

# *The Drama of Children in Florida*

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Close to 500 children of both sexes have died in Florida in the past 6 years as a result of maltreatment by their parents and cuts in social aid programmes, this, according to a report by The Miami Herald.

The paper reports that, "Cuts in government funding for the protection of minors in high risk homes have left the most vulnerable children in Florida open to cruel and preventable death." This report follows the review of thousands of case files over one year.

According to the newspaper, the Florida Department of Children and Families has been warned, repeatedly, that the children were exposed to danger. Instead of protecting the minors, the paper claims, the Department left them "protected by their families". The Miami Herald report points to 477 deaths after parents were warned by State children protection authorities.

This figure is probably larger than that officially reported to the Governor and the Florida Legislature.

In one given year, the Florida Department of Children and Families left unreported at least 39 questionable deaths, that could be described as manslaughters. Those children were not only the victims of incompetent families but also of the deliberate change in Florida policies for children's welfare, the newspaper noted, adding that the Florida department of children and families decided almost 10 years ago to reduce by half the number of children under State Care and increasing what they curiously

described as "family preservation"

Concurrently, the Florida state authorities cuts reduce supervision and the measures of protection of a growing number of children placed under violent, negligent, drug-dependent or criminally minded parents.

The investigation by the Miami Herald disclosed that most of those innocent victims met violent deaths at the hands of their criminal relatives.

Some of them had their mouths taped to silence their screams for help.

Others were deliberately given deadly doses of drugs. One baby was thrown out of a car speeding on State road and a two year old girl was strangled by a snake that her mother kept at home as a pet.

Incredibly enough, despite these dramatic facts, Florida Governor Rick Scott defended the Florida Department of Children and insisted that it had recently marked up huge successes.

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