Children's Services Council of Broward County

Qualitative Evaluation of 25 Years of Service

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Report authors:
Kimberly Nelson and Amy Wade

Purpose

As the Children's Services Council approached its 25th anniversary, leadership commissioned a series of studies to assess CSC's impact on children, families, and communities throughout Broward County and to inform future strategic planning. One component of this effort was an independent qualitative evaluation examining stakeholder perceptions of CSC's impact, governance approach, and future opportunities.

The study included 40 semi-structured interviews with elected officials, government partners, nonprofit leaders, community connectors, and other system stakeholders conducted between November 2025 and January 2026.

Across stakeholder groups, findings were remarkably consistent. Participants overwhelmingly described CSC as a trusted and influential organization that has helped shape Broward County's system of supports for children and families over the past 25 years.

Evidence of Impact after 25 Years: What Stakeholders Told Us

Across stakeholder groups, participants view CSC as a transformational force in Broward County's system of care for children and families. While respondents acknowledge that community outcomes are influenced by many organizations and factors, they repeatedly identify CSC as a primary driver behind the development of a stronger, more coordinated, and prevention-focused system over the past 25 years. Several areas of impact emerge consistently across interviews.

Strengthening Broward County's Continuum of Care

Stakeholders acknowledge CSC as the backbone organization of Broward County's child- and family-serving system. Participants emphasize CSC's role in developing and sustaining a continuum of supports spanning early childhood, youth development, literacy, behavioral health, family strengthening, after-school programming, and prevention services. Several long-tenured stakeholders reflect on the fragmented landscape that existed before CSC's creation and credit the organization with helping build a more coordinated and connected system of care.

> *"Before CSC, organizations operated independently and lacked the scale, coordination, or infrastructure needed to deliver consistent impact. The field was a cottage industry."* **Large Nonprofit Partner**

Advancing Prevention and Early Intervention

A defining theme is CSC's commitment to prevention. Stakeholders repeatedly describe CSC as investing upstream in children and families before challenges escalate into more costly and intensive interventions. Participants highlight family strengthening services, literacy initiatives, behavioral health supports, youth development programs, maternal and infant services, and after-school programming as examples of often unseen investments designed to improve outcomes while reducing future involvement in child welfare, juvenile justice, and other crisis-response systems. Several interviewees

specifically note CSC's intentional focus on serving families before they enter the dependency system**.**

> *"Without CSC, families would show up more on the deeper end of the pool."*
>
> **Government System Partner**

Improving Outcomes for Children and Families

Across interviews, stakeholders attribute a range of positive community outcomes to CSC's leadership and investments. Participants frequently reference improvements in literacy, expanded childcare access, foster care prevention, behavioral health supports, youth development opportunities, family stability, and broader quality-of-life improvements for children and families. Several respondents point to reductions in foster care involvement as a particularly meaningful indicator of long-term system impact, while elected officials highlighted CSC's contributions to early literacy, childcare access, family preservation, and trauma-informed approaches to care.

> *"There's no way you can measure the true impact of changing a family or a child's life. They've changed the trajectory for thousands upon thousands of families and children."* **Elected Official**

Building Capacity Across the Nonprofit Sector

Stakeholders consistently emphasize that CSC's impact extends beyond funding programs. Many nonprofit leaders describe CSC as a catalyst for organizational growth, professionalization, accountability, and long-term sustainability. Small nonprofit representatives credit CSC with helping establish the infrastructure necessary for organizational success, while larger organizations describe substantial growth in staffing, budgets, systems, and service capacity resulting from long-term CSC investments. Participants repeatedly note that CSC has helped strengthen not only individual organizations, but also the overall nonprofit ecosystem serving Broward County's children and families.

> *"CSC really not just gave us dollars but set the foundation of who we needed to be as an organization."* **Small Nonprofit Partner**

Creating a Culture of Collaboration and Accountability

Participants repeatedly identify CSC's convening power as one of its most important contributions to Broward County. Across sectors, stakeholders describe CSC as a

trusted organization capable of bringing together government agencies, nonprofits, schools, healthcare systems, philanthropic leaders, and community partners around shared priorities. Importantly, respondents emphasize that CSC does more than convene meetings; it helps move discussions toward action through data-informed decision-making, collaborative leadership, strategic planning, and accountability. Multiple interview groups describe CSC's commitment to research, evaluation, and performance measurement as among the strongest in the state.

> *"They don't just fund... they have a number of staff that sit on these community work groups... taking back the message, figuring out how to make services better."* **Nonprofit System Partner**

Key Findings

The findings presented below reflect the dominant themes and conclusions that emerged from stakeholder interviews. The consistency of perspectives across participant groups suggests broad agreement regarding CSC's role, contributions, and future opportunities within Broward County's system of supports for children and families.

CSC is the backbone of Broward County's child- and family-serving system.

Respondents view CSC as more than a funding entity, highlighting its role as a convener, connector, and strategic leader that aligns organizations, resources, and systems around shared outcomes for children and families. Across stakeholder groups, participants consistently describe CSC as foundational to Broward County's continuum of care and credit the organization with helping create a more coordinated and connected system of supports.

CSC's convening and collaborative leadership are defining organizational strengths.

Across interviews, stakeholders describe CSC as a trusted organization capable of bringing partners together, fostering cross-sector collaboration, identifying community needs, and helping move collective discussions toward action. Participants consistently note that CSC's influence extends beyond funding by creating opportunities for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, schools, healthcare providers, and community leaders to work toward shared goals for children and families.

