

A Map for Moving The Policy Group Agenda

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In order to make the well-being of children and families a priority in the State of Florida, extensive efforts are needed to create a state vision and a commitment to working toward the realization of this vision. To this end, The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children seeks to facilitate improvements and/or change across local, state, and federal systems. The Policy Group proposed the following agenda for Florida:

*The **well-being** of children and families is the highest priority in Florida and public policies will be established to be consistent in their support of this priority. The key indicators of well-being are:*

- * All of Florida's **children** are healthy, safe and ready to learn at every age.
- * All of Florida's **families** are stable, nurturing and economically self-sufficient.
- * All of Florida's **communities** are supportive of families raising children.

Extensive study of the system change process by noted national researchers and organizations has revealed nine critical components for implementation of comprehensive initiatives. The policy priorities identified in *The Florida Agenda* are far-reaching and ambitious; achieving their implementation will require attention to each of these nine critical components.

Critical Component 1: A Longer View of Change

Effective interventions take a longer view of change, often targeting at least two generations. A longer view of change requires recognition that all generations are negatively impacted by shortsighted, quick fixes. Indeed, quick fixes waste precious resources and should be considered expenditures instead of investments. We should seek a reasonable return on our investments. In order to produce important outcomes, time is needed to launch an initiative, develop relationships, and provide necessary supports.

Critical Component 2: A Coherent Framework for implementing a Comprehensive Initiative

A coherent framework for implementing a comprehensive initiative requires the development of a vision, mission, goals, objectives, and a long-term strategic plan to identify progress and correct problems. The visioning process encourages innovation and focuses on identifying successful strategies, integration of services, transitioning and moving beyond specific projects and programs.

Critical Component 3: High-Level Leadership

Leaders are needed to help develop and advance the work of The Policy Group. These individuals must be knowledgeable of systems and solutions, skilled at building consensus and resolving conflicts, and able to communicate effectively. Furthermore, leaders are needed that reach across cultural, ethnic, and political boundaries.

Critical Component 4: Broad-Based Involvement of People at the Local Level

Long term, sustainable policy change requires creating a public will to support such change. This requires attention to culture and values that influence individual and community behavior. It requires respect for the potential of "the masses" to either support or defeat change in either direction.

Critical Component 5: A Mechanism for Strategic Communications

Developing common understandings, building public will, garnering multi-partisan support, and bringing champions on board are all served by the development of a mechanism for strategic communications. This mechanism will enable the development and delivery of key messages and spokespersons to target messages for outreach and ensuring informed decision making.

Critical Component 6: Partnerships between Formal Systems and Community-Based Organizations

There is no way that a single institution or agency can provide all of the services and supports that children and families need. Partnerships are needed to bring services to families where they live, work and play. Formal systems (e.g., government-sponsored systems and programs) are more likely to have significant fiscal and administrative resources, and community-based organizations are better equipped to identify and relate to community needs. Working in alliance, these entities can maximize resources.

Critical Component 7: Multi-Partisan Support

The balance of power moves rather frequently from one party to another and influential policymakers can be found in all political affiliations. Therefore, it is imperative that the visioning and implementation process incorporate viewpoints and strategies that cross political boundaries. Soliciting widespread input and inclusion of all stakeholders helps to ensure adequate representation and build support.

Critical Component 8: Balance between Regulation and Accountability

The way programs are funded, regulated, and held accountable can support or undermine the attributes of effectiveness. Just as local communities differ, so must implementation. Whereas, accountability for certain outcomes is necessary, local flexibility and responsiveness are key to successful interventions.

Critical Component 9: Incorporation of On-Going Research and Evaluation

Progress depends on an evolving knowledge base that informs policy direction, assists with midcourse correction and guides public investments. Research and evaluation are needed to help identify promising practices, the connection between interventions and interim benchmarks, and the long-term outcomes of public investments.



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The Policy Group is an independent, non-partisan policy research organization composed of local and state leaders who are working together to enhance the well-being of Florida's families and children. The vision of the Policy Group for Florida's Families & Children is that, together, we will ensure a generation of young people who grow up to be responsible adults — ready, willing and able to contribute to self, to family and to their community. For additional information about The Policy Group, this paper or other products, please visit our web site at www.policygroup.org. You may also contact the Executive Director as follows:

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