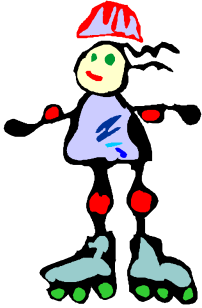


Part 10:



This section will offer you examples of the kinds of communication referred to in other sections of the toolkit. Please do not use these verbatim – it is important for you to communicate with your own words and thoughts when advocating on behalf of children and families.

Index:

- 1) Letter or E-mail to a Legislator – example of a letter regarding support for Community Empowerment
- 2) Message slip (Iowa Senate and House) – copies of actual blank message slips
- 3) Testimony (oral and written)
- 4) Thank You letter to a Legislator – sample with blanks to fill in
- 5) Letter to the Editor
- 6) Press Release – example from Department of Human Services releasing information about the redesign of the child welfare system in Iowa
- 7) Press Briefing Kit Contents
- 8) Candidate Questionnaire
- 9) Candidate Pledge – example of a candidate pledge used by Prevent Child Abuse America

Date

The Honorable _____
Iowa (Senate/House)
State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear (Senator/Representative) _____:

Thank you for all of your hard work in representing this community. As a (parent/teacher/concerned constituent/child care provider/etc.), I am writing to ask that you make the care and education of young children a priority in your work.

I have seen in my community that funds being used from the Iowa Community Empowerment initiative have been essential in helping to create positive results for our children. (*Share a "brief" personal story here.*)

Numerous studies have proven time and again that quality early learning programs can increase children's rates of literacy, secondary school graduation, employment and college enrollment, in addition to decreasing future incidences of teen pregnancies and juvenile delinquency.

I'm writing you to ask for continued support and enhancement of Iowa Community Empowerment state appropriations.

Sincerely,

Name
Home address
Telephone
Email address

THE SENATE

Date: _____ Time _____

To: _____

Seat No: _____

Message:

_____ is at the rear of the chamber and requests to see you: _____ in the lounge
 _____ at the door

House of Representatives

Representative: _____

Seat Number: _____

Mr. Mrs. Ms.

Of: _____

1. Is waiting to see you; 2. Has left literature

3. Has left the following message:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Delivered by: _____

FRONT DOOR

These message slips are located next to the doors to the chambers for both the House and Senate. They should be filled out and given to the doorperson when you would like to visit with a state legislator while he/she is in session.

Testimony:
Early Childhood Education Public Hearing
On House File 385

Monday, March 7, 2005

Charles Bruner, Ph.D., Director
Child and Family Policy Center
State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network

House File 385 represents the Governor's proposal for a significant "down payment" on early childhood education. It involves a greater overall investment of new resources than the House majority party's proposal and a lesser investment than that proposed by the Urban Education Network as part of the Iowa stakeholders group. We are providing a crosswalk of these three proposals to show their similarities and differences (Attachment 1). While the Urban Education Network's proposal is the most comprehensive of the three and the one we believe best meets the needs of Iowa's young children, all have merit and represent a step forward in addressing the needs of young children.

We want to stress that we do not believe early childhood is a partisan agenda. In fact, many of the foundations of Iowa's current system – including community empowerment and Shared Visions – were established under Governor Terry Branstad. Marvin Pomerantz chaired the World Class Schools group that recommended increased funding for both pre-school and parenting education programs that led to Community Empowerment.

While Iowa has developed promising initiatives and programs, however, Iowa has yet to develop an early learning system that can improve school readiness. Current investments in the development and education of infants and toddlers and in pre-schoolers in Iowa in comparison with those in school-aged children and college-aged youth (Attachment 2).

This exists despite a growing evidence based for the cost effectiveness of programs that strengthen and support parents, provide enriched pre-school programs, ensure early access to treat developmental delays and special health care needs, and provide quality child care while parents work.

House File 385 starts to address these gaps, although it could go much farther. In particular, we would like to see much greater emphasis upon improving the quality and affordability of child care and much greater attention to supporting community empowerment (Attachment 3).

Most importantly, however, we think that early childhood needs to be treated as an investment. The costs of failing to invest are known – and they are significant. Children who start school with undetected health concerns, fall behind their peers cognitively or emotionally and socially, and with lack of exposure to the richness of language, are at much higher risk of poor school performance, drop-out, delinquency, poor health, crime, adolescent parenting, and dependency.

