

Abstract

Whole Child Testimony

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Goal 2: Ensure that all children live in permanent, safe and nurturing environments.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Goal 2a: Establish mechanisms and strategies to support families in providing for optimal growth and development of their children and youth.

Starting recommendation: The Cabinet should receive testimony from the three Whole Child projects in Florida (Leon, Martin, and Manatee) with the intent of exploring opportunities for statewide implementation.

Recommendation Whole Child Testimony

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Goal 2: Ensure that all children live in permanent, safe and nurturing environments.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Goal 2a: Establish mechanisms and strategies to support families in providing for optimal growth and development of their children and youth.

Long-term recommendation: Expand the Whole Child initiative statewide for children and families

Starting recommendation: The Cabinet should receive testimony from the three Whole Child projects in Florida (Leon, Martin, and Manatee) with the intent of exploring opportunities for statewide implementation.

Background: Whole Child is a communitywide effort to get our children off to the best start in life by ensuring they have everything they need to thrive. Families with young children often need help: some lack education, information or economic stability, or they may not know where to go for help. Even busy, two-parent, working families may struggle due to a lack of time, information or adequate child care. Other families are strained by the many demands of caring for young children or dealing with a child with special physical or emotional needs.

A growing body of research shows that the first five years of life are crucial to brain development, to acquiring social skills necessary to grow into good citizens, and to developing emotional strength and physical and mental health.

About the Whole Child Project

The Whole Child Project is a program of the Lawton Chiles Foundation (established to preserve the legacy of the late Governor Lawton Chiles, 1991-1998) in an effort to assist Florida communities in building comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems to enable infants, young children and their parents to lead productive, rewarding lives.

What is a Whole Child Community?

A Whole Child community is one that provides all children with the opportunity to be healthy, contributing members of society, based on the belief that parents have primary responsibility.

Communities must join together to make their commitment to the philosophy of the Whole Child Project to become designated as such. To date, 5 Florida counties have been designated Whole Child communities: Manatee, Palm Beach, Osceola, Sarasota, and Leon.