



2010 Legislative Priorities

The Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) advocates for Florida's abused and neglected children and support the agencies and individuals who work on their behalf. Our member agencies care for nearly 50,000 children and families in crisis, providing critical services and programs to this vulnerable population throughout the state.

In addition to contracting for services with the Department of Children and Families, and other state agencies, our members raise approximately \$80 million per year from private sources which are used to provide program and facilities for the children in their care. As the slow economy affects the state budget, it has also affected those private donors around the state.

Budget Issues

During the past five years, Florida's child welfare system has gone from being one of the worst in the nation to a model system of care. Two main factors made this happen: (1) privatization and a community-based care approach, and (2) the Title IV-E Waiver granted to Florida in 2004 which allowed for flexibility in the use of funds to go beyond out-of-home care and into diversion services.

As the Legislature grapples with difficult financial decisions, the members of the Coalition urge them to **maintain the current level of funding** and to **restore non-recurring funding (\$23 million)**. Any further cuts to child welfare would be costly to both the state and the children we serve.

Carry Forward - The Coalition requests the continuation in budget policy to allow community-based care lead agencies to carry forward unspent funds to next fiscal year. This mechanism recognizes that these are multi-year risk-based contracts that allow expenses to be incurred during the life of the contract.

Title IV-E Waiver - The Coalition strongly encourages the continuation of the funding level needed in order to main current policy which allows Florida flexibility in its use of federal child safety and permanency funds.

Maintenance Adoption Subsidy - \$21 million

The Coalition supports the DCF request for Maintenance Adoption Subsidy funding in response to the increase in adoptions in FY 2009-2010.

Independent Living - \$10 million

The Coalition supports DCF legislative budget request (LBR) for the Independent Living Program to assist youth exiting foster care.

Child Welfare Workforce - \$16.6 million

The Coalition requests increase in funding for child welfare workers' salaries in order to provide workforce stability.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities – Cost Sharing - \$10 million

The Coalition requests that the Agency of Persons with Disability share the cost of children that are both in the child welfare system and are developmentally disabled.

Substance Abuse Joint Pilot Project - \$5.4 million

The Coalition proposes a pilot project with the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA) to provide substance abuse services to caregivers of children in the child welfare system.

Substantive Issues

While providing quality care for children and families, our member agencies are constantly seeking ways to improve the system. There are some issues which can solely be dealt with through statutory change.

Liability - The Coalition requests changes in statute to assist lead and provider agencies in managing their liability risk, including (1) codifying in statute the role and intent of foster care providers carrying out a state function, (2) eliminating loophole that allows stacking of insurance policies which raises the amount of these lawsuits, and (3) removing an artificially high arbitrary escalator of the cap on non-economic damages.

Health Care for Dependent Children - The Coalition strongly supports a system of health care that provides and ensures all dependent children in the foster care system receive appropriate and timely health care.

Presumptive Eligibility of Medicaid of Child Welfare Recipients from Date of Removal - The Coalition requests statutory change to establish presumptive Medicaid eligibility for children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect from the date of their removal.

Health Insurance Portability - The Coalition strongly encourages a portability of health insurance for children in state care. There should be a requirement that once a child is in the child welfare system and has Medicaid that the child's eligibility and managed care payor not change regardless of where the child resides.

Executive Branch Issues

Contracting Efficiency - The Coalition encourages changes of the current contract monitoring model to a more cost-effective and efficient contracting model. COA (Council on Accreditation) and other nationally recognized accrediting bodies should play an important role on the monitoring of child welfare lead and service providers.

Behavioral Health Overlay System (BHOS) - The Coalition strongly encourages the preservation of this current, cost-effective system of care.

Coordination of Agency Rules - The Coalition requests that the Department of Children and Families have exclusive jurisdiction to approve rules for health standards established by the Department of Health specific to foster homes, residential child-caring agencies and child-placing agencies.

FCC Mission

The Florida Coalition for Children advocates for Florida's abused and neglected children and supports the agencies and individuals who work on their behalf.

FCC Vision

The Florida Coalition for Children's vision is a system of Child Welfare in Florida that is fully resourced, well-managed, and fulfills the needs of our abused and neglected children.



Michael Cusick
President/CEO

Deborah P. Mortham
Governmental Affairs Director

200 West College Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
Main Phone: (850) 561-1102 • Fax: (850) 222-7117

www.FIChildren.org