

## MEDIA CONTACT

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### **United Way Grants Strengthen Florida Center's Vital Intervention Services**

*Two major grants from United Way of Charlotte County will bolster family-focused programs that promote healthy development and emotional wellbeing.*

(April 3, 2025) The Florida Center for Early Childhood has received two significant grants from the United Way of Charlotte County, totaling \$49,326. These funds will support vital early intervention services through The Florida Center's Healthy Families program and Early Childhood Therapy Services.

**Healthy Families Charlotte**, a nationally accredited program focused on preventing child abuse and neglect, received \$21,326 to support its mission. The program assists expectant parents and families with newborns facing stressful life circumstances, fostering family self-sufficiency through education and community support. Trena Miller, B.A., M.S., program manager of Healthy Families Charlotte, explains that the program allows parents to gain essential skills in recognizing and responding to their babies' developmental needs, using positive discipline techniques, managing parenting stress in healthy ways, and setting both short- and long-term goals.

"These services make a real difference," Miller says. "Ninety-nine percent of children in our program remain safe from abuse while receiving support, and even three

years after finishing, 95 percent continue to thrive in stable, nurturing homes. These numbers aren't just statistics—they represent real children growing up in safer, healthier environments because their families received help at the right time." She adds that the program served 93 families in Charlotte County in 2024.

The Florida Center's **Early Childhood Therapy Services** received \$28,000, evenly divided between Developmental Therapies and Mental Health support. These programs help young children overcome developmental and behavioral challenges, equipping them for success in school and beyond.

"One in six children faces these challenges," says Melissa Bradley, M.A., LMHC, Clinical Director of Mental Health Services. "Many have experienced trauma, including abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol. With guidance from trained therapists, children and their families receive the support they need to navigate difficulties and build a brighter future."

Bradley notes that the demand for these services continues to grow. "More families are reaching out for help, and this funding enables us to provide life-changing therapies that help children thrive."

Dr. Kristie Skoglund, CEO of The Florida Center, emphasizes the profound impact of the United Way of Charlotte County's support.

"The ripple effects of these services—both our Healthy Families program and Early Childhood Therapy Services—extend beyond individual families, strengthening the entire community," she says. "As more children gain the tools to succeed, their families and future prospects grow stronger. Behind every statistic is a child gaining confidence, a parent feeling supported, and a family finding hope. Thanks to the

generosity of the United Way of Charlotte County, we can continue providing these critical services that transform lives and lay a firm foundation for everything that follows.”

### **About The Florida Center for Early Childhood**

For more than 40 years, The Florida Center for Early Childhood has been the leading provider of therapeutic services, early education, and healthy development for young children in southwest Florida, offering a seamless delivery of services for the whole child and their family. Today, the agency is nationally recognized for its early childhood expertise in various specialties. The Florida Center provides developmental therapies, mental health counseling, Starfish Academy preschool, the Healthy Families home-visiting program, and the state's only Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Clinic, with locations in Sarasota and Orlando. **For more information, visit [TheFloridaCenter.org](http://TheFloridaCenter.org).**