavior concerns as reported by parents, which suggest that these would be appropriate targets for future interventions.

Literacy Activities in the Home

In the 2007 *Parent Survey on Child Well-Being* report, parents reported the following related to literacy activities with children under age 6:

- Parent or household member reads to child: one in ten (10 %) are never read to on a weekly basis, 17 % have a household member who read to them one to two times per week, and 73 % are read to three or more times per week. A higher percentage of children whose parent has no more than a high school diploma (15 percent) or whose parent is not in the labor force (18 percent) are never read to on a weekly basis, compared with children whose parent has a bachelor's degree (five percent) or whose parent is employed (four percent).

- Parent or household member tells child stories: Fifteen percent of children are never told stories by a household member on a weekly basis. Seventeen percent have a household member who tells them stories one to two times per week and 68 percent are told stories three or more times per week. There are no significant differences across population groups in the frequency of storytelling.
- Literacy activities: Fifteen percent of children are never taught letters, words, or numbers by someone in their household, and 11 percent of children receive such teaching one or two times per week, while 74 percent receive such teaching three or more times per week. Children who do not speak English very well are less likely to experience such literacy activities with a household member at least three or more times per week.

Conclusion

When all the variables in the school readiness equation align: Ready Families + Ready Early Care and Education Services + Ready Health Services + Ready Schools + Ready Communities, the result is Ready Children for school and overall success.

Miami-Dade County and its many Ready Child proponents and institutions are positioned to build a seamless system to better understand and address the factors that could limit success for some children. This initial system scan indicates important strides taken in this regard. There are also a number of challenges:

- While a county-wide scan provides very useful data, the picture varies widely based on which part of the county one examines. As a next step, specific neighborhoods are being examined to identify services strengths and gaps, unmet needs, and opportunities for better system development and integration;
- The data collected through this scan has highlighted opportunities for better data-sharing arrangements to inform the big picture, rather than having to navigate multiple data systems that focus on pieces of children's needs.
- There are many examples of excellent service delivery to address a focused set of needs, as well as significant room for better service integration. These areas are being identified and strategies to address them will be developed.