

Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida, Inc.

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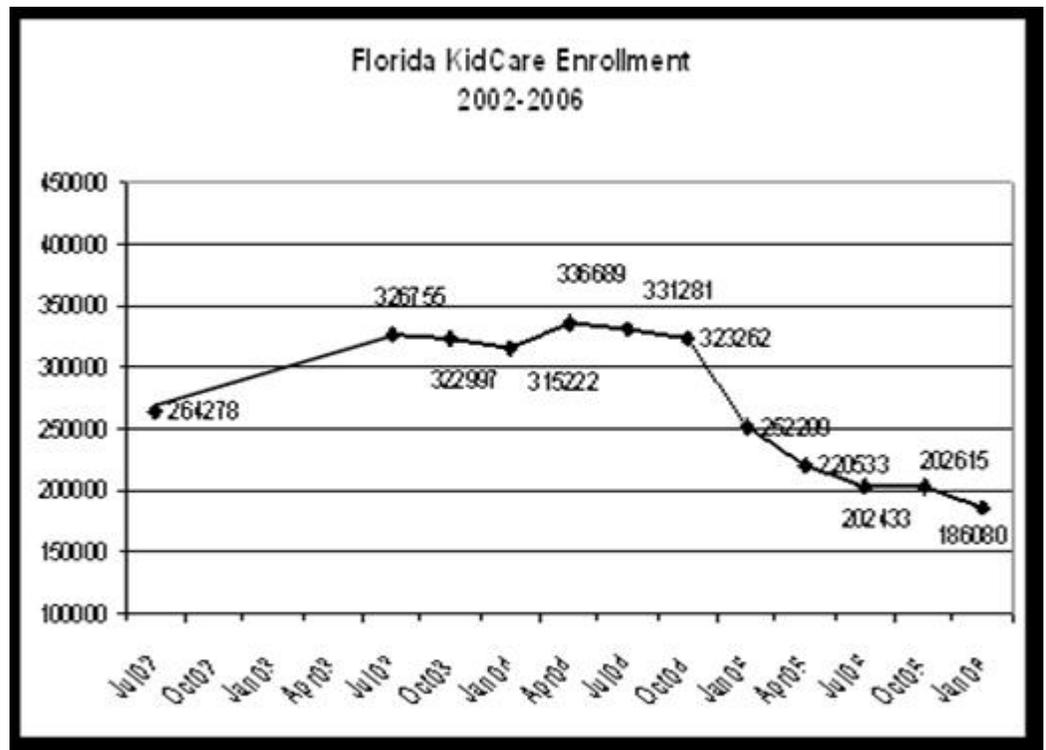
Protect KidCare!

The Governor has proposed cutting funding for children's health insurance under the Florida KidCare program by \$183 million, effectively eliminating coverage for 135,000 potentially-eligible children. The proposed cut is in response to declining statewide enrollment in the program. In April 2004, KidCare enrollment peaked at 336,000 children (not including Medicaid); in January, 2006 enrollment dropped to 186,000 statewide. According to the 2004 Florida Health Insurance Study, more than 500,000 children remain uninsured in the state. Over 370,000 of these children live in families with incomes of \$19,350-\$38,700 (family of four) and have at least one parent that is employed.



United Way of Florida

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Does Declining KidCare Enrollment Justify Funding Cuts? No. Florida KidCare has been subject to numerous programmatic and administrative changes since it was created in 2001. Enrollment has been capped and closed, re-opened for limited periods and then opened year-round. Documentation requirements have been modified at least twice. Application processing has been delayed and the statewide information hotline has been overwhelmed and ineffective. The program no longer distributes free applications locally because of budget constraints. Community surveys document administrative and programmatic enrollment barriers. Families are confused and can not get the information or help that they need. KidCare has simply failed to enroll eligible families whose children remain uninsured today.

Will Proposed Cuts Save Money? No. The proposed cuts to Florida KidCare will cost the state \$130 million in federal matching funds. These funds are provided by the federal government to help defray the cost of providing coverage to uninsured children. Florida currently draws down \$248 in federal funds for every \$100 it invests in KidCare. The federal government is poised to reauthorize funding next year which means Florida will not maximize potential match if the proposed cuts are approved by the Legislature. Without health insurance, the cost of caring for sick children is borne by local hospitals, doctors and communities. Uninsured children contribute to uncompensated care and inappropriate, costly emergency room use. Families with uninsured children often delay care until it is critical and requires more expensive intervention. Local hospitals, providers and communities can not take advantage of federal matching funds—instead they bear 100% of the cost of caring for uninsured children. These costs are passed on to those covered by private insurance, most often provided by local employers.