CSC is a leading force in prevention and early intervention efforts across Broward County.

CSC's investments in family strengthening, youth development, literacy, behavioral health, after-school programming, early childhood supports, and other prevention-focused services are widely viewed as central to its long-term impact. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasize CSC's commitment to investing upstream, helping to address challenges before they escalate into more intensive and costly interventions.

CSC's investments contribute to broad community benefits.

Respondents associate CSC's work with improvements in literacy, childcare access, family stability, behavioral health, youth development, and foster care prevention. Many participants emphasize that CSC's influence extends beyond individual programs by strengthening the broader system of care available to children and families throughout Broward County.

CSC is committed to data-driven decision-making and accountability.

Stakeholders frequently cite CSC's use of research, evaluation, and performance data to guide investments, monitor outcomes, and support continuous improvement. Across stakeholder groups, respondents view CSC's commitment to data and accountability as an important factor in building trust, demonstrating stewardship of public resources, and informing strategic decision-making.

CSC's governance approach is characterized by trust, transparency, and responsiveness.

Across stakeholder groups, participants describe CSC as collaborative, accessible, adaptable, and committed to responsible stewardship of public resources. Stakeholders consistently praise the organization's responsiveness to emerging needs, transparent communication practices, and ability to build strong relationships with community partners.

CSC plays an important role in strengthening organizational capacity and helping build a more coordinated system of care over time.

Many nonprofit representatives attribute growth in infrastructure, accountability systems, service delivery capacity, and organizational sustainability to CSC's long-term investments and support. Participants consistently emphasize that CSC's impact extends beyond funding individual programs to strengthening the overall capacity of organizations serving children and families across Broward County.

Key Considerations for the Next Five Years

While participants express overwhelming confidence in CSC's leadership, impact, and stewardship of public resources, interviews also identify several opportunities to build upon CSC's strong foundation over the next five years. These opportunities should not be interpreted as organizational shortcomings. Rather, stakeholders viewed them as natural areas for continued growth, refinement, and leadership within Broward County's evolving system of care.

Enhance public visibility

Participants note that many residents, families, and taxpayers benefit from CSC-supported services without fully understanding CSC's role in making those services possible. Stakeholders recommend strengthening public awareness efforts, storytelling, and communication regarding CSC's impact and return on investment.

Address ongoing tensions between accountability and operational flexibility

While stakeholders generally support CSC's emphasis on accountability and performance measurement, providers note opportunities to streamline administrative

requirements and reduce burden while maintaining strong oversight and stewardship of resources.

Strengthen coordination across the provider network

While CSC is widely recognized as an effective convener, some stakeholders suggest additional opportunities to increase collaboration, referrals, information sharing, and alignment among funded partners.

Continue investments in innovation, workforce development, and long-term organizational sustainability

Respondents highlight the importance of maintaining CSC's adaptability while continuing to explore emerging community needs and future leadership development.

Bottom Line

Findings indicate that CSC is widely regarded as one of Broward County's most trusted and influential organizations serving children and families. Stakeholders consistently describe CSC as a backbone organization that strengthens systems, aligns partners, advances prevention-focused strategies, and serves as a responsible steward of public resources. Importantly, participants did not identify a need for significant organizational redirection. Instead, they point to opportunities to build on CSC's strong foundation through increased public visibility, stronger system coordination, continued investment in workforce and leadership capacity, and ongoing adaptation to emerging community needs.

This evaluation provides CSC with a valuable external perspective on its impact, leadership, governance approach, and future opportunities. Because the study was intentionally designed to gather stakeholder perspectives rather than assess internal operations, the findings are best viewed as a foundation for organizational learning and future planning rather than a roadmap for specific operational changes. As CSC enters its next chapter, the themes emerging from this evaluation provide a strong starting point for future strategic conversations. An adaptive strategic planning process could help CSC align external stakeholder perspectives with internal assessments of organizational capacity, workforce needs, fiscal realities, and long-term priorities. Ultimately, the central message emerging from the interviews is that CSC's future challenge is not whether it creates value, but how effectively it continues to evolve, communicate, and amplify the value it already creates for children, families, and communities across Broward County.

Addendum: About the Authors

Kim Nelson, Ph.D. Kimberly Nelson is the Albert and Gladys Coates Distinguished Professor at the UNC School of Government, Director of the Division of Public Leadership and Governance, and a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. A nationally recognized expert on local government leadership, management, governance, and ethics, her scholarship includes numerous books and peer-reviewed publications on local government management, corruption, organizational effectiveness, and public leadership. Nelson serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of *State and Local Government Review* and lead faculty for the School's Public Executive Leadership Academy. Her research, teaching, and advisory work support local government leaders across North Carolina and the nation.

Amy Wade, Ph.D. Amy Wade is an Assistant Teaching Professor at the UNC School of Government and Director of the Faculty Network for the Master of Public Administration program. Her work focuses on organizational capacity building, grant strategy, collaborative governance, and applied research. She works with local governments, nonprofits, and community partners to strengthen organizational effectiveness and secure resources to address complex public challenges. Her current projects include leading implementation of the School of Government's strategic plan and supporting local governments in exploring the use of artificial intelligence for grant development and management. In 2025, she was named the Albert and Gladys Hall Coates Term Professor for Teaching Excellence.