

State gets five-year extension of a funding waiver to help foster care kids

Florida's foster care system got a boost Monday with federal approval of a five-year renewal of a waiver that has helped the state reduce the number of children removed from their homes and placed in foster care.

The waiver allows the state to use money that would normally be restricted to out-of-home foster care for other services, including intensive in-home assistance to prevent placement of children in foster care, reuniting families and improved child welfare, according to a statement from the state Department of Children and Families.

It allows "flexibility" to respond to the needs of Florida families, DCF's Interim Secretary **Esther Jacobo** said.

The waiver has helped reduce the number of kids in the state's child welfare system in half, from 40,000 to 20,000, said **Christina Spudeas**, executive director of Florida's Children's First.

"The waiver is necessary for the state of Florida to continue to use federal dollars earmarked for foster care to be used for prevention and intervention," she said. "It's very necessary to keep children in their homes."

The waiver first went into effect under former Gov. **Jeb Bush** in 2006. After its expiration in 2011, the waiver was extended in three-month increments and now won't have to be renewed until 2019.

Read more here:

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2014/02/state-gets-five-year-extension-of-a-funding-waiver-to-help-foster-care-kids.html#storylink=cpy>