How Can We Increase Enrollment? Community Outreach works. When KidCare was created, the state invested in community-based outreach to provide assistance to families with the enrollment process. Despite increased requirements, program complexity and confusing changes, outreach funding has not been provided by the state since 2004. A proposed statewide marketing campaign may successfully increase demand, but local outreach is needed to make sure families can actually enroll in the program.

Action Needed: Health insurance coverage for children should be a priority for the state because of its impact on individuals, families, and the economy of communities and the state as a whole. **The Legislature should protect the health and well-being of children by opposing the cuts to Florida KidCare and investing \$6 million in local outreach using the existing infrastructure developed through the Covering Kids Program housed at the Chiles Center at the University of South Florida, to assist families in enrolling in this cost-effective program.**

Source: Thanks to Karen Woodall, Linda Merrill, and Carol Brady for authoring the above.

Additional Sources:

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Florida KidCare Statewide Enrollment Trend [online]. Florida KidCare. Available from: www.floridakidcare.org [Accessed March 2006].

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“A 2006 Review of Escambia County Healthy Kids’ Enrollment Issues,” Escambia Healthy Kids, 2006.

PRESBYTERIAN: When you rearrange the letters: BEST IN PRAYER

DESPERATION: When you rearrange the letters: A ROPE ENDS IT

THE MORSE CODE: When you rearrange the letters: HERE COME DOTS

SLOT MACHINES: When you rearrange the letters: CASH LOST IN ME

LONG TERM CARE – MEDICAID

The cost of an average nursing home stay tops \$55,000 per year, overwhelming the savings of many middle-class seniors who then turn to Medicaid.

Medicaid is the federal-state program that subsidizes health costs for the poor and disabled. In Florida, the program spent \$2.4 billion on long-term care in fiscal 2005 - 17.5 percent of the state's Medicaid budget.

Source: Tampa Tribune

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

As we headed into session it wasn't clear if Legislators were fully aware of the affordable housing crisis facing most areas of the state. The crisis is not just affecting very low income individuals (what else is new?), but lower and middle class workers like teachers, police officers, nurses, and a host of others who work hard and struggle daily to make ends meet. Many of them can no longer afford to live in the same community or even county where they work. No small wonder. Since 2002, the cost of a median priced home in Florida has risen by almost 80 percent while personal income has risen just 1.4 percent. According to the Florida Association of Realtors, the median home price in the state in December was \$247,000, up 27 percent from 2004.

Legislators are beginning to understand the scope of the problem, and have filed a number of bills attempting to address specific affordable housing needs. However, two overarching issues upon which all the others rest - together with the state's future ability to appropriately address affordable housing - are being pursued by the Florida Housing Coalition, of which the United Way of Florida is a member. Both of them relate to the Sadowski Trust Fund.

The 1992 Legislature passed bipartisan legislation creating the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Act. The Act created the Sadowski Trust Fund, a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing, with funds generated by a 10 cent increase per hundred dollars of documentary stamps collected by the state.

The Sadowski Trust Fund now has about \$940 million in it due, among others, to not having been fully appropriated in the last few years.

One of the overarching issues the Florida Housing Coalition is fighting for this session is for the Legislature to appropriate the entire \$940 million in the Trust Fund for affordable housing next year. The needs are great, and the money is needed now. Governor Bush has recommended appropriating only about \$545 million, \$243 million for "regular" affordable housing issues and \$302 million for hurricane housing issues.

The second issue relates to a cap last year's Legislature put on the Trust Fund. Even though it is projected that doc stamps will generate about \$500 million for the Trust Fund next year and in future years, the 2005 Legislature passed a bill that caps the amount of money that can go into the housing program at about \$243 million, the level of 2000-2001 distribution. Where will the rest of the money go? It will likely be swept into general revenue, breaking faith with the 1992 Legislature and the many organizations that have supported the Trust Fund for the last 14 years.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Legislature to appropriate all monies in the Sadowski Trust Fund for affordable housing, and to remove the Trust Fund cap that is scheduled to take effect next year.

