The Florida Institute for Child Welfare enjoyed a productive year thanks to the contributions and accomplishments of our affiliates, partners, and staff. We look forward to providing further groundbreaking work in the child welfare field in 2024!

Here are our 2023 highlights:

1. **Beta Launch of the MyALIGN Platform**

Between May and July 2023, the Institute’s GROW Center launched the MyALIGN platform, a customized digital platform for child welfare professionals, to three beta testing sites at the Department of Children and Families and the Northwest Florida Health Network (NWF) in Chipley and Pensacola. These beta testing sites provided pivotal feedback for the platform, which aims to provide career-long learning opportunities and holistic ongoing support for college students, recently trained personnel, trainers, and middle and upper management positions working in child welfare agencies.

To learn more about MyALIGN, visit [ficw.fsu.edu/MYALIGN](http://ficw.fsu.edu/MYALIGN).

2. **Launch of the SOS Interventions and SAFER Advanced Certifications (AdCerts)**

As part of the Institute’s GROW Center, the Advance Learn Innovate Grow Network (ALIGN) program provides specialization and learning opportunities for child welfare professionals. Support of Substance Use (SOS) Interventions in Family Systems and SAFER: Strategies for Addressing Family Violence and Enhancing Resilience, launched this year and are making strides towards diversifying competencies within the child welfare workforce.

To learn more about these AdCerts and future application cycles, please visit [ficw.fsu.edu/ALIGN](http://ficw.fsu.edu/ALIGN).
3. First Cohort Graduates from the STARS Advanced Certification (AdCert)

In May 2023, after 7 months of covering stress, primary and secondary trauma, and how child welfare professionals can support both their clients and themselves, the first cohort graduated from the Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies (STARS) AdCert course. 27 participants—representing several circuits, child welfare organizations, and direct service provider organizations—completed all required coursework and became eligible for CEUs from the Florida Certification Board, as well as meeting Advancement Criteria on the DCF Career Ladder.

Registration for the second cohort of STARS is expected to open in January 2024. Learn more about STARS at ficw.fsu.edu/STARS.

4. Season 6 of the Child Welfare Podcast

In January, the Institute’s Child Welfare podcast premiered Season 6, Elevating Lived Experience: Co-Creating Knowledge through Partnership in Child Welfare Research. Enlisting the expertise of a diverse group of child welfare researchers, Institute affiliates, and study participants, this season explored how child welfare researchers can uplift the voices of those with lived experience.

Listen to the podcast on all streaming platforms or visit ficw.fsu.edu/Podcast.

5. 2023 Annual Symposium

“Transformational Leadership: Leading at all Levels,” our 2023 annual symposium, garnered our largest attended symposium to date. Two hundred child welfare professionals and partners convened for the two-day event and learned about transformational leadership through interactive and skill-building workshops on topics that included passion-driven leadership and creating a culture of learning and growth.

Save the Date: Our next symposium will take place May 8-9, 2024 at the Augustus B. Turnbull III Florida State Conference Center in Tallahassee, FL.
6. Redesigned Website

In January 2023, after a multi-year redesign process in collaboration with the Florida Center for Interactive Media, the Institute launched its new and improved website redesign. Providing a much more user-friendly experience, the website features a streamlined organizational system to promote ease of finding information related to the Institute’s programs and research, including a searchable and filterable resource library.

Check out the resource library in action at ficw.fsu.edu/Resources.

7. New Director Dr. Lisa Magruder

In March 2023, the Institute announced the selection of the next director, Dr. Lisa Magruder. After serving as the Institute’s associate director of research since 2020, Dr. Magruder transitioned into this role after previous director, Dr. Jessica Pryce, transitioned into leading the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE) program under the GROW Center.

We are grateful to Dr. Magruder and Dr. Pryce for their leadership and contributions!

8. Launch of the AWE Leadership Academy

In January 2023, the AWE Leadership Academy launched its first cohort in Leon County, with a subsequent cohort launched in July 2023 at the Partnership for Strong Families site in Gainesville, FL. The Leadership Academy intends to promote organizational well-being and enhance leadership capacity in child welfare through training, support, and coaching.

Learn more about the AWE Leadership Academy in the “Teaching Transformation” video on our YouTube page and about the AWE program at ficw.fsu.edu/AWE.
9. FSPSF Data Released in the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect

From July 2023 to October 2023, the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) released data for waves 1 - 4 from the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF). This pivotal data captures responses from nearly 1,500 newly hired CPIs and case managers over the five-year longitudinal study.

The Institute is tremendously proud of this achievement and hopes that this data fosters a national impact on workforce well-being.

Learn more about the FSPSF by visiting ficw.fsu.edu/FSPSF and access the database through ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/datasets/dataset-details.cfm?ID=278.

10. Launch of the FL YES Study

Serving as a first-of-its-kind in Florida, the Florida Youth Experiences Study (FL YES) launched in 2023 and will follow up to 325 foster youth during their transition into adulthood over the course of five years. The purpose of this longitudinal study is to provide a comprehensive view of youth who are aging out of foster care in Florida as they transition to adulthood by elevating their voices as they share their lived experiences.

Led by Institute Affiliate Dr. Martie Gillen at the University of Florida, the FL YES study is currently open for enrollment until June 30, 2024, or until the study reaches 325 participants.

Know a foster youth in Florida who may be interested in participating? Share and explore the project webpage with your networks at ficw.fsu.edu/FLYES.