



The Children's Movement of Florida Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is The Children's Movement of Florida?

A: The Children's Movement of Florida is a citizen-led, non-partisan movement to educate political, business and civic leaders -- and all parents of the state -- about the urgent need to substantially improve the way we care for our children.

Our goal is to encourage the people and leaders of Florida to make the well-being and education of our children the state's highest priority, especially when it comes to the investment of public resources in programs that make a real difference in the lives and futures of children.

Q: Why is this necessary?

A: By almost every objective standard, Florida ranks poorly in measure after measure in how we invest in children.

Q: Can you cite examples of that?

A: Here are just a few:

- Perhaps 436,000 children in Florida are not covered by health insurance. Florida ranks 49th – only behind Texas – in the percentage of uninsured infants.
- The state's prekindergarten program – a program that serves more than 170,000 4 year olds -- does not meet most national standards. The State of Florida spends less than \$2,383 per year on a pre-K slot and less than \$7,000 for a public school slot, but will spend more than \$51,000 to incarcerate a juvenile.
- Early screening and treatment programs for children with special needs are poorly coordinated, difficult to access and of inconsistent quality.
- A fifth of our public high school students do not graduate, and almost half of 10th grade public school students in Florida cannot read at grade level.
- Florida's businesses and community organizations do not have a full enough commitment to strengthening child mentoring and parent skill-building programs.
- Only 3% of Florida's budget is spent on programs that benefit children in the early childhood years.

Some key numbers:

43%

The percentage of third grade public school students in Florida who cannot read at even minimally proficient levels (90% of Florida's children go to public school).

46%

The percentage of 10th grade public school students in Florida who cannot read at grade level.

1 in 6

Children who are born with a special need such as autism or cerebral palsy.

\$2,383

The amount Florida spends annually for a slot in its voluntary pre-kindergarten program.

\$51,000+

The amount Florida will spend annually to incarcerate a single juvenile (not including medical costs).

75%

The percentage of young Americans, ages 17 to 24, who are unable to enter the American military because they have an academic problem, a physical problem, a criminal problem or a substance abuse problem.

Q: What is at stake here?

A: Nothing less than the economic future of our state and the stability, safety and security of the communities in which we live.

If these multiple failures remain uncorrected, the associated economic and social burdens can become crushing. For instance, studies show that \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood programs can save society at least \$4 in costs associated with more prisons, more police and prosecution, more remedial programs, higher health-care obligations.

Furthermore, we know from significant research that 90 percent of human brain development occurs by age 5. If children are our future, then shouldn't Florida invest more in them when it matters the most -- during their earliest years?

Q: What sort of programs do you have in mind?

A: We have identified five areas for a first focus of special interest and action: Access to quality health care. Screening and treatment for special needs. Quality pre-kindergarten opportunities. High-quality mentoring programs. Support and information for parents.

Q: What about elementary and secondary education?

A: The state should fully fund a high-quality education for all children. Our children – and our economy and our future – require that. Many foundations, school boards, teacher organizations, parent associations and other entities already work toward those goals. The Children's Movement of Florida seeks to fill the void in advocating for support of programs that are crucial to children at earlier ages when early and wise investment would have such a splendid return.

Q: Who is leading this movement?

A: The leaders:

- Chair David Lawrence Jr., president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, founding chair of The Children's Trust, "Education and Community Leadership Scholar" at the University of Miami's School of Education and Human Development, and retired publisher of The Miami Herald.
- Vice Chair Carol Jenkins Barnett, of Lakeland and the president of Publix Super Markets Charities. She's a nationally known early childhood leader, most especially with United Way Success By Six.

Chair Dave Lawrence and Vice Chair Carol Jenkins Barnett lead a 28-member steering committee that began planning and overseeing this initiative in 2009.

Q: How will you accomplish your goals?

A: After more than 20 months of research and planning, a major effort already is underway to muster, enhance and solidify statewide support for The Children's Movement of Florida and its objectives.

That began in September 2010 when The Children's Movement of Florida led 17 major "Milk Party" rallies and events from one corner of the state to the other -- from Pensacola all the way to Key West.

More than 15,000 people attended these rallies, sharing their sense of commitment and enthusiasm for our goals. Today, tens of thousands of Floridians are reached every week by The Children's Movement.

Media coverage was superb – and universally supportive. Scores of newspapers printed front page stories; all 10 of Florida's largest newspapers published editorials endorsing the movement, and dozens of radio and television reports were aired, including a piece broadcast nationally on CNN.

This outpouring of support reinforced our efforts to convince political, business and civic leaders to elevate – significantly -- the priorities assigned to children's issues.

Q: How can you know this approach on changing priorities will work?

A: The group conducted a pilot project in Palm Beach County in the Spring of 2010. Surveys conducted before and after that pilot project found that a series of community events – backed by an extensive informational media campaign – dramatically increased awareness of the inadequacy of children's programs in Florida and substantially enhanced support for a statewide children's movement.

Q: What comes next?

A: Based on our successful "Milk Party" tour, the magnitude of the grassroots support that has been generated and the commitment of local leaders now positioned in every major region and city of Florida, The Children's Movement of Florida has clearly demonstrated the ability to impact Florida's governmental and legislative process when it comes to issues that affect children and their families.

Q: Are any tax dollars being used to fund The Children's Movement of Florida?

A: No tax dollars are being used during any phase of this project.

Q: Then how are you paying for it?

A: The statewide Children's Movement of Florida is being funded by contributions.

Q: Are you advocating tax increases to pay for these improvements in children's programs and these larger investments in the development of Florida's children?

A: We are not advocating statewide tax increases. But we are insisting that children's issues receive the highest priority, and a much larger share of resources.

Q: So, what priorities would see reduced support in order to divert more funds into children's programs?

A: It is up to our legislators and other elected officials to listen to the citizens of Florida and then act accordingly when it comes to prioritizing how public resources are allotted.

Q: Are you endorsing political candidates?

A: No. This is an educational and informational campaign. We hope that Floridians will hear our message, enlist in this movement and work to ensure that the necessary public and private resources are dedicated to ensuring the full and proper nurturing of our most important resource – our children.

Q: How can I support The Children's Movement of Florida?

The strength of The Children's Movement is in the number of Floridians standing together to demand that children be our state's highest priority. By submitting your name and e mail address on our website -- accessible via www.childrensmovementflorida.org -- you will be updated weekly on what's happening in The Movement and how you can get involved. You can also become a member of The Children's Movement of Florida by making a contribution of any size -- fully tax-deductible -- by simply clicking on the Donate button on The Children's Movement of Florida homepage.