George Carlin Strikes Again

- *Ever wonder about those people who spend \$2.00 apiece on those little bottles of Evian water? Try spelling Evian backwards.*
- *Isn't making a smoking section in a restaurant like making a peeing section in a swimming pool?*
- *OK...so if the Jacksonville Jaguars are known as the "Jags" and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are known as the "Bucs", what does that make the Tennessee Titans ?*
- *If 4 out of 5 people suffer from diarrhea...does that mean that one enjoys it?*

STATE WALLET FAT

Economists have projected that Florida will have an additional \$3.3 billion to spend next year, a situation that will help lawmakers bring home the bacon during this election year.

While some thought the devastation that wracked the state from another hurricane season might result in a depressed economy, Florida's red-hot real estate market, surging sales tax receipts, population growth, hurricane rebuilding, and even more taxes earned off higher insurance premiums that are rising in the wake of the storms, contributed to the windfall.

But as they did last year, economists predict the surge of money from taxes charged on real estate transactions has already peaked and real estate sales will begin to slow down next year.

Economists predict that Florida will take in \$1.7 billion more than expected in taxes this year, and \$1.5 billion more next year, to give lawmakers a \$3-billion-plus surplus to work with when they pass the

2006-07 budget during the 2006 session. The total is 7 percent above this spring's forecast and accounts for nearly 5 percent of the \$64 billion overall state budget.

The line of potential recipients is already longer than can be accommodated with the funds. The state Board of Education has asked for \$1.3 billion more for public schools, as well as an additional \$1.98 billion in construction money to comply with the class size amendment passed by voters in 2002. Medicaid will take another \$500 million-\$1 billion, and the House has proposed a new one-week sales tax holiday on all sales less than \$5,000 – costing about \$500 million. Scores of additional requests for funding are accumulating.

The picture for the future isn't so rosey: The Revenue Estimating Conference indicated Florida's runaway economy will start slowing next year. Higher interest rates, higher energy bills and higher inflation will likely shrink annual revenue increases to 1.2 percent by 2007, the panel predicted.

*These are REAL notes written by PARENTS in a Tennessee school district.
(Spellings have been left intact.)*

*“John has been absent because he had two teeth taken out of his face.”
“Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football. He was hurt in the growing part.”
“Megan could not come to school today because she has been bothered by very close veins.”*

2-1-1 UPDATE

Things have been pretty quiet on the 2-1-1 front for the last couple of weeks. Why?...Because the Senate bill (SB156) has unanimously passed out of the two substantive committees to which it was referred, the Senate Health Care and Community Affairs Committees, and the House bill (HB 249) has unanimously passed the only substantive committee to which it was referred, the House Utilities and Telecommunications Committee.

The Senate bill is now awaiting hearing in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

As this Legislative Link went to press, the House bill was being heard in the House Health Care Appropriations Committee.

Things are about to heat up. Both Houses are moving aggressively forward on budget issues. If you have not yet called your Legislators to urge them to support 2-1-1, please call them today. If you have already called them, do it again!

GOVERNOR PROPOSES \$565 MILLION IN HURRICANE FUNDS

In his proposed 2006-07 budget, Governor Bush has proposed spending \$565 million to assist with recovery from past hurricanes and to prepare for future ones. The proposal includes:

- \$314 million to continue recovery efforts from the eight storms of 2004 and 2005, most of which (\$302 million) would come from the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund and be used for affordable housing for victims of the 2004 and 2005 storms, including \$177 million to build and repair rental housing, \$98 million for a home ownership program and \$25 million for housing for farm workers, the elderly and the homeless.
- \$154 million to strengthen the state's ability to respond to future disasters.
- \$97 million for "instilling a culture of preparedness.
- \$42 million in tax breaks for a sales tax holiday during the final 11 days of May for purchase of hurricane-related goods, such as gas cans, flashlights, battery-powered radios, repair material such as tarps, generators costing up to \$1,000 and even cell phone batteries;
- \$30 million for special needs shelters.
- \$302 million that would be used for affordable housing initiatives in areas hardest hit by the storms.

