Florida Children’s Council Public Policy Priorities 2020

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.

Support programs that promote family engagement.

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

Support programs that promote the ability for families to continue toward economic self-sufficiency without losing access to services that support children’s development.

The policy issues below are divided into three categories:

- **Lead**- The Council will actively engage legislative members and staff in an effort to influence legislative outcomes;
- **Support** - Issues that are of importance to the Council but are not anticipated to be a primary focus;
- **Monitor** - Issues that have the potential of requiring Council attention, but specifics are not yet known and could become a “Lead” issue.
Lead

**Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)- Coordinated Assessment System**

In order to build on the momentum of the 2018 legislative session and specifically the passage of HB 1091, the FCC will work closely with policy makers, agency leadership and stakeholders to develop an assessment system that addresses the following:

- Recognizes learning gains in the calculation of readiness rates using the current VPK assessment administered during the VPK program year;
- Incorporates observational assessment with focus on effective teacher-child interaction. This will assist with informing whether gains, or lack thereof, are due to teacher effectiveness;
- Implement an assessment within the first 30 days of kindergarten that aligns with VPK assessments and can be utilized to monitor student progress through 3rd grade.

**Two-Generational Strategies for Children and Families**

Develop more effective policies for families with young children in poverty by aligning targeted social services that support children’s development with workforce development services to increase family economic self-sufficiency by:

- Identifying policy makers interested in a Two-Generational approach to serving families;
- Supporting the creation of a legislatively appointed committee to review all meanstested programs to identify opportunities to address the “fiscal cliff”;
- Continue to engage policy makers on the issue by distributing the Council 2Gen Report as part of regular meetings with members.

**Expanding Access to Mental Health Services for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma**

Children in Florida are being exposed to significant traumatic events such school shootings, natural disasters and personal tragedy. Due to size of Florida and lack of mental health resources, children are not able to easily access critically important services.

- Support efforts to increase funding and access for mental health service delivery in the public or private settings;
- Advocate for expansion of tele-health access to mental health services. Work with Department of Children and Families, the Agency for Healthcare Administration and First Lady Casey DeSantis to expand access through the *Hope for Healing Florida* campaign.
• Identify opportunities for funding for mental resiliency – social / emotional learning, conflict resolution, mindfulness.

Support

Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK)

• Based on recognized “Cost of Care” models, support increased funding that can be directly correlated to increased quality and kindergarten readiness;
• Increased hours for children entering the VPK program, who based on assessment would benefit from increased dosage to strengthen kindergarten readiness.

Florida’s School Readiness Program (SR)

• Maintain ability for SR providers to receive payment differential based on results of observational assessment;
• Maintain option for SR providers to receive payment differential for implementation of approved child assessment.

Expanding School-Based Medicaid Services

Align state law with federal policies to allow federal reimbursement for access to school-based health services for all students eligible for Medicaid by:

• Supporting policy to expand access to Medicaid school-based services through statutory changes that allow for an increase of children served in the school environment;
• Coordinate with Florida Healthy Kids on additional issues intended to increase funding or expand access.

Investments and/or Expansion of Prevention Services from the Department of Children and Families (DCF)

• Support DCF legislative priorities that are intended to reduce the length of time that children are in the child welfare system;
• Support increased funding in programs currently supported by CSCs.

Child Safety

• Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages one to four in Florida. Support increased standards related to swimming pool safety in the residential and business setting.
Monitor

Requirements for Governmental Entities including Special Districts

- Track all legislation impacting government, including special districts, to ensure proposals do not negatively impact Children’s Services Councils.

Early Learning

- Changes to current governance structure of early learning system that could potentially negatively impact CSC communities;
- Early learning funding decisions/allocations that could negatively impact CSC communities.

Criminal Justice Reform (Juvenile Justice)

- Reform that is intended to appropriately lessen penalties for youth criminal violations or address long standing disproportionate penalties for all youth.