

BOOST FOR KIDS

Expression of Interest

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL MODEL OF FLORIDA

States and localities across the country are continuously seeking answers and solutions to the problems facing our most vulnerable children and families. Traditional state and local government responses have historically resulted in cumbersome, bureaucratic systems, lacking in their ability to respond in a flexible and timely manner to the immediate and real needs of families. Children living in poverty are particularly vulnerable. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count 1997 Report*:

The 7.1 million children growing up in poor communities today face tough odds. Research predicts that they are at greater risk of being sick and having inadequate health care; of being parents before they complete school; of being users of easily available drugs; of being exposed to violence; and of being incarcerated before they are old enough to vote. Although poor neighborhoods include individuals and families with extraordinary resilience and strength, too many kids growing up in such environments will reach adulthood unprepared to parent, to work, and to contribute to society.

During the past decade in particular, locally inspired partnerships and coalitions have begun to emerge as agents of change and as primary vehicles to more efficiently optimize resources and more effectively serve the needs of children and families. Ten years ago, following enabling legislation at the state level, a new solution and different kind of initiative was created in Florida -- the fastest growing and one of the most diverse states in the nation. Patterned after the pre-existing (1946) Juvenile Welfare Board in Pinellas County, the Florida legislature passed a bill in 1986 that empowered any county in Florida to create, pursuant to local referendum, a Children's Services Council (CSC) -- a unique entity that could generate its own local revenue as well as coordinate community responses, to meet the needs of its most vulnerable children and their families. Significantly, while many other systems focus on more deep-end needs, the primary focus of CSC's is prevention. **The CSC model represents a solution that works! It is also a model for the nation.**

Clearly nontraditional, the Children's Services Council is perhaps the most creative and unique local solution to addressing the multitude of challenges and problems facing our most vulnerable children. Established as an independent public entity with *ad valorem* taxing authority, the Children's Services Council is also a prime example of a locality taking action to respond to the devolution of funding responsibility from the federal and state governmental levels to local governments.

Children's Services Councils function as independent organizations, unburdened by direct service responsibilities and unencumbered by federal, state, and county government rules and regulations that, in many cases, might stifle creative and timely responses to the myriad problems facing the most "at-risk" children and families in our society. Established as independent

governmental entities, several counties in Florida have now created Children's Services Councils. **The Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County (CSC) and Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB)**, the two largest CSC's are the primary partners along with the State of Florida Department of Children and Families in this proposed *Children's Services Council Boost for Kids* initiative. Both are superb examples of what can be accomplished with this model. As the major players on children's issues in two large rapidly growing counties, both governmental entities have creatively utilized their local authority and have assumed several key roles:

- As an outcome-based **funder** of quality programs
- As a **catalyst** for key county-wide initiatives and **convenor** of collaborating public and private entities serving children and families
- As an **advocate for and trainer of "best practices"**
- As an **evaluator** of programs to ensure that its resources are invested to achieve positive outcomes for children and families
- As a **data manager** for national, state and local data

The assumption of these roles has resulted in an extremely powerful force for change and action for children and families at the local level.

Funder

CSC's have the legal authority to generate a significant amount of local revenue, earmarked for children's services through local property taxes. The Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County now has an annual budget that exceeds \$36 million; the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County's annual budget is approximately \$32 million. Both organizations work closely with state, local and private funding partners to leverage these local resources to fund and coordinate a variety of programs and county-wide initiatives for children and families. This revenue generating ability has made these organizations a major local and statewide force for bringing the agenda for children and families to a new level.

Catalyst & Convenor

In their respective county's, both organizations have emerged as leaders in solving problems facing children. Assuming a dual role as both the catalyst for action and convenor of collaborating organizations, CSC and JWB have and continue to lead county-wide efforts to transform what, heretofore, were bureaucratic, cumbersome, and unresponsive systems in addressing the needs of children. For example, over the past three years, funders and providers in Palm Beach County have worked together to design and develop ***an infrastructure to support the healthy development of children to ensure that they are ready for school by age five***. Two major county-wide initiatives created to support this goal are the Healthy Start Home Visiting Program and the Child Abuse and Neglect Network Project.

Healthy Start Home Visiting Program

Recently recognized by and awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Healthy Start Home Visiting Program of Palm Beach County is the result of a unique effort among funders and providers to develop a system that provides prenatal and postnatal support and prevention services to families. The system is predicated on interagency collaboration and cooperation, to provide a level of broad-based care available to all women and their families. The goal of the program is to give all children born in Palm Beach County the healthiest start possible. Key features of the program are:

- Every new mother giving birth at St. Mary's and Good Samaritan Hospitals is offered a visit by a nurse within two weeks after they return home from the hospital.
- Through care coordination provided by eight not-for-profit agencies, families that determined to be in need of additional support/care are informed about and linked to community and support services they may want or need.
- A "bank" of funds (with multiple funders) created to pay for services not covered by insurance or Medicaid

Through this program, we are hoping to improve pregnancy outcomes, increase parenting skills, promote prevention and early identification of child abuse or neglect, make referrals for children with developmental delays and improve infant/child health by encouraging parents to begin immunizations and schedule regular medical appointments for their child.

