

CAPITOL CONNECTION

Florida Children's Services Council

News from our State and Nation's Capitols about children and families



Final Report

May 3, 2010

2010 Session Throws Legislative Curveball to CSCs

The House's final passage of SB 2014 last week, which included the CSC compromise language on future referenda, brings closure to one of the most difficult legislative sessions CSCs have ever faced. In previous years, CSCs focused on advocating for programs that serve the needs of Florida's most valuable resource - its children. However, CSCs found themselves this year having to defend their funded programs, their longstanding accountability, and the children they serve. Not at all what they anticipated a year ago.

Last summer, Florida CSC leadership agreed to make the centerpiece of their organization's 2010 legislative agenda to work for system reform in the state's early learning programs. They wanted to find ways and means to consolidate governance and administration of early education under the AWI Office of Early Learning. This move would have been an important step toward forging a more efficient and seamless system for early childhood services.

Instead, a surprise legislative proposal -- SB 1216 by Sen. Joe Negron and most of the Senate leadership - required a concerted effort during most of the 2010 legislative session to preserve what voters in CSC communities said they wanted -- to make children a priority. After many weeks of discord between both sides of the philosophical divide, an opportunity for compromise surfaced with help from Rep. Debbie Mayfield, the bill sponsor in the House. In the end, Sen. Negron and the Florida CSC Board of Directors were able to find middle ground. Compromise language was amended to an Early Learning bill ([CS/CS/SB 2014](#)), and passed by both chambers in the closing days of the session.

Settling by concession may leave some CSC supporters with a feeling of injustice, especially considering that CSCs have operated so effectively and produced measurable results for children and their communities. However, the volatile political environment in Tallahassee made the CSC compromise necessary at this point in order to achieve a more permanent solution. Without the support of so many community leaders, constituents, and colleagues, the result for CSCs could have been much more damaging. Thanks to all who lent a hand. Now, it's

TAKE NOTE

Children & Youth Cabinet Meeting

May 27
Orlando

Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting

June 17
Tampa

[One Goal Summer Conference](#)

July 21-23
Tampa

Early Learning Listening Tours

Over the next two months, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) will hold a series of Listening and Learning About Early Learning meetings with one stop in Orlando on May 4, which will focus on family engagement. The meetings will focus on topics related to early learning (birth through 3rd Grade): Understanding Preschool - Grade 3 Structures, Workforce and Professional

back to work.

Another Lean Budget, Most Children's Programs Escape Cuts

In another tough budget year, the Legislature focused on little else besides more cuts, trust fund raids (33 of them), reform measures, and finalizing the Seminole Gaming Compact (\$435 million this year and at least \$1 billion over the next five years). For most lawmakers, the upcoming election season provided strong incentive to pass the state's nearly \$70.4 billion budget and get to "sine die" on time.

One very distressing casualty of the final budget was the nearly 35-percent cut (\$9.3 million) to Healthy Families despite the program's 12-year track record of success in stabilizing families and preventing child abuse. The magnitude of the reduction will mean that services for an estimated 3,500 families, including 6,000 children, will be lost and at least 200 staff positions will be eliminated. Advocates are still reeling from the shock.

Although efforts for major Medicaid reform did not happen this year, lawmakers vowed to bring the issue up again next year. They did approve a few tweaks, including a 7 percent rate reduction for hospitals and nursing homes (5 percent for nursing homes if FMAP money comes through). However, two children's hospitals - Miami's Children's Hospital and St. Petersburg's All Children's Hospital - were spared the rate reduction. Additionally, services for pregnant women between 150 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level will be fully funded.

While very few programs or agencies were spared the budget ax, a number of Florida CSC priority areas managed to escape significant cuts (see table below). Especially important was the restoration of funds for VPK, which had been targeted for a 15-percent cut. With a great team effort led by AWI's Brittany Birken, the Association of ELCs, the Florida CSC, and many child advocates and childcare providers, proposals were scrapped to reduce funding for the base student allocation and increase the VPK class size from 1:10 to 1:12. Thanks also go to Chairs Rep. Anitere Flores and Sen. Stephen Wise, as well as members of the Pre-K-12 committees, particularly Sen. Rudy Garcia who held the line on VPK.