GOVERNOR BUSH PROPOSES TAX CUTS TOTALING \$1.5 BILLION

Since coming into office, Governor Bush has cut about \$15 billion in taxes. With the state facing a \$3.2 billion windfall next year, Governor Bush proposes in his draft 2006-2007 state budget the largest tax cut package in Florida history, nine tax cuts totaling \$1.5 billion. They include:

- **\$570 million** - School Property Tax Reduction - A 9 percent reduction in the 'required local effort' property tax rate -- the tax rate the state requires local school districts to levy as part of the K-12 education funding formula. Bush's office said homeowners with the homestead exemption would save an average of \$55 a year from this tax cut.
- **\$500 million** - Homeowners Tax Rebate - A one-time tax rebate that would send \$100 checks to all resident homeowners and mobile-home owners in the state.
- **\$161 million** - Repeal of the intangibles tax - The tax on stock portfolios affects, with some exceptions, only the wealthiest 2 percent of Floridians.
- **\$81 million** - Sales tax holidays - Covers a back-to-school sales tax holiday expected to cost \$40 million and hurricane preparedness sales tax holiday of \$41 million.
- **\$75 million** - Early stage venture capital tax credits - Tax credits for private investors and lending institutions for investment in emerging enterprises in Florida.
- **\$69 million** - Sales tax exemptions for machinery and equipment - Includes a \$26 million annual sales tax exemption for machinery and equipment to expand Florida's manufacturing production. The plan also includes a \$40 million annual exemption for all machinery and equipment used for research and development activities.
- **\$15 million** - Energy diversity tax credits - Time-limited sales tax exemptions and corporate income tax credits for hydrogen-fuel vehicles, hydrogen and other clean fuel filling stations, hydrogen fuel cells and the production of biodiesel and ethanol.
- **\$51 million** - Repeal of the alcohol 'By the Drink' tax - Repeal of a tax 20,000 restaurant and bar owners must levy on each drink sold.

Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting

BUSH'S FINAL BUDGET: OVERVIEW

In Early February, Governor Bush submitted to the Legislature his eighth and final budget as Governor. The \$70.8 billion plan is about 7.45 percent greater than the current \$65 billion budget and about 40 percent larger than when Bush took office in 1999.

Out of \$5.8 billion in new spending, Bush proposes:

- 22 percent to be banked as reserves,
- 15 percent spent on education,
- 14 percent given back through tax cuts and
- 13 percent spent on transportation and economic development.

To accommodate the class-size amendment, the governor proposes an extra \$4 billion to build and staff new classrooms.

Highlights of the budget include:

- **\$33 billion** – education, a \$1.2 billion K-12 increase to accommodate about 50,000 new public school students, laptops for every teacher and more; increases per student spending by about \$348, or 5.6 percent, next year to \$6,804 per student
- **\$23.4 billion** - health and human services needs, which includes Medicaid, substance abuse programs, child welfare services, developmental disability needs and services for veterans and the elderly. Medicaid spending would increase by 12.4 percent in state money and 5.6 percent overall when combined with federal funds, totaling about \$16 billion, nearly a \$900 million increase over this year.
- **\$470 million** - state employee 2 percent raises. (Very importantly for human service providers, he calls for **increases in mileage rates from 29 cents to 44.5 cents per mile** and meal-reimbursement rate increases from \$21 to \$27 per day.
- **\$1.5 billion** in tax breaks, including a proposal to mail every homeowner \$100.
- **\$1.2 billion** will go into the state's reserve fund
- **\$70 million** to ensure that emergency operations centers can survive at least a Category 3 hurricane.
- **\$50 million** to make older homes more able to stand up in hurricanes
- **\$6.4 billion** in rainy-day reserves, protection against future disasters or downturns in the economy.
- **\$188 million** in new tax money from Broward County gambling facilities to provide laptop computers for every teacher
- **\$102.9 million** more to help clear 3,000 developmentally disabled people off a waiting-list for services. The list is almost 16,000 names long.
- **\$310 million** to buy the Babcock Ranch in Southwest Florida
- **\$300 million** for the Florida Forever land-buying program.
- **\$135 million** for the Everglades restoration program.
- **\$565 million** for hurricane preparedness and recovery, including \$70 million to build new county emergency operation centers around the state as well as \$30 million to provide generators for all of Florida's special needs shelters that house the sick and elderly during emergencies and \$302 million that would be used for affordable housing initiatives in areas hardest hit by the storms. It would include \$177 million to build and repair rental housing, \$98 million for a home ownership program and \$25 million for housing for farm workers, the elderly and the homeless.

