

Florida Children's Action Agenda 2007/2008

On October 6, 2006, more than 1,000 community leaders, legislators, advocates and policy makers met at the inaugural *Florida Children's Summit*. It was the first step in a long term process to create a shared vision of the State of Florida's commitment to its children and families.

It was a resounding success! Summit participants identified and discussed scores of public policy issues and proposals to improve the well being of Florida's children.

From the discussions emerged the *Florida Children's Action Agenda 2007/2008*. These infrastructure issues permeated discussions at the Summit workshops and embody prioritized recommendations of Summit participants that will be pursued in the forthcoming legislative session. They represent the common themes that highlighted the Summit and arose from the day-long discussions and detailed workshop priorities.

The *Florida Children's Action Agenda 2007/2008* represents the collective wisdom of 2006 Florida Children's Summit participants. Together, the Agenda's issues are intended to improve the quality of life for all Floridians by addressing substantial issues that will enable all children to grow and develop to their fullest potential. If embraced by the 2007 and 2008 Florida Legislatures, they will result in better school outcomes, less crime, reduced need for human services funding over the long term, and fundamental economic development by helping millions of children become contributing members of society when they become adults.

The *Agenda* priorities begin to form a cogent and cohesive system of support and care for our children and their families. These priorities achieve the highest principles of business and government by promoting accountability and return on investment. They reflect a keen understanding by Summit participants that the optimal growth and development of a child requires an environment that integrates physical, social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

We present the *Florida Children's Action Agenda 2007/2008* for your review and invite you to advance it during the 2007 Florida Legislative Session.

To download the *Florida Children's Action Agenda 2007* developed at the 2006 Florida Children's Summit, visit the website at <http://www.uwof.org/summit/index.htm>. If you would like to become a part of the effort to address the issues above by receiving timely updates and information regarding public policy and legislative activity, visit the Summit website and sign on to the *One Voice* network.

FLAGSHIP ISSUE:

CREATE A FLORIDA CHILDREN & YOUTH CABINET

Our vision is that Florida will be the best state in which families can raise their children. We will be a state with a cohesive vision and a plan that ensures that we have aligned all public resources serving children and families in a manner that supports our children's healthy growth and development, from prenatal into adulthood. And we will be a state in which all state agencies and programs that touch the lives of children work in a coordinated comprehensive manner that provides a continuum of services for children from birth through transition to adulthood. We believe a Florida Children's Cabinet is the primary mechanism that can help our vision become a reality, and make Florida the first place families think of when asked, "Where do you want to raise your children?"

Among others, a Florida Children and Youth Cabinet would:

- **Maximize the value of the State's investment in children** - Limited state dollars available to invest in children should be maximized by investing in policies and programs proven to work.
- **Require coordination by state agencies** - When children and youth are served by multiple state agencies, those agencies should be required to create integrated service plans for the individual child and family; and
- **Ensure that state agencies address all components of care for children** - Mission and vision statements for State agencies working with children and youth should embrace a full continuum of services, including prevention and intervention, particularly for those transitioning to adulthood.

(This flagship issue was raised in all of the 2006 Florida Children's Summit workshops.)

Bill passed in 2007.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Monitor and work with Cabinet to identify opportunities to improve services and funding.

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ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES:

- **Health Care** - Children and pregnant women should have access to quality, appropriate health care coverage. (*Prenatal Care; Health Care*)

KidCare revisions failed in 2007.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Infant mortality initiative that was funded (\$1million) for FY 07-08.
- Results of KidCare outreach grants through Healthy Kids
- Centering Pregnancy pilot projects—report on results

- **Youth Transitioning to Adulthood** - Youth in state care should have access to services and supports that enable them to acquire the skills they need to successfully transition from youth to adulthood (e.g. mentoring, college prep/professional training, life-skill, etc). (*Youth Transitioning*)

Bill passed in 2007.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

Support Florida's Children First Recommendation concerning a Comprehensive System of Mental/Behavioral Health Services for Children in State Care.

- **Screening and Assessment** - At age appropriate transition points in a child's life, provide screening, assessment and treatment for health (including dental and mental), developmental, behavioral, and cognitive issues. (*Mental Health & Substance Abuse; Assessment & Early Intervention; Free from Abuse & Neglect*)

2007 – No Action.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Support Florida's Children's First Recommendations concerning a Comprehensive System of Mental/Behavioral Health Services for Children in State Care.
- Support Supreme Court of Florida Mental Health Committee recommendations (Judge Liefman's Group).
- Study being conducted by the Chiles Center on assessment of children who have been removed from home and assessment of placement providers to determine the extent to which a match is based on the needs of the child and the skills of the placement provider, including the involvement of the courts in this process. Contact is Marianna Tutwiler (487-8871)

- **Quality Rating System** - Implement an early care and education Quality Rating System to promote quality in child care and to help parents identify quality providers. (*Early Childhood Education*)

QRIS bill failed in 2007.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Support product of QRIS Workgroup.
- If there are any reports of the preliminary results of QRS implementation in the few counties where this is being done, we should get a summary of these.

- **Before-and After-School Care** - Ensure that quality before- and after-school care is available in every community and create a Blue Ribbon Committee to study the needs of school age children for before- and after-school care, including funding needs. (*Before & After School Programs; Positive Youth Development; Juvenile Justice; Free From Abuse & Neglect*)

2007 – No action.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Use OPPAGA interim report to craft legislative request.

- **Zero Tolerance Policies** - Examine zero tolerance policies to determine if they are effective. (*Juvenile Justice; Family Friendly Neighborhoods; Positive Youth Development*)

2007 – No action.

Opportunities for follow through in 2008:

- Consider recommendations developed by the Juvenile Justice Blue Ribbon Commission, chaired by Frank Brogan.
- Follow-up with Representative Needleman regarding effort to require school districts to pay for services associated with zero tolerance policy enforcement, and others.

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