Arthur Rolnick and Rob Grunewald, researchers for the Federal Reserve Board in Minneapolis, after reviewing state economic development initiatives and contrasting them with early childhood program results, concluded:

Early childhood development programs are rarely portrayed as economic development initiatives, and we think that is a mistake. Such programs, if they appear at all, are at the bottom of the economic development lists for state and local governments. They should be at the top.

Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman, comparing the returns on investment from early learning programs with those in later life, concluded, “Invest in the very young.”

We think that both the rhetoric and the financial investment in early childhood should be at the top of this General Assembly’s actions. As Chair of the Committee for Economic Development’s Research Committee, then Chief Executive Officer for Proctor and Gamble, Brad Butler, said it succinctly but eloquently, “It is not whether we can afford to invest in early childhood; it is whether we can afford not to invest.”

The General Assembly has an opportunity to make a major down payment on Iowa’s future social and economic vitality – through investing in early learning. The investments proposed in House File 385 should be viewed as a minimum starting point.

Date

The Honorable _____
Iowa General Assembly
Iowa State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear (Representative/Senator) _____:

I am writing to once again thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to meet with us during our visit to the legislature. We appreciate the opportunity we had to discuss the state of children in _____ County and the role that _____ is playing to improve their lives and help insure that _____.

We hope you found the information we left with you useful. We know you share our hopes and concerns about children in _____ County, and will be working hard to (*in this space, you can reiterate the main points you made in your conversation. For example: "working hard to insure that early care and education is a priority."*)

Please let me reiterate our offer of assistance. If you are ever in need of any local data or have questions about our work, please let me know. We also encourage you to come and visit our offices and facilities to see first hand the work we are doing. We would welcome being your host for the day.

Thank you for seeing us and for all you are doing to keep children and their needs a priority in the public agenda.

Sincerely,

Name
Title of Organization

[Normally, your letterhead logo and titles would go here...]

THOMAS J. VILSACK, GOVERNOR
SALLY J. PEDERSON, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KEVIN W. CONCANNON, DIRECTOR

For Immediate Release
February 21, 2005

For More Information Contact
Roger Munns (515) 281-4848

New Response for Abused, Neglected Kids Under Age 6

DES MOINES, Iowa – The latest child abuse and neglect figures show that nearly half of all founded cases in Iowa involve children age five or under.

“This data underscores our decision to differentiate services depending on age, and to pay particular attention to the little guys who are so vulnerable,” said Wendy Rickman, project manager for Iowa’s redesigned child welfare system.

Beginning in March, the Department of Human Services will offer services, such as drug rehab or parenting classes, or seek court intervention for all families in which there is a founded abuse of a child under age six.

In the current system, the families of about half of these youngsters receive less formal assistance.

“Little kids can’t stand up for themselves, so that’s why one of our three main decision factors is age of the victim,” Rickman said. The others are history of abuse and presence of risk factors, like drug abuse or mental illness.

In calendar year 2004, there were 12,920 Iowa children who were neglected or abused, compared to 13,288 the previous year. While the trend was flat over the past 12 months, the trend has been steadily upward for the last decade.

Of the neglected or abused children, 5,994, or 46 percent, were under age six. Another 3,765 (29 percent) were aged six through ten, and 3,161 (25 percent) were aged 11 through 17.

Last summer, the DHS announced that the department would concentrate its efforts on the most fragile families, where risk of abuse or re-abuse is greatest. Lower-risk cases will be referred, on a voluntary basis, to a private social work agency.

The new design, called Better Results for Kids, will likely bring as many as 3,000 additional cases involving young children into the DHS system, assuming current trends.

On the other hand, the DHS will no longer open a formal case—and coordinate services—for this age group if there is no report of abuse or no founded report. In 2004, there were about 2,300 of these cases. All but about 100 have been closed.

Rickman said the focus on the youngest victims will make more resources available for all victims.

“By differentiating our response this way, we are more able to address family needs at the right time, with the right intensity, and for the right duration. That is true resource maximization while still ensuring better results.”

