Grants aim to improve foster care system

By Charlie Reed
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Community Based Care of Central Florida recently was awarded an $8.6 million grant to create more stability for younger children in foster care.

The money will fund programs focused on foster kids before they reach their critical adolescent years.

“This approach will focus on an often overlooked population of 6- to 12-year-olds in licensed care,” said Glen Casel, president and CEO of Community Based Care of Central Florida. “Nearly 40 percent of teenagers currently in foster care have been removed from their homes at least twice. Our goal is to reduce that number by ensuring caregivers have the skills, resources and long-term supports necessary to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma as they approach their teenage years. The funds will be distributed over five years through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau and will support CBCCF’s new Strong Foundations initiative.

The goal of the grant is to increase stability for children in foster care by offering strengths-based, family-centered coaching and offering behavioral support training to caregivers, including foster parents, relative caregivers and, when appropriate, reunified families.

Strong Foundations aims to accomplish the following goals over five years:
- Improve engagement between biological families and caregivers.
- Increase the frequency of placements with relatives
- Train caregivers in supporting children who have experienced trauma.
- Provide ongoing resources to meet specific behavioral health needs.
- Enhance compliance and legal planning for permanent placements.

CBCCF will serve as the lead agency in administering the grant locally.

As the region’s lead nonprofit agency overseeing foster care, adoption and other child welfare services in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, it serves more than 3,000 children and their families.

The Strong Foundations award is the second federal grant secured by the CBCCF family of companies in as many weeks, according to the agency.

In September, Community Initiatives, an affiliated company that manages child welfare programs received a $375,000 grant to improve mental health training and awareness.