



CHILD CARE
ASSOCIATION
OF ILLINOIS



ALLIANCE
FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES



VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN



FY 2005 Joint Policy Agenda for Investing in Children and Families

The Child Care Association of Illinois, the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, and Voices for Illinois Children are celebrating National Family Week (November 21-27, 2004). **As part of this celebration, we offer you a list of specific legislation and policy directives that we believe, if enacted, will strengthen Illinois families.** As an Illinois policy maker, we urge your consideration and adoption of the following proposals that will strengthen children's programs this year, among them, many services for abused, neglected, foster and adopted children.

- ❖ **Establish delinquency prevention and treatment alternatives and adequately support existing youth service resources:** Research proves that investment in these programs prevents more expensive incarceration of youth. Support the funding of juvenile delinquency prevention and treatment alternatives to an extent that makes them more uniformly available across the state. Illinois Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS) is a proven program that deflects young people from costlier child welfare or corrections involvement. Funding for this system has eroded for the past three years while needs have increased. We urge the administration to restore youth services to its regular levels in the FY'06 budget.
- ❖ **Implement the changes proposed by the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership to improve the social and emotional well-being of Illinois children:** The social and emotional well-being of children is fundamental to their overall success. To foster that well-being, we suggest dedicating increased resources as recommended by the Children's Mental Health Partnership in the September 2004 recommendations to the Governor. We should also explore ways of securing more federal resources to strengthen children's mental health supports.
- ❖ **Increase the quality of, and access to services for Illinois' vulnerable children and families by providing adequate funding for Illinois' human services system and reducing liability insurance costs for human services providers:** Since 1999, the State of Illinois has purchased human services from nonprofit agencies to care for tens of thousands of neglected, abused, mentally and physically ill Illinois citizens and has failed to comply with state law to fully pay for those services. HB 4860 and SB 2848 provide for annual indexed adjustments for purchase-of-care contracts made between state agencies and private community-based contractual providers. In addition, the crushing cost of liability insurance can be eased for child welfare providers by restricting their

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liability to that comparable to the Department of Children and Family Services. Reducing the skyrocketing cost of liability insurance premiums is the goal of HB 4723. It will ensure that more dollars that the State appropriates for human services will go directly to the clients and will enable child welfare agencies to better do their jobs – protect abused and neglected children. Your support of these legislative initiatives will greatly improve the conditions of the vulnerable citizens of Illinois for whom these agencies have responsibility.

- ❖ **Develop alternatives to inappropriate secure detention:** Research reveals that communities can reduce secure detention for youth without compromising community safety. A comprehensive continuum of community-based programs and services can adequately address both public safety and improve the chances of youth rehabilitation. Increasing the development and funding of such programs throughout the State is necessary to give these youth the best opportunity to achieve success as adults.
- ❖ **Deliver on Illinois' commitment to increase funds for early education:** Illinois should commit \$30 million more to improve and expand pre-Kindergarten for young, at-risk children, the last of three such annual increases promised by the administration. But we cannot stop there if we truly want to bolster children's chances of success in school and throughout life. Policymakers should adopt the Illinois Early Learning Council's emerging "Preschool for All" proposal, to ensure all young children can benefit from good, voluntary preschool services, starting with the most at-risk kids and phasing in greater access over time. Updating reimbursement rates for providers of state-assisted child care also is a crucial piece of the early learning system. See the Early Learning Illinois campaign (www.earlylearningillinois.org) for more information.
- ❖ **Enact reforms in school funding and in the education system:** Increase the education funding that is needed to support an adequate education for all children without taking resources from schools that already can support a high quality education. This should be accompanied by actions that improve quality, such as better preschool, special education and teacher training opportunities. Specifics on these recommendations can be found at www.aplusillinois.org.
- ❖ **Increase children's access to health care:** We recommend full implementation of FamilyCare health coverage for low-income, working parents, as well as continued expansion of health insurance for low-income children.

We encourage you to contact us for more information on any of the abovementioned issues. Additional information about what you can do to specifically enact these policies can be obtained by contacting any one of the following individuals.

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