

## Kansas City Child Abuse Roundtable Coalition

### 2008 Legislative Priorities

The Child Abuse Roundtable's legislative agenda reflects policies aimed to protect and assist Missouri's abused and neglected children and to prevent future cases of child abuse and neglect among Missouri's at-risk children.

The Child Abuse Roundtable recognizes that the following factors may contribute to an increased risk of child abuse and/or neglect:

- Low-income families in households below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL)
- Children with special needs (delayed development or developmental disabilities)
- Children in foster or adoptive care
- Children and families with mental health issues
- Children without comprehensive health or dental insurance

Legislative priorities of the Kansas City Child Abuse Roundtable Coalition for the 2008 Session of the Missouri General Assembly are as follows:

#### **I. Support full accreditation for the Children's Division by August 28, 2009 in accordance with RSMO 210.113.**

- a. Support adequate budget and appropriate staffing to provide necessary resources to meet this goal.

#### **II. Support and promote legislation that will protect access to physical and mental health services for Missouri's abused, neglected or at-risk children and their families.**

- a. Oppose any new restrictions to eligibility and access for MO Health for Kids, including, but not limited to, restrictions decreasing income eligibility standards, increasing the affordability provision, and increasing premiums or co-pays.
- b. Support efforts to reduce the number of uninsured children in Missouri and to increase access to health care services, including funding for outreach and enrollment for MO Health for Kids and increased reimbursement rates for providers.
- c. Expand funding for home visiting programs for at-risk children.
- d. Oppose any restrictions or limitations on mental health services for high-risk children or their families.

#### **III. Support and promote legislation that will improve access to high quality early care and education programs for Missouri's abused, neglected or at-risk children and guarantee the safety of those children.**

- a. Increase the child care subsidy income eligibility to at least 135% of the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2008 and to 185% of FPL by 2012.
- b. Increase incentives and funding for providers to improve quality and move toward accreditation.
- c. Support incentives for specialized training for child care providers who care for abused and/or neglected children
- d. Support state funding for comprehensive background checks for employees at all registered, licensed and license-exempt child care/early education programs to ensure that there is no prior history of child abuse, neglect or other criminal activities committed in Missouri or elsewhere in the United States.

**IV. Support initiatives that will positively impact children in the custody of the state or child protection system.**

- a. Support increasing foster parent payments to the Missouri Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates of Care (M.A.R.C.) recommended by Children's Rights, the National Foster Parent Association and the University of Maryland School of Social Work and support linking rate increases to the cost of living.
- b. Oppose any reductions in eligibility for adoption and foster care subsidies.
- c. Support elimination of the disparity between the foster care rate and the adoption subsidy which has the impact of an adoption disincentive.
- d. Support the educational needs of foster children by promoting school stability and ensuring that foster children have the same rights as any other child.
- e. Support continuation of post-permanency services for children once they are reunited with their family, gain an adopted family, or "age-out" of foster care without establishing any permanent supports.

**V. Monitor legislation that will strengthen the child welfare system and monitor any changes to mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect.**