



## Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Public Policy Priorities for 2009-2010

A Voice for Kids A Voice for Kids A Voice for Kids A Voice for Kids A Voice for Kids A Voice for Kids

# Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

### Early Childhood Education

- Assure availability of child care for low-income families by expanding funding to reduce waiting lists.
- Support legislative and regulatory efforts to ensure safe and healthy child care regardless of setting and age of the child served.
- Improve early care and education quality by increasing the state's investment in Keystone STARS and expanding state programs to improve teacher credentials, compensation, and retention.
- Expand Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and assure that every Pennsylvania preschooler has access to voluntary high quality pre-K.
- Support regulatory efforts to ensure high quality pre-K.

### High Quality Public Education

- Continue to support the implementation, and fine tuning where appropriate, of the basic education funding formula to ensure adequacy and equity of state funding so that all students have access to high quality education.
- Take steps to improve high school graduation rates in Pennsylvania and assure that more young people graduate ready for post-secondary education and work by :
  - Increasing the rigor and relevance of high school for every student;
  - Providing tools to school districts to help all students succeed, such as model curricula, professional development and diagnostics to identify specific student weaknesses in middle grades;
  - Assuring that every Pennsylvania high school graduate has met the state academic standards
  - Promoting and improving dual enrollment opportunities for students that will enable them to receive both high school and college credit that will ultimately provide them with a solid foundation for post-secondary success, including full state support for low-income students;
  - Developing multiple pathways to a high school diploma for struggling students.
- Ensure all young people have the opportunity to attend postsecondary education and develop the education and skills requirements for high-skill, high-wage 21<sup>st</sup> century occupations, regardless of their ability to pay. This includes students graduating from high school and also young people 25 years of age or younger who are returning to college, have dropped out of high school and have gone back to earn their high school credential, and those going back to earn high school and postsecondary credit simultaneously.

## **Afterschool and Youth Development**

- Continue to work to ensure the availability of high-quality afterschool and youth development programs for all of Pennsylvania's children and youth.
- Take steps to develop an effective strategy to address the issue of students at risk of dropping out of high school, and re-engaging those young people who have already left into education options leading to a high school credential and postsecondary education.
- Provide effective career education and meaningful work-based learning experiences for students and educators to help young people make informed decisions about their futures and to ensure they have the necessary skills and education and training to be responsible citizens and successful in a career of their choosing.
- Support local partnerships to engage communities to drive local solutions for youth.

## **Children's Health**

- Build on the success of CHIP and Medicaid to assure that every Pennsylvania child is insured.
- Advance strategies that assure that young people who are aging out of our child welfare system continue to have access to health benefits.
- Build an accountability system designed to track the delivery of health care services through MA and CHIP and take steps to assure that all children receive comprehensive health services designed to assure their healthy development.

## **Child Welfare**

- Help to strengthen families and assure that fewer children are ever at risk of abuse and when at-risk more children can remain in their homes by making more critical investments in prevention and family strengthening.
- When children must be removed, reduce the stress by trying to keep kids in their home communities, ideally with family members, and in the same school, etc. and provide timely and effective services to aid reunification with birth family.
- Make permanency a primary goal of the system for every child assuring legal permanence for every child through reunification, adoption or guardianship.
- Focus attention not only on the youngest children in our system that can be at greatest risk of abuse but on adolescents and older children who are often a lesser priority in public policy efforts and are disproportionately in placement.