

Executive Summary MCCF 2010 Candidate Survey

Background

The Michigan Coalition for Children and Families (MCCF) is a statewide, non-partisan network of over 60 child-focused organizations and individuals with a shared mission of improving the quality of life for Michigan children and families. MCCF is unique in that it focuses on all facets of a child's development from birth to adulthood. MCCF strives to make Kids Priority 1 in Michigan by investing in their health, safety, economic security and education now to avoid paying later. These investments support the healthy development of Michigan's children and youth to prepare a workforce that can revitalize Michigan's economy.

In July of 2010, MCCF created a survey in order to obtain primary candidates' views and knowledge about issues that impact children and families in Michigan. A postcard was mailed to all 600 candidates for the Michigan House and Senate to inform them of the survey, with 91 surveys opened, and 33 respondents overall. The survey was completed through the website Constant Contact. In October 2010, a modified, second survey was sent out to those candidates who won their respective primaries. The survey had 15 questions and allowed the candidate to also input their own answers as a follow-up to each question. The survey closed on October, 15th 2010 and had a total of 19 respondents. The following is an overall summary of the additional candidates' responses post primary.

Demographics

Of the 148 survey links that were sent out, 19 candidates opened the survey. Of the 19 who opened the survey, 19 candidates responded. This is 100% of those who opened the survey and replied. The majority of the "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" scale questions had a 100% response rate. Twelve of the candidates were Democrats, while 5 of the respondents were Republican and 1 was an Independent candidate. Of the 18 known responses, there were eleven House Representatives that responded and 7 Senate candidates. Of the 18 total known respondents, 22% were female, and 77% were male. One respondent remained anonymous.

Trends and Responses

Family Support Eligibility and Benefits

Of the 19 respondents, 93% "strongly agree" or "agree" with the statement when asked their thoughts about the importance of maintaining eligibility and benefit levels in key programs for low-income families. Five percent of the respondents answered "neutral". The candidate responses reflected that the candidates are in overall agreement that it is important to maintain eligibility and benefit levels for the families affected by the current recession. These results mirror the responses (n=33) from the previous candidate survey with the majority in overall agreement about assisting families with programs with 91 % answering either "strongly agree" or "agree".

Tax Expenditures

The responses were varied regarding candidates view of regularly reviewing tax expenditures in Michigan. Eighteen out of 19 candidates either “strongly agree” or “agree” with reviewing tax expenditures for their effectiveness and how it helps constituents. One candidate disagreed with the statement. This contrasts with the previous MCCF candidate survey in that Question 2 obtained mostly positive responses from candidates on the idea of reviewing tax expenditures as an elected official. Respondents either answered “strongly agree” (82%) or “agree” (18%) (n=33).

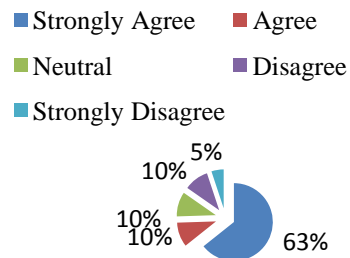
Coordinated School Health Care

Question 3 discussed coordinated school health care. The 19 candidates has a wide range of responses to whether investing in coordinated school health care would improve the health and academics of students. Fifty-two percent of candidates “strongly agree” that these programs would be beneficial, 36% “agree”, and 10% answered either “neutral” or “disagree”. In the previous candidate survey, 28 candidates overall responded positively to investing in coordinated school health programs; 20 “strongly agree” and 9 candidates “agree”, with 4 respondents answering “neutral”.

Child Disparities

When asking candidates about investing in programs to reduce childhood disparities in Michigan, 94% of the candidates agreed that it was important to provide funds to programs that help the most at-risk children. Five percent of candidates disagreed (n=19). In the previous MCCF survey, the results were similar with 91% agreeing that it was important to invest in these programs.

Chart 1: Family Planning Services

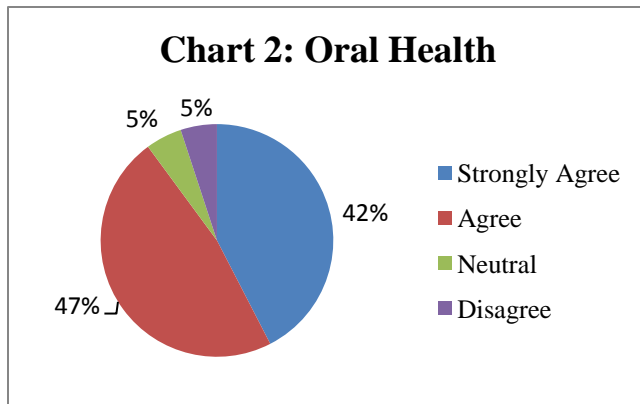


Family Planning Services

Question 5 asked candidates how they felt about investing in family planning services. This question garnered some of the most varied responses amongst candidates in the survey (n=19). Sixty-three percent of candidates “strongly agree” and 10% “agree” that family planning services are a wise investment when considering the potential costs of unintended pregnancies. Ten percent of candidates answered “neutral”, 10% disagreed and 5% of candidates strongly disagreed with the statement. The previous candidate survey also asked candidates about investing in family planning. Their responses were 64% “strongly agree”, 24% “agree”, 6% answered “neutral”, 3% “disagree”, and 3% “strongly disagree” (n=33). See Chart 1.

Nutrition in Schools

Nine candidates responded “strongly agree”, 5, “agree” and 5 were “neutral” on implementing and developing nutrition plans for schools (n=19). The majority of candidates showed agreement that the Michigan Nutrition Standards Recommendations for all Foods Available in Michigan



Schools should be utilized in Michigan schools. These responses were similar to those in the first MCCF survey with 22 candidates strongly agreeing, 7 agreeing and 5 reporting neutral.

Oral Health

Of the 19 candidate responses, 8 “strongly agree”, 9 “agree”, 1 “neutral”, and 1 “disagree” about expanding state funding for oral health care to prevent dental decay in

children. When comparing these results to the previous MCCF survey, the current candidate responses indicate a more diverse range of opinions. In the July 2010 survey, 98% of candidates (n=33) either strongly agreed or agreed with investing in oral health care. See Chart 2.

Early Childhood Programs

The reported percentages for Question 8 indicate that the candidates feel strongly about early childhood programming in Michigan. The 19 candidate responses were broken down as follows; 73% “strongly agree”, 21% “agree” and 5% were “neutral”. These responses were very similar to the previous MCCF survey with 71% “strongly agree”, 27% “agree” and 2% were “neutral” about the importance of early childhood programs.

Community Mental Health

The majority of candidates, 95%, either “strongly agree” or “agree” that it is imperative to fund and strengthen the Community Mental Health System for children and juveniles to reduce the incarceration rate and the amount of juveniles in the Criminal Justice System in Question 9 (n=19). The respondents felt very strongly about this issue and responded positively. The July 2010 MCCF survey results included 20 candidates strongly agreeing, 10 candidates agreeing and 3 candidates answering “neutral”.

Lead Poisoning

Question 10 discussed the importance of protecting Michigan’s children from lead poisoning in their homes by supporting new and sustainable funding streams for lead poisoning prevention and control.” Of the 19 candidates, 52% “strongly agree”, 26% “agree” and 21% reported “neutral”. When comparing these results to the previous MCCF survey, there are similarities in candidate responses; 69% of candidates “strongly agree”, 14% “agree” and 17% were “neutral” on this issue (n=33).

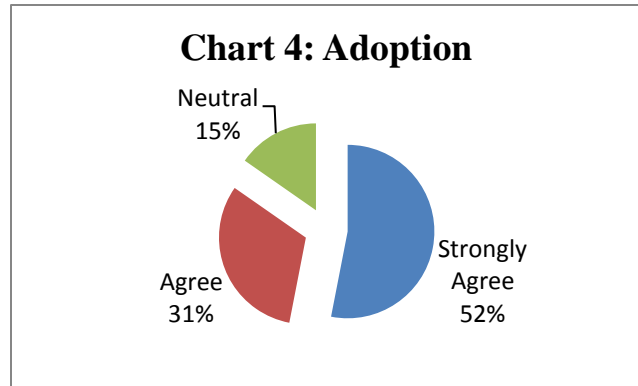
Education

Question 11 asked candidates if they believed that providing education and training opportunities for low-income workers and pre-K through 18 is important in strengthening economic development and attracting business to Michigan. The responses (n=19) indicated that this is an important issue for candidates. Seventy-three percent of candidates “strongly agree”, and 26% “agree” that education and training opportunities are necessary for Michigan families to succeed

on multiple fronts. These results are similar to the previous MCCF survey, with the majority of candidates, 96%, stating that this is an important issue (n=33). See Chart 3.