It is important to note that in addition to General Revenue, the 2010-11 budget was pieced together using remaining stimulus funds, anticipated federal Medicaid matching money (FMAP), and more than \$500 million in Trust Fund sweeps - all one-time, non-recurring money. This does not bode well for next year's budget and beyond.

Development, Family Engagement, and Standards and Assessments. The meetings will be led by Secretary Duncan's senior advisor on early learning, Jacqueline Jones, and HHS's Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development at the Administration for Children and Families, Joan Lombardi. The meetings will help inform the work of ED and HHS around early learning. [Learn more.](#)

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FLORIDA'S 2010-11 BUDGET

ISSUE	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	COMMENT
School Readiness	\$615.4M	\$615.4M	Funding maintained at current year level
VPK (Non-admin.)	\$366.8M	\$404.4M	Funds enrollment growth; Base Student Allocation is \$2,562 for the year and \$2,179 in summer; reduces admin to 4.5% (was 4.85% in 09-10); Teacher, student ratio remains 1:10.
Healthy Kids (KidCare)	\$237.8M	\$245.2M	Fully funds expected enrollment growth
Healthy Start Coalitions (GR)	\$26.3M	\$23.6M	Total \$4.7M reduction in services, \$2.7M in GR and \$2.1M in Health Federal Grants Trust Fund sweep. Coalitions will be given permission to apply for grants to make up the difference.
Healthy Start Coalitions (TF)	\$5.9M	\$3.7M	
Healthy Families	\$27.4M	\$18.1M	\$9.3M reduction, nearly 35% cut
Early Steps/Part C	\$11.5M	\$11.5M	Fully funded
Children's Medical Services	\$125.3M	\$149.1M	
Child Protection Investigation	\$38.2M	\$37.4M	
Community Based Care (CBC)	\$740.7M	\$740.9M	Fully funded
Community Based Care Equity	\$ -	\$10.3M	Uses remaining stimulus funding
Independent Living			Held harmless, but no funding for growth. Monthly stipend to be determined in DCF rulemaking process
Maintenance Adoption Subsidies			Fully funded, including growth
Juvenile Assessment Centers*	\$4.7M	\$4.7M	\$1M original cut was restored to Leon, Pasco, Polk and Marion JACs
PACE Centers	\$10.9M	\$11M	Fully funded
CINS/FINS	\$30.7M	\$30.8M	Fully funded

* While the front end of the juvenile justice system (JACs) was virtually held harmless this year, besides a cut of \$188k to Community Based Intervention, cuts to residential beds (\$7.8M non-secure and \$3.4M secure) resulting from fund shifts to the corrections system still call into question the Legislature's priorities on public safety.

OTHER STATE NEWS

Late Change Allows PSNs to Provide Behavioral Health Services

While efforts to pass major reform for Medicaid did not happen this Session, the Senate agreed Thursday night to restore a provision that had been stripped out of [CS/CS/SB 1484](#), and put it in the conforming bill. The provision "allows a provider service network to provide behavioral health services in addition to physical health services in areas of the state not under Medicaid reform." This provision also applies to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). The language is authorization to contract for Behavioral Health Services and does not favor any company or provider. It is not opposed by anyone and is supported by the Agency for Health Care Administration. The FQHC provision of Medicaid mental health services is critical to children because FQHCs are some of the only providers that can provide integrated care (primary medical care, plus mental health). Efficacy has been shown to be limited when treatment is split. FQHCs also can leverage federal wraparound dollars for primary health care and additionally leverage funds for the uninsured. Additionally, the capitated model allows FQHCs to achieve cost offsets by reducing expensive interventions such as residential treatment. Thanks go to Sen. Nan Rich and budget chairs Sen. JD Alexander and Rep. David Rivera.

