



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

Better Health Care for all Floridians

ELIZABETH DUDEK
SECRETARY

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Contact: AHCA Communications Office
AHCACommunications@ahca.myflorida.com, 850-412-3623

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: *Miami Herald* Mischaracterizes Parent Choice

- Florida encourages parents to place their children in the least restrictive setting that can best serve their needs. Ultimately, the choice is up to the parents.
- The State has absolutely no financial incentive to, and does not, encourage parents to place their children in skilled nursing facilities rather than keeping their children in their homes.

Claim: "...the state has squeezed funding for in-home care so severely that parents have no choice but to institutionalize their children."

Fact: As of May 9, 2013, there were 191 children residing in skilled nursing facilities, out of the 1,814,543 children who receive Medicaid services in Florida, i.e., .011%. In contrast, during fiscal year 2011-2012, there were 1,788 families with medically complex children who chose to keep their child at home with supportive services paid for by Florida Medicaid. In FY 2011-12, Florida Medicaid expended an average of \$94,952 per medically complex child for services in the community, versus \$112,503 per child for services in skilled nursing facilities. The State has absolutely no financial incentive to, and does not, encourage parents to place their children in skilled nursing facilities.

Claim: "AHCA insists it reached out to the parents of all the roughly 230 children in nursing homes and that the overwhelming majority declined an offer to help move their offspring back home. But AHCA's own records suggest a large number have effectively abandoned their kids... many did not call the agency back — and are content to allow the state to call the shots."

Fact: The Agency called the parents of all children who reside in skilled nursing facilities and were able to speak with all but seven parents. The parents of children with complex medical conditions have made a difficult choice of which care setting they believe is best for their child and their family.

Opting not to speak with an Agency staff member or return our call does not in any way signify a parent has abdicated his or her responsibilities, nor does that mean the state "calls the shots." Each parent makes a choice at the time his or her child is originally assessed for the level of service needed. While AHCA provides frequent opportunities for parents to revisit that decision if they choose to, parents are under no legal obligation to further discuss the issue with AHCA staff. "Abandonment," as defined in Florida law, relates to the contacts a parent has with her child. Whether, or how often, a parent chooses to speak with AHCA staff is irrelevant to the question of whether a parent has abandoned his or her child.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 45,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and publishes health care data and statistics at



www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov. Additional information about Agency initiatives is available via [Facebook \(AHCAFlorida\)](#), [Twitter \(@AHCA_FL\)](#) and [YouTube \(/AHCAFlorida\)](#).

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