Adoption

Allowing co-adoptions by single and unmarried adults to expand the pool of adoptive families for 24,000 children in Michigan foster care was the focus of Question 12. This question exhibited diverging candidate opinions in the previous MCCF candidate survey; however, there was more candidate response alignment with the second installment of the MCCF survey. In the previous survey, 54% of candidates “strongly agree”, 27% “agree”, 9% answered “neutral”, while 5% “disagree” and 5% “strongly disagree”. In contrast, the current survey results were 52% “strongly agree”, 31% “agree”, and 15% were “neutral”. See Chart 4.



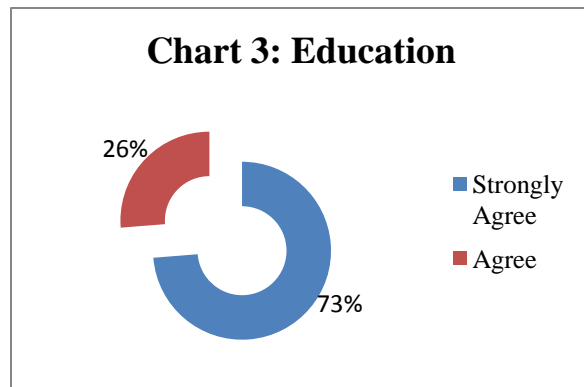
Top Priorities for Candidates

This question allowed candidates to rank eight child and family issues in order of importance. The issues listed by candidates by order of importance were; Jobs, Healthcare, Education K-12, Economic Security, Early Childhood Education, Child Abuse and Neglect, Mental Health and Safety. The previous MCCF survey rankings were; Early Childhood Education, Education K-12, Jobs, Health Care, Child Abuse and Neglect, Economic Security, Safety and Mental Health (n=33). The majority of the responses from candidates indicated that all were important issues and that they could not be ranked. A common theme from the candidate responses included how all of the issues were interrelated and dependent on one another. The candidate provided responses were very similar to the first candidate survey as well.

Top Three Children’s Issues

Question 14 asked candidates to fill-in the top 3 children’s issues that they will work on as elected officials. Table 1 is a comprehensive list of 19 candidates’ top three child and family issues. The top three children’s issues overall were Health/Health Care, Education and Early Childhood Education.

Table 1. Candidate’s Top Three Child and Family Issues



Children's Issues	# of Responses
Health/Health Care	11
Education	9
Early Childhood Education	6
Early Childhood Programs	3
Mental Health	3
K-12 Education Funding	2
Dental Care	2
Nutrition	2
Abuse and Neglect	1
Safety	1
Parenting Programs	1
K-12 Education	1
Environmental Hazards	1
Childhood Obesity	1
Reading	1
Economic Security	1
Helping At-Risk Families	1
Coordinate Health and Education Programs	1
Courts for Families	1
Early Identification of Learning Differences	1
Free Medical and Dental Care from Universities as Part of Medical Training	1
Attracting Business	1
Regulations	1
Foster Care	1

Summary

As with the first MCCF Candidate Survey of 2010, some of the responses highlight an important aspect of candidate surveys. Candidate education is greatly needed on issues effecting children and families. Candidates expressed that they themselves need more information on certain topics such as lead poisoning and prevention, coordinated school health care programs, the Michigan Nutrition Standards Recommendations, co-adoptions for single and unmarried adults, and oral health before making the decision of whether or not to support these important issues. The results of the survey also address the need to provide correct information to, and correct misinformation that clouds certain child and family issues for candidates as well. This provides a great opportunity to encourage candidates to become better informed of where they should be focusing their own efforts on children and family issues as elected officials.

A few candidates stand out as those who could champion for children and family issues, and support these as elected officials. Given their responses, they have the potential to be child and family advocates when elected to their respective offices. These candidates expressed the importance of addressing needs, services and investing in programs to help Michigan children and their families. Our job as a result, is to continue to communicate with these candidates and let them know that children and family issues are a top priority while they are in office. For the candidates that needed more information or were not clear about the importance of certain child and family issues, it is crucial that we take the steps to educate them on these issues. These candidates may get elected and it is our responsibility to be a continual, visible presence for child and family issues during their term.

For more information about the Michigan Coalition for Children and Families please visit www.miccf.org. For candidate and voter information please visit www.kidspriority1.org. You may also find us on Facebook.