

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet
Recommendations From The
Children's Summit Work Group

Proposed 2009 Legislative Priorities

The Children's Summit Work Group respectfully submits the following as proposed 2009 Florida Legislative Session priorities for the Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida. These recommendations were culled from a list of possible priorities preliminarily identified by Cabinet members at the September 23, 2008 Cabinet meeting and other issues raised by Work Group members.

The Work Group applauds the Cabinet for identifying and pursuing long range issues that will significantly improve services for Florida's children. While it may appear the Cabinet's work is moving too slowly forward, the issues being explored are critically important and complex and could lead to fundamental improvements in how Florida serves its children. The first two recommendations are intended to ensure that the progress that has been made to date continues, while the third proposes to immediately increase access to health care for children across the state. (The Vision, Guiding Principles, and Goals identified below are excerpted from the *Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida Strategic Plan, December 2007*)

In light of the extremely difficult fiscal straits in which the state finds itself, the Work Group recommends that the over-arching message provided by the Cabinet to the Legislature be that the Legislature explore all options in order to minimize funding cuts to services for children and families during the 2009 session.

Recommendation 1 – The Cabinet should secure legislative funding to support adequate staffing to support its work. In the alternative, state agencies represented on the Cabinet should collaborate to provide Cabinet staffing through use of existing and available staff positions and funding.

The Vision - All children in Florida grow up safe, healthy, educated and prepared to meet their full potential.

Rationale – Cabinet staff have done an extraordinary job supporting the work of the Cabinet to date. However, as the work of the Cabinet increases and initial reports to the Cabinet and Cabinet activities result in additional workload, it is essential that the Cabinet be staffed at a level that will ensure its success. This success is paramount if the Cabinet is to realize the Vision it set forth in its Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 2 - The Cabinet should secure Legislative funding to support implementation of the Children and Youth Cabinet Data and Information Sharing System Initiative, per the recommendation of its Interagency Information Sharing Committee.

The Guiding Principles - Actions proposed to implement Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet Strategic Plan must:

1. Align public finances, information technology, and human resources to support the healthy growth and development of children.

Goal 1 - Promote increased efficiency and improved service delivery by all governmental agencies that provide services for children, youth and their families

- a. Develop and implement a shared and cohesive vision for child and youth outcomes across state agencies, departments and programs.
- b. Create communication mechanisms and strategies between state agencies to share information and resources.
- c. Coordinate planning between state agencies to promote a continuum of integrated and comprehensive services for children and youth through adoption of common benchmarks, integration of funding streams, and shared data.

Rationale – This recommendation furthers Guiding Principle 1 and Goals 1a, 1b, and 1c by linking information systems of state agencies involved in children’s services. This linkage is the precursor for identifying additional information that can be shared to assist state agencies, providers and parents/caregivers to better serve the children in their care and for creating more coordinated planning and comprehensive services for those children. It is the foundation upon which significant future efforts by the Cabinet will rest.

Recommendation 3 - The Cabinet should support and advocate for improvements to the Florida Kid Care program that will enable the state to maximize our federal funding allocation. Such improvements include but are not limited to: reducing loss of coverage for late payments from 60 to 30 days; good cause exceptions for leaving existing health insurance, reducing the 6 month wait to 90 days; electronic income verification; Medicaid transition; etc.

The Vision - All children in Florida grow up safe, healthy, educated and prepared to meet their full potential.

Goal 2 - Ensure that all children live in permanent, safe and nurturing environments.

- a. Establish mechanisms and strategies to support families in providing for the optimal growth and development of their children and youth.

Goal 3 - Ensure that all children in Florida have access to high-quality preventative, primary, specialty and long-term healthcare.

- a. Identify and implement policies to support access to affordable health insurance for all children.

Rationale – Nearly 19 percent of Florida’s children - about 797,000 - do not have health insurance, the second highest percentage in the country. At the same time, only 233,000 Florida children are enrolled in Kid Care even though about 310,000 spots are funded. This recommendation furthers the Cabinet’s Vision and Goals 2 and 3 by streamlining the Kid Care application, enrollment, and retention processes so more children can receive the health care they need.