

**MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
2005-2008**

ACTION GROUP: LEAD SAFE ST. LOUIS

GOAL: ALL CHILDREN WILL BE LEAD SAFE (0-5 Thriving)

PREVENTION OF LEAD POISONING

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Children under the age of six are especially at risk to lead's harmful health effects, because their brains and central nervous system are still developing. Even low levels of lead exposure can result in reduced IQ, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, stunted growth, attention deficit disorders, impaired hearing and kidney damage.

St. Louis City has more than 95,000 housing units built prior to 1950. All 29 City ZIP Codes are designated High Risk by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS). In 2003 the City was ranked sixth in the nation for the total number of childhood lead poisonings. The 2005 screening prevalence rates were 9.1% at ≥ 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ and 1.6% at ≥ 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ for children under 6 years of age.

PRIORITIES:

- Universal and annual blood lead testing for all children under age 6
- Proactive remediation of lead risks in City homes and enforcement of applicable laws
- Educate homeowners, landlords, teachers and parents with children at risk
- Coordinate and align various lead initiatives

STEPS TAKEN

- City's focus shifted from treatment to prevention
- Creation of community partnerships and increased collaboration
- Established training program for staff and volunteers

RESULTS

- 2007 screening prevalence rates were 4.6% at ≥ 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$
- More than 76% of children tested had blood levels below 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ (compared to 52% in 2003)
- City Building Division completed a record 519 remediation projects

NEXT STEPS

- Continue building remediation
- Continue outreach to parents, physician and community partners for annual testing

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ACTION GROUP: AFTER SCHOOL FOR ALL PARTNERSHIP (ASAP)

GOALS: All Children Meeting Health & Physical Standards for Developmental Age (Thriving)

All Children Have Positive Self Awareness (Connecting)

All Children Develop the Soft Skills Necessary for Work and Life (Working)

**All Children Accept Rules and Social Boundaries (Leading)
(6-13)**

QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL FOR ALL

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Less than 10% of children ages five to 13 have access to everyday, quality after school programs in St. Louis City, while the national average is 22%.

PRIORITIES:

In order to develop a coordinated system of high quality, non-school hour programs that will provide every child by 2010, ASAP will:

- 1) Develop program slots and ensure equitable distribution
- 2) Assess quality through common objective measures and use of best practices
- 3) Develop a common information and data collection system to verify program outcomes and to support planning, decision making, investments, program development, evaluation and advocacy
- 4) Build support for increased investment from multiple sectors of the Greater St. Louis community
- 5) Ensure adequate financial resources -- public, private, state, local and national

STEPS TAKEN

- Several city-wide summits that resulted in a strategic plan
- St. Louis For Kids and ARCHS signed MOU to create ASAP management team
- Mental Health Board beta tested standards developed by St. Louis For Kids in first round of new after school grants with St. Louis Public Schools

RESULTS

- City, SLPS, philanthropic and business communities met State's match for the initial \$800,000. This leveraged additional dollars for a total \$3.2 million for new after school seats.
- Funding secured for 3 years
- Year 1 goal of 1,000 new seats surpassed for a total of 2,883 new seats
- All sites are licensed

NEXT STEPS

- Continue professional development
- Bid for 2008-09
- Focus on full enrollment

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ACTION GROUP: EARLY CHILDHOOD SUCCESS

**Goals: All Young Children Ready to Learn (Learning)
All Young Children will be in Quality Child Care (Connecting)
(0-6)**

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Missouri's income eligibility level for subsidized child care is the worst in the nation. To qualify for assistance, families can make no more than 110% of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$18,216 for a family of three. Parents earning just above this level are unable to afford quality, licensed care that is critical to a child's development and safety and often place their children in sub-standard care. Low-income parents who receive assistance for child care are more likely to stay employed and achieve economic stability. Additionally, children in quality settings are better prepared for kindergarten, have better long-term educational outcomes and earn more income as adults.

PRIORITIES:

- