

2011 MO Legislative Wrap-Up

2011 VICTORIES AT A GLANCE

Maintained state funding for child care assistance (\$188M)

Increased funding for Intensive In-Home Services to help keep kids out of foster/adoptive care

Foster and Adoptive Parents Recruitment and Retention Fund created

Defeated regressive tax proposals that would have raised taxes for 95% of Missourians without generating any new revenue

Farm to Table Advisory Board created to help get local, healthy foods to kids in schools

Safeguards put in place to keep kids safe from sexual predators in schools

Enhanced Foster Care Clothing and Diaper Allowance will be included in the state's recurring budget.

Summer School funding maintained to ensure kids graduate on time

With the help of numerous partners, coalitions, legislative champions and many of you, Partnership for Children is pleased to announce that many of our 2011 legislative priorities made it to the finish line and are now on the Governor's desk, ready to become law with his signature.

If this year proved anything, it's the importance of working closely with our partners throughout the state. Each of the measures that succeeded had several partners working together to make it happen. Below is our preliminary review of what succeeded as well as some possible areas that will need support in the coming year. Building on the momentum of the 2011 legislative session, our outlook is positive for the future.

Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention

Safety and Security

Problem: The number of children in out-of-home placements increased 9% in the previous fiscal year, bringing the total number of children in care to more than 10,300. In order to effectively care for these children, we need a new influx of foster and adoptive families who are willing and able to care for all of these children, particularly those who are generally more difficult to place in foster/adoptive families.

Children in out-of-home placements have increased 9% in the last year.

Progress this Session: House Bill 431 and House Bill 604 passed the legislature and are now awaiting the Governor's signature. These bills, among other benefits, establish the

foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention fund

Amy Hestir Act

Problem: According to witness testimony, there are instances where sexually predatory teachers and school district employees have preyed on students and school districts have addressed the issue by transferring teachers out of the school district without notifying the new school district of the allegations. Students and their families are then left without civil recourse when these predators strike again. Worse, these teachers are rarely prosecuted and are left to continue to prey upon children.

Progress this Session: Sponsored by Senator Jane Cunningham for the past five years, SB 54 was passed by the General Assembly and sent to the Governor. This legislation now requires school districts to notify other school districts of allegations of sexual misconduct to ensure school districts do not continue to hire predatory teachers.

In addition, this legislation gives more power to the Office of the Child Advocate to review Children's Division cases. This will help ensure more kids do not fall through the cracks when allegations of physical and sexual abuse exist.

Early Care & Education

Child Care Assistance Program

Problem: For the last three years, Missouri has ranked near the bottom in the country in terms of supporting working parents through child care assistance. With child care costing families nearly \$10,000 per year per child (or more) it is important that families have support in order to continue to work and provide for their families. As well, it is proven that children in high quality, safe child care programs perform better than other children when they reach elementary school.

Progress this Session: For the third year in a row, advocates have helped protect child care assistance funding. The appropriation was protected again and has resulted in a \$188 million appropriation to help working families, while ensuring children have safe, quality places to learn while their parents are at work.

Background Checks

Problem: Missouri only does a name-based background check within the state of Missouri for people who work in child care settings. This potentially allows predators to change their names or offend in a bordering state, but work in Missouri without being detected by child care providers or parents.

More than 300,000 Missouri children under age 6 are in need of child care while their parents go to work.

Progress this Session: At the request of the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Partnership for Children did not actively pursue national fingerprint background check legislation for child care providers this year. The Department was advocating for a piece of legislation that would authorize them to implement a federal grant, updating the family safety care registry where the background checks would be held. DHSS felt that advocating for two separate bills relating to similar issues would confuse legislators and they would not be able to pass their bill. As it turns out, their bill did not pass. PFC will be pushing for this legislation in the 2012 legislative session.

Child Care Regulations

Problem: There have been specific examples in the state of Missouri of child care providers who have abused children resulting in death and who have continued to provide child care without repercussions.

Progress this Session:

Sam Pratt and Nathan's laws were part of an effort by the families of both Sam and Nathan to change some of the child care regulations in the state. Sam's law would make it illegal for people who are under investigation for child abuse to operate an unlicensed child care facility. Nathan's law would put further restrictions on the number of kids a child care provider is legally allowed to care for at a time. These bills received hearings in both the House and the Senate, but did not pass.



K-12 Education

Summer School Funding

Problem: Last legislative session there was an effort to eliminate summer school funding for public schools. Thousands of Missouri's kids rely on summer school to catch up on unfinished school work from the prior year or to work on remedial courses in reading and math.

Progress this Session:

While there was some uncertainty heading into the session whether summer school funding would continue to get the same support it had in the past, when the legislature adjourned, a compromise was struck and summer school funding was safe for another year. Included in SB 81 sponsored by Senator Pearce, is a provision to repeal language that would trigger an increase in state funding if summer school attendance were to decrease by 25% as compared to the 2005-2006 school year summer school attendance.

Administrative Renewal

Problem: Thousands of kids are kicked off the Missouri children's health insurance program each year because their parents are unable to fill out the renewal form for insurance coverage. This creates a lot of wasted time and money for both families and the state. In addition, adopting a new policy on renewing coverage may allow Missouri to receive unrestricted federal bonus funds to be used in any part of the state budget.

Health

Progress this Session: HB 793 sponsored by Rep. Bob Nance (R-Excelsior Springs) received a hearing in the House late in the legislative session and was amended onto several bills out of the House. It was amended on to HB 555 and SB 177. SB 177 was never brought up in the Senate for a vote and with only 2 hours remaining in the session, HB 555 was brought up, however the only amendment that passed on this bill was the amendment that stripped the administrative renewal language from the bill. HB 555 eventually passed the legislature, but without the children's health insurance provisions attached to it.

If it had passed, it would require the Department of Social Services to mail a pre-populated renewal form instead of a blank renewal form when families renew coverage for MoHealthNet for Kids, Missouri's public insurance program for children. When many families receive the blank form they believe it is simply an application for the program and not a renewal form and thus they fail to return it. Adopting the administrative renewal policy would be less time intensive for the families and the Department of Social Services, saving everybody time and money. In addition, it would put us in a position to be eligible for the unrestricted federal bonus funds available under the Federal Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. Last year, Alabama received more than \$50 million in bonus funds – Missouri received none.

More than 100,000 children in Missouri are uninsured – two-thirds of them qualify, but are not enrolled in CHIP.

Health Insurance Exchange — Health Reform Implementation

Problem: The Federal Government has required states to set up state-based health insurance exchanges to allow families, individuals, and businesses to purchase health coverage. If states do not implement the prescribed health insurance exchange, the federal government is required to set one up for us. For consumers and advocates, this would mean less influence in the process and less certainty in terms of benefit packages, proper consumer protections and others.

Progress this Session: HB 609 sponsored by Rep. Chris Molendorp was the "Show Me Health Insurance Exchange". This bill passed unanimously out of the House of Representatives, but never made it on the list of priorities for the Senate. Under the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, states are asked to set up state-based health insurance exchanges where people can shop, compare and purchase private health insurance for themselves, their families or their businesses. However, if states fail to act, the Federal Government will set up the exchanges themselves. This means that state advocates and local voters will have less of an opportunity to engage in the process to make sure adequate patient and consumer protections exist within the exchange.



The bill this year contained a number of beneficial components for children and families as well as containing adequate protections against improper insurance company participation on the Exchange's board of directors. Unfortunately, the measure failed to gain the support of Senator Jane Cunningham and Senator Jason Crowell who both vowed to filibuster it if it came to the floor. As a result, the Senate handler (Senator Jay Wasson) never pushed the bill any further than a committee hearing in the Senate.

PFC will be working with advocates and others in the coming year to see if we can put together a piece of legislation that works for patients, insurance companies, and dissenting Senators. However, with 2012 being an election year, we are not optimistic that such a bill would make it through next year's legislative session if it couldn't make it through this year.

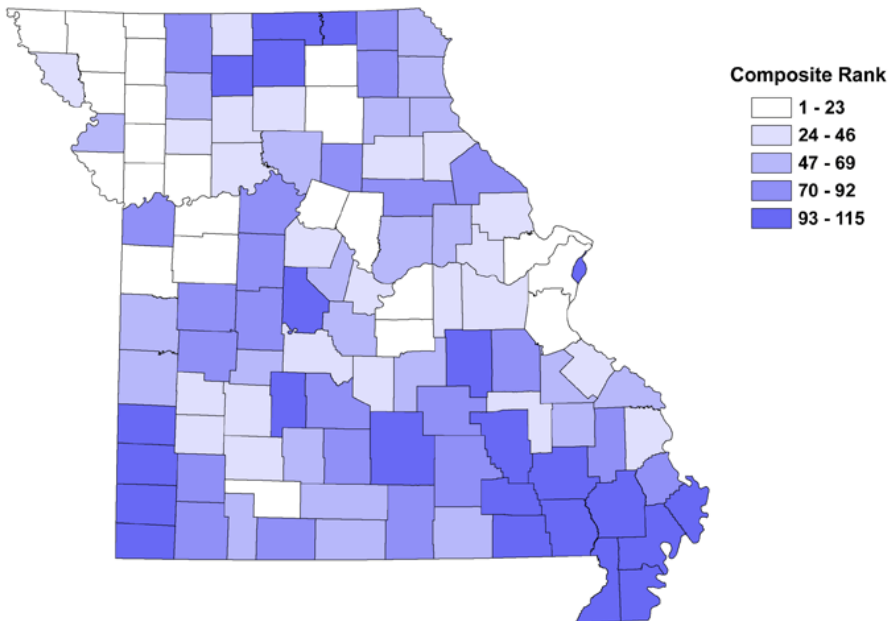
2010 Missouri KIDS COUNT

The Annie E. Casey Foundation selected Partnership for Children as the new KIDS COUNT grantee in Missouri. The KIDS COUNT in Missouri 2010 Data Book updates information on measures of child well-being for the state, its 114 counties and St. Louis City. By highlighting trends and comparing geographic areas, the KIDS COUNT initiative educates users about the condition of Missouri's children and encourages citizens to take action on their behalf.

The 2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book shows that the lingering recession has continued to negatively impact children in Missouri. With unemployment still near 9%, more children are living in poverty and thus accessing public assistance programs like free and reduced lunch. Providing support to individuals living in poverty while enacting policies that help to eliminate that condition will go a long way toward ensuring the effects of the recession are not felt for generations to come.

To access the Missouri KIDS COUNT online database, go to:
<http://www.oseda.missouri.edu/kidscount/>

Missouri Kids Count, 2010 Composite County Rankings



Data Source: Missouri KidsCount, 2010
Map Prepared By: University of Missouri Extension, Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA)
Map Generated On: 05 Apr 2011

Partnership for Children is Greater Kansas City's leading child advocacy organization. Our mission is to focus the energy of our community and government on enhancing life for children and youth through research, education and advocacy.



4049 Pennsylvania Ave, Kansas City, MO 64111 • 816-531-9200 (t) • 816-531-8996 (f) • www.pfc.org • info@pfc.org

Partnership for Children