To view the Governor's proposed budget, visit <http://www.ebudget.state.fl.us/govpriorities.aspx>

Bad Bill for Seniors

SB 1330 and HB 13 are being fiercely opposed by advocates concerned about services for the elderly. Florida has the lowest percentage of elders in nursing homes of any state. Arguably, this is largely due to the community-based system of care that is currently in place. SB 1330 and HB 13 would replace this community-based system with one that is state-driven and controlled, and that would set the stage for even more mandated managed care for seniors. A flier developed by elder advocates proclaims:

United We Stand to Protect and Serve...Florida Seniors

Advocates for Florida's almost 4 million seniors stand united in OPPOSITION TO HB 13/SB 1330 because it:

Increases **CONFUSION** and **FRAGMENTATION**:

- **Creates at least two parallel service delivery systems:** one state-funded and the other federally-funded.
 - At least 2 sets of administrative functions
 - At least 2 Lead Agencies in every county
- **Fragments elder delivery service.** Results in more bureaucratic red tape for Florida's elders and their families.

Increases **COST**:

- **Costs more money than the present aging service network.** Additional administrative costs as a result of the creation of a parallel service delivery system for state-funded programs will be financed through reductions of services to older persons.
 - 2 sets of administration and overhead costs
 - 2 computer reporting systems
 - 2 sets of staff
 - 2 sets of monitoring and review

Dismisses **CARE** for elder Floridians:

- **Recasts provisions relating to Aging Resource Centers**, which were created by the Legislature in 2004 and hailed as a "single point of entry" and "one-stop-shopping" for services for our seniors. Substitutes DoEA discretion for what has been a legislative mandate.
- **Erodes Florida's "care and mission driven" model** and fosters a "cost system" model.

Takes **COMMUNITY** out of Community Care:

- **Diminishes local community control** risking the loss of millions of dollars in value-added services currently provided through local governments and non-profit organizations: local match, local contributions, grants, and volunteers.
- **Jeopardizes the long-standing, respected aging network**, a system that has been privatized for years and has a proven track record of empowering volunteers and serving seniors.
- **Endangers Florida's model community services** that are pivotal to controlling our nursing home population.

Expands **DOEA CONTROL**:

- **Augments "big" government** in Tallahassee. Gives blanket authority to DOEA, without evaluation, to develop and expand pilots statewide without legislative approval.
- **Creates needless law.** DoEA argues that they need additional entities to sanction wayward AAAs. However, DoEA has ample authority to do so under federal and state law.
- **Provides DoEA excess discretion.** DoEA has failed to do what they should have and could have under current law. Why give DoEA greater discretion? This increased discretion usurps legislative prerogative to control and oversee programs and their evaluation.
- **Focus is NOT on Florida seniors, it is about government CONTROL.**

OPPOSING Organizations: AARP Florida, Clearinghouse on Human Services, Community Care for the Elderly Coalition, Florida Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Florida Association of Aging Services Providers, Florida Association of Senior Centers

BILLS HEARD THIS WEEK

(Some information below is excerpted from legislative staff analyses)

SB 280 – Community Behavioral Health Agencies (Fasano and Lynn)

This bill limits liability in tort actions involving crisis services provided by detoxification programs, addictions receiving facilities, and designated public receiving facilities. The bill requires that net economic damages be limited to \$1 million per liability claim, including but not limited to past and future medical expenses, wage loss, and loss of earning capacity. Additionally, any noneconomic damages are limited to \$200,000 per claim. The bill extends the immunities enjoyed by a provider to an employee of the provider under certain conditions.

Last Action: 3/15/06 SENATE Favorable by Judiciary

SB 930 – Optional Medicaid Payments (Jones)

This bill allows a Medicaid recipient in a licensed nursing facility, a licensed intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled, or a state mental hospital whose income and assets do not exceed a specified amount to retain a monthly personal allowance of \$45 per month (up from the current \$35 per month), which is deducted from the individual's income when determining the patient's responsibility for the cost of care. Legislative appropriations currently set the monthly personal allowance for Medicaid recipients in these facilities.

Last Action: 3/15/06 SENATE Favorable by Health Care

SB 1008 – Suicide Prevention (Lynn and others)

In 2003, suicide was the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States, costing the lives of 31,484 individuals. It was the eighth leading cause of death for males and the 17th leading cause of death for females. For teenagers and young adults, suicide is the third leading cause of death after accidental death and murder. Among the highest rates (when categorized by gender and race) are suicide deaths for white men over 85, who had a rate of 51.4/100,000. Overall, suicide takes 50 percent more lives each year than homicide.