Lawmakers Approve Changes in State Employee Insurance and Retirement Plans

State employees were relieved that the Legislative Session did not result in a 3 percent pay cut as originally proposed by the House. Despite little prospect of a pay cut, not to mention no raise for the fifth straight year, some state employees will see changes in their insurance and retirement benefits. Roughly 27,000 bosses and mid-level managers who don't pay for coverage now will start making payments July 1 (\$100 for single coverage, \$360 for family). However, they won't have to chip in part of their wages for retirement benefits, although interest on stockpiled pension checks in the deferred retirement plan (DROP) was cut by more than half (effective for employees who enroll in DROP on or after July 1, 2010). The state-paid life insurance for employees will now be a flat \$25,000 instead of 1.5 times each worker's salary. Also, the state will cover a 5-percent increase in health insurance premiums, but copayments for doctor office visits, name-brand prescriptions and emergency room or "urgent" care will rise. Any provisions won't be finally decided until Gov. Crist signs the budget. The governor has line-item veto power with the budget. Read an editorial in [Tallahassee Democrat](#).

Hundreds Celebrate Earth Day at Broward CSC Community Fair

More than 300 people participated in the Children's Services Council of Broward County's (CSC) celebration of Earth Day dubbed, "Going Green - Banking on Our Future." Held April 24, the event gave children and adults the opportunity to participate in a scavenger hunt where they learned tips on preserving the environment and received eco-friendly prizes, including bicycle helmets, reading and coloring books, healthy snacks and toys. In addition, many were treated to an interactive concert by Lanny "Earthman" Smith.



Face painting was one of many fun activities at the Broward CSC Earth Day Community Fair

"I thought it was an absolutely wonderful thing the CSC did for the community," said Donna Grossfeld, a visitor to the fair, in a telephone message to the CSC. "I was with my daughter, a fourth grade teacher who got an immense amount of information and our friend's son, who got a bicycle helmet. I just want to say thank you," she said.

EARLY LEARNING

ELC Bill Passes with Unusual Amendment

The Early Learning Bill ([SB 2014 C2](#)), by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) passed the full House last week after passing the Senate the week before. The bill includes provisions related to early learning, such as cleaning up obsolete statutory references, clarifying state-level authority, increasing collaboration across state agencies, and ensuring flexibility to meet federal requirements. It also includes the CSC compromise language that requires Florida's eight independent children's taxing districts to go back to the voters for reauthorization over the next 10 years starting in 2014 (see CSC story above).

STATE & LOCAL REVENUES

Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) Dies in Committee

[SJR 2420](#) by Sen. Mike Haridopolos (R-Brevard), also known as TABOR, never made it out of committee. The bill proposed an amendment to the state constitution to limit tax revenues and, if passed by the electorate, would require voter approval of new taxes and fees. The bill no longer includes local governments under the spending cap, so it would apply only to state revenues.

Bill to Limit Assessments for Non-Homestead Property, Additional Exemptions for New Homeowners Stalls

[SJR 1254](#) by Mike Fasano (R-Pasco) was read a third time and then postponed. The resolution proposed amendments to the State Constitution to reduce from 10 percent to 5 percent the limitation on annual assessment increases applicable to non-homestead real

property, provide an additional homestead exemption for new owners of homestead property and application and limitations with respect thereto. If passed by the legislature, the measure would have appeared on the 2010 November ballot.

CHILD WELFARE

Transition Services for Youth

[SB 1356](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) died in messages in the House. The bill would permit the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to provide transition to adulthood services to youth in DJJ's custody or supervision. It required that transition-to-adulthood services for a youth must be part of an overall plan leading to the total independence of the child from DJJ's supervision, and the bill specifies the requirements of the overall plan.

