



The Children's Agenda and How To Use It?

The *Children's Agenda* is a comprehensive budget and policy agenda that is focused on children's prevention services. The Michigan Coalition for Children and Families (MCCF) promotes the priority of prevention in the *Children's Agenda* by advocating for programs that prevent problems by ensuring that health, shelter, social/emotional and intellectual needs are met for children and families.

After the *Children's Agenda* is released each year, MCCF and its allies utilize its priorities to work with the Legislature, and to help communities be effective advocates throughout the year. Especially in this election year, the *Children's Agenda* is very important tool to help all child advocates frame their issues around children when they come face-to-face with candidates. The *Agenda's* recommendations address initiatives from prenatal through infant, early childhood, and adolescence and focus on critical program areas that have been recently targeted for reduction or elimination.

The following are some ways to best utilize the *Children's Agenda* and get the most exposure for it and the critical issues that it addresses:

- You can convey the importance of the issues laid out in the *Children's Agenda* by putting a real face and experience to them by attending budget and legislative committee hearings in Lansing, MI and give testimony. Use a copy of the *Children's Agenda* to accompany your written testimony. Go to www.michiganlegislature.org to find out committee meeting schedules.
- At the local level, you can present the *Children's Agenda* to an assembly of child advocates and their allies and then hold an informal forum on the issues. Don't forget to invite you district's Representative and/or Senator.
- You can also hold a press conference at the local or state level and highlight those issues in the *Children's Agenda* that are most relevant to you and your district. Include appropriate community and MCCF partners in the event.
- Use the *Children's Agenda* to help you frame a position on a critical children's issue when writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece that can be published in local and regional newspapers.
- Meeting with or writing letters directly to Representatives, Senators, and the Governor is also a way of advocating on behalf of children. The *Children's Agenda* should be included and used to show statewide support on the issue on behalf of the MCCF members. This will provide additional credibility to your opinion, and provide continued visibility to the issue.
- Invite your local Representative or Senator to visit a program serving children and families in your community and reference how the *Children's Agenda* recommendations help to continue these critical services.
- Finally, you are invited to join with other MCCF members to draft recommendations for legislation and departmental budgets.

Sample Postcard to Elected Officials about the State Budget

Sample Postcard

Dear <name>:

I am a <<parent, provider, advocate>>. My <<family/community>> benefits from the state's investment in children's services and prevention. << tell your story>> Do not make cuts in children's services! I am a voter and taxpayer who believes that the investments we make in prevention today will reap financial and social benefits for our state. I encourage you to find the revenue to invest in children.

Sincerely:

<name>

<address>

<city, state, zip>

Remember this is a simple model. Your postcard or letter will be most effective if you use your own words and experiences.

You can send correspondence to elected officials at the following addresses:

State Senator
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909

State Representative
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909

Governor Granholm
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

U.S. Congressperson
U.S. Capitol
Washington DC 20515

For a directory of Elected Officials see:

www.michiganlegislature.org/documents/publications/citizensguide.pdf