Florida currently ranks 15th in the nation for suicides per 100,000 in the population, higher than the national average. Suicide was the ninth leading cause of death in Florida in 2004. There were 2,376 suicides in Florida during 2004 (an average of 46 suicide deaths every week); suicide claimed the lives of 1,525 of Florida's citizens between the ages of five and of 55. Suicide has been identified as the third leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds, the second leading cause of death for 25-34 year olds, and the fifth leading cause of death for 35-44 year olds in the state.

Senate Bill 1008 creates the Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention in the Executive Office of the Governor and specifies the duties of the office, including:

- Developing a network of community-based programs to improve suicide prevention initiatives;
- Implementing the statewide plan prepared by the Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council;
- Increasing public awareness concerning topics relating to suicide prevention; and
- Coordinating education and training curricula in suicide prevention efforts.

Contingent upon a specific appropriation, the bill authorizes hiring of a coordinator for the Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention and details the duties and responsibilities of the coordinator. The bill also creates a Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council to advise the Statewide Office on the development of a statewide plan for suicide prevention. The bill specifies the membership, terms of office, meeting requirements, and the duties of the council. The council is to provide findings and recommendations regarding suicide prevention programs and activities and to prepare a report annually to be presented to the Governor and the Legislature. The bill authorizes the council to seek and accept grants to support its operation and appropriates \$100,000 and one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) position to the Office of Drug Control to implement the bill during FY 2006-2007.

Last Action: 3/15/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Governmental Oversight and Productivity

THE YEAR'S BEST [actual] HEADLINES OF 2005:

*Crack Found on Governor's Daughter
[imagine that!]*

*Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
[no, really?]*

HB 1231 –Child Care (Ausley)

HB 1231 amends s. 402.3017, F.S., relating to the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarship program to transfer authority for administration of the program from DCF to AWI, thereby eliminating the need for the appropriations implementing act to annually reflect the transfer for the fiscal year.

Although current law authorizes, but does not require DCF to contract for the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, the bill would require AWI to contract for the program and adopt rules to administer the program.

Gold Seal Quality Care Program: This bill revises s. 402.281, F.S., relating to the Gold Seal Quality Care Program to require a child care provider to maintain the following compliance history in order to achieve and maintain Gold Seal status:

- The child care provider must not have had any Class I deficiencies (as defined by rule) within the two years preceding application for Gold Seal Quality Care status. Commission of a Class 1 violation shall be grounds for termination of Gold Seal status until such time as the provider has established a two-year period with no Class 1 violations.
- The child care provider must not have had three or more Class 2 deficiencies (as defined by rule) within the two years preceding application for Gold Seal Quality Care status. Commission of three or more Class 2 violations within a two year period shall be grounds for termination of Gold Seal status until such time as the provider has established a one year period with no Class 2 violations.
- The child care provider must not have been cited for the same Class 3 violation (as defined by rule) three or more times within the two years preceding application for Gold Seal Quality Care status. Commission of the same Class 3 violation three or more times during a two year period shall be grounds for termination of Gold Seal status until such time as the provider has established a one year period with none of the same type of violation.

According to the Department of Children and Families, these proposed changes are consistent with department and program goals, and are important for the continued protection of children in child care. The bill provides consistent enforcement measures and safety standards for all child care arrangements to protect the health and safety of all children in care, regardless of the type of setting.

Background Screening of Volunteers: The bill revises s. 402.302(13), F.S., relating to the screening of volunteers, to remove conflicting language. The bill provides for volunteers who meet the definition of “child care personnel” to be subject to the same level of screening as other child care personnel.

Enforcement Authority in Registered Family Day Care Homes: The bill amends s. 402.309, F.S., relating to provisional child care licenses in the following ways:

- Clarifies that a provisional license may be issued to any licensed child care arrangement (licensed center, licensed family day care homes, or licensed large family child care home).
- Authorizes the issuance of a provisional registration to a family day care home that is unable to meet child care standards.
- Expands provisions to enable the department to revoke a provisional license (the department already has the authority to suspend a provisional license), and to revoke or suspend a provisional registration, if periodic inspection or review indicates that insufficient progress has been made toward compliance with licensing or registration standards.
- Requires the department to adopt administrative rules specifying the conditions and procedures under which a provisional license or registration may be issued, suspended, or revoked.