Governor to Sign Background Screenings Bill

[HB 7069](#) by the Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council along with Rep. Snyder (R-Martin) and Rep. Ari Porth (D- Broward) unanimously passed both houses and will go to Gov. Crist for his signature. The bill prevents individuals from working with children, disabled adults or adults over 65 until they pass a background screening. It also prevents those classified as sexual predators from ever being able to work with vulnerable individuals. The bill also requires that fingerprints be submitted in an electronic format to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement by July 1, 2012, allowing regulatory agencies to retain prints and receive continuous arrest notifications from state and federal law enforcement entities. Gov. Crist applauded the Legislature for passing the bill and thanked Sens. Nan Rich, Victor Crist and Ronda Storms, and Reps. Ari Porth and Bill Snyder for their leadership in getting the legislation passed.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Juvenile Justice Blueprint Bill Stalls

[CS/SB 1072](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) did not pass. It originally passed both the House and Senate. However, during debate the House added an amendment referred to as the "Adams Amendment" and sent the bill back the Senate. The Senate refused to concur and sent the bill back to the House where it ultimately died in messages. It would have made changes to the juvenile justice chapter, along with conforming changes to relevant statutes such as the "Children and Families in Need of Services" (CINS/FINS) statute and the "Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Act" in an effort to enhance services for youth in the juvenile justice system. The Adams Amendment would have given a judge the authority to commit a child to Juvenile Justice, but also determine the restrictiveness level, thereby impacting the child's placement. Critics warned that this provision would open the door for providers to directly and indirectly lobby judges in an attempt to increase placements in their programs.

OTHER ISSUES

Booster Seat Bill Dies in House

[SB 316](#) by Sen. Thad Altman (R-Brevard) passed the Senate and was sent to the House, but never heard. The House bill was sponsored by Reps. Rich Glorioso (R-Hillsborough) and Richard Steinberg (D-Miami-Dade). It would have required booster seats, in addition to seat belts, for children aged 4 through 7 and less than 4'9" to protect the child by properly using a crash tested, federally approved child restraint device. It also provided certain exceptions, and redefined the term "motor vehicle" to exclude certain vehicles from such requirements. Unfortunately, members of House leadership were opposed to such a mandate on families and refused to allow the bill to be heard. We thank the sponsors in the House who worked very hard to pass this bill. We hope they will pick up the fight for children's safety next year.

Legislature Approves Bill to Create Collier County CSC

[HB 511](#) by Rep. Matt Hudson (R-Collier) was approved by the full House and Senate. The bill provides a charter to create an independent special district to provide children's services in Collier County. An amendment by Rep. Chris Dorworth (R-Seminole) was also adopted that will require 60 percent approval by Collier County voters in order for the CSC to be established.

FEDERAL NEWS

Report Details State Child Care Efforts with ARRA Funds

The National Women's Law Center released a report detailing how states are using child care funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As a part of the ARRA economic stimulus legislation, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) received an additional \$2 billion. CCDBG assists low-income, working families in obtaining child care so they can maintain employment or attend training or education programs to gain employment.

The report reveals that the ARRA funds were helpful in ensuring continued access to the program in many states and in necessary quality improvements in others. In terms of access, states made use of the funds to continue covering children receiving services; to keep up with the increasing numbers of eligible children; to cover, reduce, or delay waitlists; and even to expand eligibility. Quality improvements included creating or enhancing quality rating and improvement systems, professional development for child care staff, educational material and facility equipment grants, social service connections, and infant and toddler care. To see how your state spent the ARRA child care funds, [download the report](#).

~ Source: Children's Monitor newsletter, Child Welfare League of America

Federal House Committee Holds Hearing on Reforming Juvenile Justice

On Wednesday, the House Education and Labor Committee held a

hearing on reforming juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. This marked the first hearing of the full committee on these issues in many years and gave a major boost to efforts to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and to get the legislation done this year.

Tracy McClard, the mother of a child who committed suicide in an adult facility, described in heart-wrenching detail the trauma and abusive conditions that led to her son's suicide when he was in the adult jail. Other witnesses urged the committee to support strong provisions to reduce disproportionality in the juvenile justice system, increase the emphasis on and funding for prevention, and do much more to utilize evidence-based approaches. The chair of the committee Rep. George Miller (D-CA) is expected to introduce legislation in the coming days or weeks. The Senate Judiciary Committee passed their version of the bill, S. 678, last year.

~ Excerpted from the Children's Monitor newsletter, Child Welfare League of America
