



Sean Boyle, Chair

Brittany Birken, CEO

The Council's mission to promote policies that build effective primary prevention and early intervention systems of supports for Florida's children and families by engaging and enhancing the collective strengths of the individual Children's Services Councils of Florida.

Background

Created in 2006, the Florida Children's Council is Tallahassee's premiere children's advocacy organization. Representing seven special taxing districts statewide, the Council provides an umbrella for leadership, coordination and oversight focusing on the status of children and their families. The special district model is unlike any in the nation. Florida is the only state where a community has the power, by law, to create a special district for the sole purpose of investing in the well-being of children and families. Led by Dr. Brittany Birken, the Council ensures that state-level policy decisions do not hinder local communities' ability to make targeted decisions benefiting their residents.

As a non-profit organization, the Council is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is comprised of the Chief Executive Officer of each member Children's Services Council and their respective board chairs. The Board meets bi-monthly and operates from an approved 18 month-plan and policy agenda for children.

The Council serves two primary functions. First, the Council serves as a leading policy organization focused on child, youth and family well-being and as a cutting edge trade association.

Policy and Systems Leaders

Being located in Tallahassee allows the Council to navigate the state's policy arena year round. The Council serves as the hub for the collective mission to improve the lives of children and their families. Thus, being centrally located in the heart of the state's legislature, Council staff are positioned to be strong leaders and partners on legislative activities, both throughout the year and during active legislative session. Given advocacy is a full-time endeavor, the Council is poised to serve as the unified messenger on behalf of all CSCs and the thousands of children and families served.

The Council serves as a catalyst for a Florida children's policy agenda that focuses on improving the lives of all Florida children. The 2012-2013 Children's Agenda includes the following priority areas:

- ❖ Adequately fund and improve early childhood and afterschool programs
- ❖ Healthy children
- ❖ Supports for children and families
- ❖ Youth services

The Council partners with both local and state-level organizations sharing a vision for the state's children and influences state policies related to each priority area. Critical partners include United Way of Florida, the Children's Movement, local Early Learning Coalitions, key state agencies, and staff of both the House and the Senate.

The Council focuses on the collective goals of the CSCs statewide including the advancement of public policy, educating local communities, policymakers, businesses, community leaders and other organizations about the work and worth of CSCs, building productive partnerships with individuals and organizations interested in making strategic investments, and expanding communities by assisting in the establishment of children's services councils in each of the state's 67 counties.

Trade Association

The Council serves as a trade association to provide services for its members, promote best practices and professional standards. The Council serves as the organizing mechanism to connect local CSCs and to expand upon the already existing local services, programs and relationships through unified messaging and outreach, streamlined data sharing, and shared policy agendas. The Council ensures the CSCs have access to the latest information and research relative to children, youth, and family development. This coupled with providing opportunities for members to exchange information and maximize resources enables members to effectuate change benefiting children, youth and families.

The Council brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to the collective table to ultimately increase the visibility of CSC's work statewide. Members are given ample opportunities to engage in discussions to increase working knowledge in such areas as communication and messaging, administrative practices, financial practices, and program evaluation and outcomes tracking. In turn, the Council utilizes the shared information to create consistent and uniform messages about the local and collective CSC work. To do this, the Council publishes influential Op Ed pieces on critical CSC issues and generates a blog to capture current policy perspectives on issues that impact and protect CSC investments.

The Council's model is designed to educate and share resources among CSC communities and move Florida's children's policy agenda forward.

Council Leadership

Dr. Brittany Birken is the CEO of the Florida Children’s Council. She coordinates resources and system development activities to enhance Florida’s collective efforts and ensure children are healthy, well cared for, learned, and prepared for a successful future. With recognition of the critical linkages between educational investments and economic development, the Council works closely with business and decision makers to create policies that support the current workforce, promote economic revitalization and develop a sustaining educational infrastructure to ensure talent growth and expansion for a continued vibrant and prosperous future for Florida. Dr. Birken leads the charge to impact policies that touch the lives of the families and children served by CSCs and by all services geared at improving their lives. Taking lead of the trade association activities is Dr. Stacy Howard, the Director of Research and Development. She leads efforts to expand and connect local initiatives of member CSCs and to support the Florida Children’s Council’s mission with data-driven information.

The Council represents Children’s Services Councils by serving as active members on several state level workgroups and boards including the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Council, serving as a board trustee for the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation, serving on the Workforce Florida Board of Directors, serving as a member of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council’s Child Developmental Screening Taskforce, and the serving as content experts on several committees of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet.

The Council leads a collective effort to achieve tangible change in the lives of the state’s youngest.

Contact Information

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Member CSCs:

Jacksonville Children’s Commission * Children’s Services Council of Broward County * Children’s Services Council of Martin County * The Children’s Trust * Hillsborough Children’s Board * Children’s Services Council of St. Lucie County * Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County