

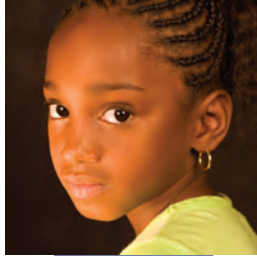
Children's Home Society of Florida 2009 Proposed Legislative Agenda

Adopted by CHS State Board on September 26, 2008

The Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS) supports legislation that ensures children are safe, healthy and prepared for life.

FLORIDA'S DECLINING REVENUES

For more than a year, Florida has experienced consistently declining revenues and, as a result, Florida's current FY 08-09 budget was reduced to \$6 billion less than the previous year. An additional \$1.8 billion deficit for the current year was determined in August 2008, with more revenue losses predicted for FY 09-10. During the 2008 Legislative Session, Children's Home Society of Florida experienced severe reductions in funding for programs that serve children in the child welfare system and family-centered programs that attempt to prevent children from entering the system. Community Based Care has a relatively short history, but its successes are significant: the number of children in foster care has decreased; caseloads for case managers are more manageable; and more children than ever have found their forever families. Florida cannot sustain these successes with another year of budget reductions. We implore our legislative leadership to establish other means to ensure child welfare is a priority and receives no further reductions.



The Children's Home Society of Florida supports:

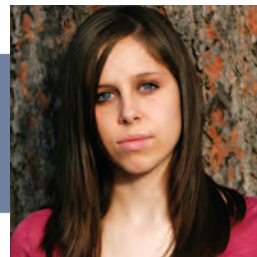
- Developing policies that generate new and additional revenues and maximize existing revenues;
- Maximizing government efficiency and streamlining government functions that have potential cost savings;
- Maintaining the Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement by allowing no further reductions to child welfare services that place federal funding and Title IV-E Waiver in jeopardy;
- Fully funding the need in critical programs such as Independent Living, Maintenance Adoption Subsidies and Healthy Families Florida; and
- Increasing the user fee for tobacco-related products.

Created in Jacksonville in 1902, Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS) is the oldest and largest statewide not-for-profit provider of services to children and families in Florida and the third largest of the private organizations in the United States and Canada accredited by the Council on Accreditation. CHS services include foster care, adoption, child abuse prevention, emergency shelters, residential group homes, independent and transitional living for teens, early education and care, parent education, counseling, mentoring, and treatment for developmentally disabled children. CHS, which serves an average of 100,000 children and family members annually, finalized 1,019 foster child adoptions in 2007-08, accounting for more than 27 percent of Florida's record adoption total. Headquartered in Winter Park, Florida, CHS offers services in 123 locations by more than 2,000 staff members who are dedicated to providing child-focused, family-centered care.

COMMON IDENTIFYING SYSTEM

The services provided to children in the child welfare system are varied and diverse and often are delivered by multiple state agencies. Currently the state has no means to track all of the services that a child has received or is receiving. The Florida Senate is reviewing this issue and working with the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability to establish an electronic database as a method of tracking. Implementing a common identifying system would reduce duplication of services, improve communication between agencies, establish more precise budget preparations for services, reduce expenses and better serve the whole child by recording an accurate list of services obtained and needed.

Children's Home Society of Florida supports legislation establishing a common identifying system to track services provided by the state to children from birth to age 18.



INDEPENDENT LIVING: 280 TO ZERO

The Children's Home Society of Florida has developed a five-year program entitled 280 to Zero to help reduce the number of children who exit the child welfare system and become homeless each year. The program considered the many needs of these youth and was designed to provide access to services they need to succeed, including housing, transportation, educational and/or professional goals.

Children's Home Society of Florida supports legislative action necessary to support the 280 to Zero program and achieve the goal of youth successfully transitioning from child welfare to independence.



FLORIDA STATUTE CHAPTER 39 REVISIONS

Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes is responsible for the judicial proceedings of children removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Children's Home Society of Florida works intimately with this law on a daily basis as we serve children and families in the child welfare system. The Florida Department of Children and Families has established a work group to review the current statute and propose legislative changes for 2009.

Children's Home Society of Florida will carefully review all proposals and offer support or changes if applicable.

For more information on legislative issues or the Children's Home Society of Florida, please visit our website, www.chsfl.org/advocacy or contact:

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Embracing Children.
Inspiring Lives.

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2009 Legislative Agenda



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