Child Abuse & Neglect Network Project

The Child Abuse & Neglect Network Project is the culmination of two years of study and planning by both public funders and private service providers. The project restructures how services are delivered, funded and monitored. Key features of the project are:

- A system of short-term shelters managed by a private not-for-profit agency
- A redesigned system that requires collaboration between the Florida Department of Children and Families and not-for-profit agencies in conducting investigations of child abuse or neglect
- Family care coordination services through a private not-for-profit agency and family choice for family support services
- A "bank" of funds created to pay for services not covered by insurance or Medicaid

Like the Healthy Start Home Visiting Program, the Child Abuse and Neglect Network Project also restructures how services are delivered, funded and monitored. CSC has worked closely with both public and private funders/organizations to ensure that these and other initiatives were true partnerships

JWB in Pinellas County is also committed to the development of systems that focus on the strengths of individuals, families and communities and provide the necessary supports to enhance capabilities. As a result of cooperative efforts involving the public sector, the private sector and

the community at-large, services are preventative, asset-based, community driven, efficient and effective. Coordinated efforts to improve outcomes for children, families and communities in Pinellas County include Healthy Families Pinellas and the Pinellas Early Childhood Collaborative.

Healthy Families Pinellas

Modeled after the highly successful Hawaii Healthy Start Program, Healthy Families Pinellas works with two major birthing centers to identify and serve high need families at the birth of their child. The core of the project is an intensive home visiting component that is provided by a collaboration of three local agencies, with the Pinellas Unit of the Department of Health as the lead agency, in order to: improve family functioning, promote positive parenting, promote positive child development, prevent child abuse and neglect and to provide linkages to medical, educational and social resources. In addition, Healthy Families Pinellas cooperates with several community agencies to address specific needs expressed by families.

The program, which began in 1992 and was awarded an expansion grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, includes:

- Universal screening from a geographically defined area.
- Use of a standardized needs assessment protocol
- Promoting family choice by offering services on a voluntary basis
- Comprehensive early intervention and home-based family support services until the child is five years old.
- A third-party evaluation component was put in place from the outset of the project and includes the tracking of children in elementary grades.

Healthy Families Pinellas demonstrates that a comprehensive, coordinated effort is the most effective way to ensure that children receive the best start in life. Since its inception, less than 2% of these high-need families have been involved in confirmed abuse and/or neglect reports and 95% were in compliance with medical visits and immunizations. Most importantly, these families are given the support necessary to take the lead in raising healthy, safe and secure children.

Pinellas Early Childhood Collaborative (PECC)

The mission of the PECC is to enhance and improve the planning and delivery of early education and care. For the last five years, families with young children in Pinellas County have been the beneficiaries of a streamlined system that has been awarded a *Success by Six* contract from the United Way of Florida.

The primary goals of this joint effort between major funders and providers are:

- To coordinate efforts to provide a seamless system of delivery.

- To increase the number of high quality early education and care programs.
- To support the coordination of advocacy efforts.
- To increase the professionalism of early education and care providers, thereby improving the quality of programs.
- To encourage coordination and collaborative efforts in the early education and care system.

These goals are accomplished by collecting and analyzing data in order to develop programs that are responsive to the needs of the community; providing training opportunities to providers; monitoring programs for quality; and providing a unified system of entry for children with special needs and subsidized care recipients. Plans are currently underway to enhance the collaboration between Healthy Families Pinellas, the county’s Healthy Start Program, and PECC to further strengthen the service delivery system. An interlocal agreement between the JWB, Pinellas County School Board, and the Florida Department of Children and Families was established pursuant to statutory authority for cooperative intergovernmental relations to support the work of the PECC.

In addition, both CSC and JWB work closely with our partners in the areas of children’s health insurance, juvenile justice, the school systems, and overall family self-sufficiency. One excellent example is the Florida KidCare program.

Florida KidCare

Both Pinellas and Palm Beach Counties have model *Florida KidCare* programs. KidCare provides low-cost health insurance to children without health insurance coverage. It is aimed primarily at families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (that translates to about \$32,000 a year for a family of four); however there are slots available to families with higher incomes.

KidCare is actually four programs: Medicaid, MediKids; Healthy Kids; and Children’s Medical Services, which is only for children with special health care needs.

