

## The Florida Agenda

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*March 2003*

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.

**Healthy Children.** The benefits of beginning and living a healthy life are enormous and long lasting. The consequences of beginning life unhealthy can be devastating, lifelong and costly. To safeguard our physical, social and emotional health, we need accessible and affordable health care. Particularly important is a healthy start prenatally and from birth so that children have the opportunity to live full, healthy and productive lives. Access to health care is particularly important for children with disabilities and/or special health care needs.

**Children Safe in their Families and Communities.** The quality of life in our communities depends upon feeling and being safe in our communities. Children are among our most vulnerable citizens. They require protection and nurturing to help them grow up to become responsible, law-abiding and nurturing adults.

**Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School.** Quality early care and education beginning in the infancy period should be affordable and accessible for all children. This is especially important for children with special needs. It is the first and crucial step in creating a well-educated work force and citizenry to help build better lives for Florida's families and a prosperous economy for Florida as a whole. Our best investment is to capitalize on the capacity for young children to learn in the early years and to teach our children how to live and work in our rapidly growing and complex world. At the outset, all children should enter school ready to succeed and continue to succeed as they grow.

**Stable and Nurturing Families.** Florida reflects a society comprised of four generations — children, parents, grandparents and super-elder great-grandparents. For all Floridians to participate fully in society, families need to thrive — children need to be able to grow to full potential and elders need to feel secure and believe they are needed.

**Economically Self-Sufficient Families.** Low-income and/or single parent families, some with inadequate or unsafe housing, face extraordinary challenges in providing the basic necessities of life. Such families are vulnerable to an array of social and economic challenges: unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy, lack of an adequate education and the need for public assistance. Eliminating poverty is an initiative likely to strengthen our communities in many ways, not just economically.

**Supportive Communities.** For Florida's communities to thrive and for children to grow up to become contributing adults who take their personal and community responsibilities seriously, a stable neighborhood environment that nurtures and supports the four generations represented in our communities is essential.

In order for the state to realize these outcomes, Floridians must implement the following key policies and practices:

- \* All children and families have access to affordable, quality:
  - \* Health care;
  - \* Parenting support (e.g., home-visiting) services;
  - \* Early care and education; and
  - \* Integrated health, economic, and family support services.
- \* All communities, in partnership with the public and private sectors, have the capacity to provide a comprehensive, integrated continuum of natural, primary, and specialized supports.
- \* All public and private employers in Florida promote family-friendly employment practices and a livable wage.