



Effective Public Policies Benefiting Children, Youth and Families

GOAL: The Florida Children's Council supports effective prevention and early intervention policies and investments that minimize families' long-term dependence on government services.

EARLY LEARNING AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Maximize early learning investments by including education-based performance standards and a tiered-payment structure for early learning programs to prepare children for school success, to enhance the private business model of early learning, and to ensure accountability of public funds.

Provide quality School Readiness educational, enrichment programs for children of low-income working mothers and fathers, birth-12, in early learning and school-age care to support stronger student outcomes including grade level reading proficiency—an important indicator of later school success and high school graduation.

Maximize out-of-school time investments for K-12 students to foster grade promotion, graduation, and college and career preparedness.

Include differential-rate contracts with high quality early learning programs in high-poverty areas to increase family access to quality early learning programs.

Increase access of mothers and fathers to community resources through Help Me Grow to support the healthy development of young children.

Align increased investments in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for four-year-olds to quality benchmarks to improve kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Revise eligibility requirements for early learning to allow communities the flexibility to determine eligibility prioritization based on community need.

Streamline duplicative background screenings for personnel subject to public school and clearinghouse requirements.

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Reduce the number of children served in costly emergency care and improve health outcomes by providing increased access to preventative physical, oral and behavioral health care for all eligible children through Florida KidCare.

Streamline enrollment and reenrollment procedures in Florida KidCare to ensure continued access to preventative health care services.

Reduce infant mortality and disparities in birth outcomes by increasing the capacity of Healthy Start to serve mothers and fathers at highest risk, including those experiencing perinatal depression, substance use and intimate partner violence.

Support the healthy development of infants and young children by making infant mental health services accessible as needed, including services for substance-exposed newborns, and supports related to maternal/paternal depression, and substance abuse.

Promote greater access to physician services in underserved neighborhoods through reimbursement for telemedicine in school settings.

Facilitate increased access to quality oral health care for children from low- to moderate- income families.

CHILDREN WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES

Maximize the impact of intervention services and reduce more costly treatments for older children by managing caseloads and adequately serving infants and toddlers with significant delays or with pre-existing conditions in the Early Steps program.

Implement universal developmental screening and improve the process for referrals to the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for comprehensive assessment and access to appropriate interventions to optimize investments supporting children's healthy development.

Strengthen public policy by eliminating restrictive limitations in Children's Medical Services (CMS) and by educating families on eligibility for services.

Ensure that children with unique abilities in state custody receive priority status from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

CHILD PROTECTION

Coordinate services and increase accessibility to preventative evidence-based substance abuse and mental health programs such as Community Action Teams (CATs) for children and families to decrease the incidence of child abuse and neglect; as well as maximize investments capable of disrupting existing cycles of substance abuse that contribute to generational and hereditary addiction.

Develop a network of high quality early learning programs with practitioners trained in trauma informed care for children in foster care.

Support young adults who are leaving foster care and are transitioning to independence.

Ensure that children who have been abused and/or neglected are provided with safe, stable and permanent homes.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Maximize investments in youth through evidence-based prevention and diversion programs including those for Juvenile Assessment Centers (JACs) in areas of high utilization, Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS), multi-dimensional and functional family therapy,

and effective girls' and boys' programs.

Reduce the number of children held in detention through evidence-based diversion programs and promote increased opportunities for career and technical education in the juvenile justice system.

Reduce the direct file of youth into Florida's adult prison system, especially for youth who commit non-violent crimes.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Integrate the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework into systems that serve **mothers, fathers** and children within the early education and care system, home-visiting programs, Head Start programs and Florida's KidCare Child Health Check-Up Program.

Maximize investments for evidence-based youth mentoring programs to improve youth outcomes and ultimately reduce youth violence.

Provide an exemption from public records requirements for personal identifying information of witnesses to child and youth murders to encourage such witnesses to provide information regarding perpetrators to law enforcement without fear of retaliation.

Provide increased funding for parent preparation, inclusive of fathers receiving prenatal education, and support and paternal wellbeing services.

Promote funding for programs that assist fathers and mothers in raising boys and girls during middle and high school, the years most problematic for parents.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Maintain the ability for local communities to determine the best use of resources to develop, implement and administer programs that address the needs of children and families.

Support evidence-based policies and programs to ensure healthy, educated children, stable families, and safe and supportive communities.

Ensure equitable funding for programs affecting children and families that are adequate and respect regional economic differences.

Maximize all available revenue streams for strategies that support child development and economic stabilization.

Minimize requirements and regulations to local government or community services that increase the need for taxpayer-funded programs.

Support programs that promote the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.

Ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in all publicly funded programs.