Rickman said the new focus on the most fragile families does not mean that the department will ignore older children.

--more--

“If there’s abuse or high risk of abuse, count on it, we’ll be there,” she said.

But when abuse is not confirmed and risk of abuse is not high, the department will no longer be the case manager for services.

“We’ll be at the table, but we’ll be one of many players,” she said.

“In these cases, such as the frustration that many families face with unruly teen-agers, we start with the family, and from there we go to the extended family and friends. From there you see if there is support in schools, churches, community groups, and other sources. Formal intervention by the state or the court is the last resort,” she said.

Other numbers in the calendar 2004 report:

- As usual, the largest category of abuse was “denial of critical care,” which accounted for 68 percent of all abuse (12,088 of 17,774 total abuse reports).
- There were 299 cases of “manufacturing of a dangerous substance in the presence of a minor,” compared to 400 the year before.
- There were 1,713 cases of illegal drugs in a child’s system, compared to 1,502 the year before. Of those, two-thirds were under age six and 23 percent of the total were under age one.
- There were 2,523 cases of physical abuse (14 percent of total abuse reports) and 1,110 cases of sex abuse (6 percent). Percentages were similar in 2003.

###

Editors:

- Below is a chart that explains the way services will be differentiated under the new child welfare system.
- On the next page is a diagram showing the community response in low-risk cases involving older children.
- See also attached a one-page “child welfare by the numbers” summary.
- The entire calendar 2003 and 2004 reports will be posted on the DHS web site under “reports and publications.”



Using risk factors to differentiate level of service

- **Lowest risk**
 - Information
 - Children all ages, no abuse report, no court involvement
 - Children all ages, unconfirmed abuse report, low risk
 - Information and referral
 - Children all ages, confirmed/not registered abuse, low risk
- **Low to moderate risk - Community Care**
 - Children all ages, unconfirmed or confirmed/not registered abuse report, moderate to high risk
 - Children age 6+, founded abuse, low risk
- **Higher risk - Open DHS case**
 - Children age 0 – 5, founded abuse, all risk levels
 - Children age 6 +, founded abuse, moderate to high risk
 - Children all ages, court ordered

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Press Briefing Kit Contents

- Recent press releases
- Background material about your company/agency/coalition
- A one-page fact sheet about your company/agency/coalition
- Biographies of your executive staff
- Photographs
- Pertinent brochures/information sheets
- Contact names and numbers

Example of a Candidate Pledge designed and used by PCA America.

**One Percent to Prevent
Candidate Pledge**

Prevent Child Abuse America

I believe in supporting the children of our state and in the power of prevention. I believe that our children are the foundation for the future and that all children should be healthy and safe. I believe that all families should receive the supports they need to provide healthy and safe environments for their children.

To this end, I pledge to:

- Meet on an annual basis with representatives from Prevent Child Abuse America and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois to hear about current issues and trends in child abuse and neglect and its prevention.
- Learn more about child abuse prevention programs and how I can support and promote them.

When elected, I pledge to continue these efforts to understand child abuse and neglect and to support policies and programs that help prevent child abuse and neglect.

Signed

Name

Office Sought

Mailing Address

City, State Zip

Campaign Contact Person

Phone

**Return by fax/mail to Prevent Child Abuse
America: (FAX) 312.939.8962**

For more information, please contact Susan Kelsey at 312.663.3520

Example of a Candidate Pledge designed and used by PCA America.

I believe in our nation's children and the power of prevention. I believe that our children are the foundation of the future. I believe that all children should be healthy and safe, and that all families should be supported to provide a healthy and safe environment in which to raise their children. I believe that children should be a top priority of government.

To end, I pledge my support to:

- x Meet at least once with representative of (your organization or coalition).
- x Listen to your concerns for our children.
- x Learn more about child abuse and neglect and efforts being made to prevent abuse and neglect.
- x Create a children's platform, with the health and well-being of children and families as a top priority.

When elected, I pledge to continue these efforts to understand child abuse and neglect and support policies and programs that can help prevent child abuse and neglect before it begins.

Signed

Name Office Sought

Mailing Address City Zip

Campaign Contact Person Phone

For more information, please contact (name of contact person) at (name of organization and phone number).