- Families who are eligible for Medicaid pay nothing.
- Families whose income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level and are found eligible for one of the other three programs, pay \$15 per month for all of the children in their family.
- Families whose income in more than 200% of the federal poverty level, pay the full price of the insurance premium – or \$63 per child, per month.

It is especially noteworthy that families only have to fill out one application. Florida Healthy Kids in Tallahassee reviews the application and determines which program the family is eligible for. There is no separate application for Medicaid or any of the other programs.

CSC and JWB work with their partners, funded programs and other organizations to ensure that families are made aware of this important program.

Many more existing examples of collaborative initiatives are included in the Attachments to this “Expression of Interest.”

Advocate for “Best Practices”

JWB and CSC’s staff are continually reviewing, developing and implementing model systems and programs. One example is the implementation of a developmental stage funding focus at the CSC in Palm Beach County, which supports a child moving successfully through each developmental stage of childhood. Included with this transmittal is a chart that highlights the developmental stage funding focus.

JWB is currently implementing A.S.S.E.T. (Agency Self-Study Tool), a standards-based, comprehensive review process for funded programs. A.S.S.E.T. integrates the concepts of quality improvement and public accountability, the incorporation of strengths-based approaches into program design and implementation, and the sharing of responsibility for results-based outcomes.

Both CSC and JWB have extensive training programs designed to build the capacity of community providers to ensure best practices. Training at both of these CSC’s has included national experts that have developed model programs and cutting edge approaches. We are also continuously looking at other national models that have achieved positive results for children and families, for possible replication. We believe that, *en toto*, the information and practical knowledge realized through our work, the systems developed and implemented, and the outcomes achieved, will prove to be extremely valuable for the field of child development in the United States.

Evaluator

CSC and JWB are not only funders, planners, and catalysts for county-wide initiatives. Both organizations incorporate a comprehensive outcome-based approach to program evaluation that is conducted at two levels:

- 1. Systems Impact Evaluation***

This level is designed to determine if the overall array of services in the community is achieving the desired results.

- 2. Program-specific Outcome Evaluations***

Evaluations are also conducted for each funded program to determine if it is achieving its goals and targeted outcomes.

Programs may be expanded, redesigned, or eliminated, based on the data gathered from evaluations at either level. Overall results within each of these counties may be impacted by other funders and programs (including state and federally funded programs). Accordingly, we find it imperative to work as closely as possible with all institutions at each level of government, as well as within our respective communities, to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

We believe that this total program and system evaluation approach is unique among funders of programs serving children and families and will yield valuable new information both for the field of child development policy and funders of health and social service programs nationally.

Central to CSC's and JWB's direction and focus is a basic philosophy that **investment in an infrastructure for children now will result in major dividends to our community and society in the future.**

Data Management

The success of the systems transformations in Pinellas and Palm Beach County hinges on the sharing of information among a complex network of agencies, public and private service providers, system evaluators, funders and the state and federal government. An effective data management system is essential to assuring that delivery systems are seamless and provide for an efficient evaluation process.

SAMIS

SAMIS, the Services Activities and Management Information System is central to coordinated service delivery in Pinellas County. SAMIS, currently in the pilot stage, is a Web-based data collection system designed for the JWB to collect, manage and analyze the data from the community's strategic action plan.

The system was designed with input from community service providers. Because of SAMIS, data collection and reporting is simplified, paperless and more accurate. Consequently, JWB staff has more time to focus on implementing the strategic plan, evaluating results and assisting programs and providers are able to more effectively serve clients.

Integrated Data Base

In Palm Beach County, CSC is currently interviewing potential consultants to develop an integrated database. Like Pinellas, CSC and community partners require a system that will benefit the client by improving service provision; the provider by being using friendly, comprehensive and compatible with other systems; and the researcher by providing a platform for the collection of quantitative data. In short, it must comprehensively meet the needs of Palm Beach County.

The CSC State of the Child of Palm Beach County & JWB's Pinellas Profile

Both CSC and JWB have published/disseminated annual progress reports (which have served as substantive “report cards”) regarding the state of children and families, including indicators of well-being. The *State of the Child in Palm Beach County* and *JWB’s Pinellas Profile* have annually reviewed key areas such as health, child care, child abuse and neglect, etc. Each area is thoroughly reviewed, with status, data, demographics, services and outcomes.

The *America’s Children 1998* report, prepared by the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics provides the most comprehensive information on indicators of child well-being in America. JWB and CSC, along with local partners, collect data on many of these same indicators. Future reports from both entities can include relevant national comparative data from the *America’s Children* report. Please see the enclosed copies of the most recent *State of the Child Reports* and the *JWB Pinellas Profile* for a more expansive explanation of their relevance locally and possibly nationally.