The bill revises current statutory language regarding licensed family day care homes to provide rulemaking authority regarding minimum safety standards. This will provide safety standards for all child care arrangements to protect the health and safety of all children in care, regardless of the type of setting.

Last Action: 3/15/06 HOUSE Favorable with CS by Future of Florida’s Families

SB 1278 – Persons with Disabilities (Wise)

Senate Bill 1278 creates the Interagency Services Committee for Persons with Disabilities to develop and implement a coordinated, multidisciplinary, and interagency intervention service system for youth with disabilities who are between three years and 30 years of age. The service system is to eliminate barriers to educational opportunities and enhance educational opportunities that will lead to future employment of these youth.

The bill requires that the committee consist of state agency heads of those agencies involved in providing educational, social, and employment support services and requires that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provide staff and administrative support to the committee.

The committee is charged with carrying out a variety of activities that will encourage the educational, vocational, and social development of young persons with disabilities. These activities relate to educational and vocational training opportunities, workforce development, community participation and housing.

Last Action: 3/15/06 SENATE Favorable with 1 Amendment by Children and Families

CS/SB 1286 – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation (Children & Families and Lynn)

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1286 revises the duties of the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation, modifies membership requirements to include primary consumers, and delays the repeal of the corporation's authorizing statute until the year 2011.

The bill amends s. 394.66, F.S., modifying legislative intent regarding community substance abuse and mental health services to include intent that the publicly funded system of services focus on recovery and resiliency and provide continuity of care for persons released from state correctional facilities into the community.

Last Action: 3/14/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Children and Families

SB 1324 – Prevention for Obesity (Peadar)

During the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States. Results of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for 1999–2002 indicate that: an estimated 30 percent of U.S. adults aged 20 years and older - over 60 million people - are obese, defined as having a body mass index of 30 or higher; and an estimated 65 percent of U.S. adults aged 20 years and older are either overweight or obese, defined as having a body mass index of 25 or higher. Over six and a half million adults in Florida were overweight or obese in 2000, based on self-reported height and weight.

In 2003, 14 percent of Florida high school students were at risk of being overweight and an additional 12.4 percent were overweight. When people are overweight or obese, they are more likely to develop health problems such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep disturbances and breathing problems, and certain cancers.

According to The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, the cost of obesity in the United States in 2000 was more than \$117 billion (\$61 billion in direct and \$56 billion in indirect). Most of the cost associated with obesity is due to type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and hypertension. Obesity-related medical expenditures for adults in Florida are estimated to total over \$3.9 billion with over half of the costs being financed by Medicare and Medicaid.

The bill requires the Department of Health (DOH or department), in addition to its current health promotion and prevention activities aimed at reducing the prevalence of excess weight gain and obesity, to:

- Collaborate with other state agencies to develop policies and strategies for preventing obesity, which must be incorporated into programs administered by each agency and which must include promoting healthy lifestyles of employees of each agency; and
- Advise Florida-licensed health care practitioners regarding the morbidity, mortality, and costs associated with the conditions of being overweight or obese, inform such practitioners of clinical best practices for preventing obesity, and encourage practitioners to counsel their patients regarding the adoption of healthy lifestyles.

Last Action: 3/15/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Health Care

Bills Heard this Week continued

SB 1372 – Children in Foster Care (Wise)

This bill creates a Community Advisory Panel on Foster Care Pilot Program in Duval County. It provides that the purpose of the pilot program is to identify educational needs and follow-up strategies for foster children aged six through 12 years enrolled in the Duval County school system. The goal of the program is to ensure that children in foster care will be tested appropriately and placed in an educational environment which optimizes their opportunity for success.

The community-based care provider in Duval County is given responsibility for administering the pilot program and is directed to employ a full-time project coordinator and a full-time psychologist for the program.

The chief judge for the Fourth Judicial Circuit is directed to create the Community Advisory Panel, to appoint four members of the 15-member panel, and to chair the panel. The other members are to be selected by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) (four members), the county school board (four members) and the guardian ad litem program for Duval County (three members).

Last Action: 3/14/06 SENATE Favorable by Children and Families



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