Intergovernmental Issues

We have followed the progress of the work being done at the federal level to address the significant intergovernmental issues/concerns we all need to focus on to achieve better results for children. We fully embrace the following strategies identified by intergovernmental working group, first initiated through the White House Policy Council and highlighted in *Partnerships for Stronger Families: Building Intergovernmental Partnerships to Improve Results for Children and Families* (The Policy Exchange, The Institute for Educational Leadership, 1997):

Improve Accountability for Results

Results must be well defined and measurable, and partners must agree on how they will reach them, in order to target resources to produce better results for families and children.

Strengthen Data and Information Systems

Federal, state and local governments must ensure that the data they produce are reliable and accurately reflect the conditions of children and families, and then ensure that these data are disseminated to those who need to use them. The federal government must also simplify ways that states and communities report on programs funded by multiple agencies so that comprehensive efforts are not constrained by requirements to produce inconsistent and overlapping data.

Streamline the Bureaucracy

Federal support for comprehensive approaches at the community level would reduce or eliminate multiple applications and reporting requirements, simplify federal waiver review processes, and allow communities to combine funding for administration and programs.

Increase Financing Flexibility

Communities need to be able to use federal funds as an important component of integrated local approaches. Congress could help by restructuring federal funding to

create incentives for communities to develop comprehensive prevention programs that achieve results. Long-term funding for programs is essential so that initiatives can sustain momentum and demonstrate results.

The local and state partners submitting this “Expression of Interest” share these priorities and are committed to working with you to implement them on an intergovernmental basis. The lead agencies, CSC and JWB, both share good working relationships with other county and state governmental entities.

In addition, there are natural linkages for our eventually working with the other Children’s Services Councils in Florida if the *Boost for Kids* initiative expands. The executive directors of the CSC’s meet on a regular basis to discuss common issues/concerns and to work collaboratively on areas such as proposed/pending state legislation and seeking to streamline and simplify state-to-local administrative funding and processes.

Issues/Concerns

The partners in this *Boost for Kids* “Expression of Interest,” recommend that the following objectives be considered in this initiative’s objective to cut red tape and increase flexibility:

- Allow for increased flexibility between federal streams.
- Allow for the integration of eligibility criterion across federal and state funded programs so that we may look at the whole family.
- Allow the flexibility to provide alternative services in a revenue-neutral manner within existing funding streams and programs.
- Establish better mechanisms of communication between different levels of government (sometimes it is difficult to get clear answers to important questions).
- Establish program and funding parameters that encourage the design of programs from the grassroots level – not programs that are “redesigned” simply to chase federal funding.

Specifically, some examples of particularly frustrating intergovernmental obstacles include the following:

- Family Preservation funding, through HHS, requires that a certain percent be spent on deep-end services. At the local level, we would like to have the flexibility to spend those funds on prevention.
- We would like the ability to use local funds to match Title IV.e. funding for services to children who are at-risk of entering the foster care and/or child welfare system. Currently, the state of Florida does not allow this flexibility and, currently, we do not have the flexibility at the local level to work directly with the federal government.

- Often we learn separately of interesting HUD programs that would connect with programs/initiatives from HHS. If possible, we would like to see greater coordination of these programs/cross-referencing at the federal level.
- Currently, a nursing visit to a newborn through our Healthy Start Home Visiting Program could be classified and billed under Medicaid for EPSDT. However, we are unable to do so.

Commitments of the Partnership

This partnership, which includes the two largest Children’s Services Councils in Florida, the Department of Health in Pinellas County and the Health Care District of Palm Beach County, and the Florida State Department of Children and Families (representing both regional districts), is firmly committed to working closely with all relevant agencies and organizations at the federal and state levels associated with the *Boost for Kids* initiative. This *Boost for Kids* proposed partnership is an example of this type of collaboration.

Specifically, already possessing readiness and substantial capacity, we will commit to:

- Using data to measure the progress and manage resources to improve child well-being
- Cut red tape, integrate or coordinate all appropriate services, and use current funding more effectively to achieve better results for children
- A long-range strategic plan and sustained effort to improve the well-being of children, youth and families within our communities

Based on our efforts to date, our leadership roles within our counties, our geographic locations in the fastest growing state in the nation, the very diverse populations that we serve and, finally, our firm commitment to the *Boost for Kids* goals, we believe that we are excellent candidates for a *Boost for Kids* Performance Partnership.

Included with this “Expression of Interest” are numerous attachments, which are specifically identified on a “List of Attachments.” These reports/documents are additional evidence of the readiness and willingness of this partnership to work with the *Boost for Kids* Program to ensure its success.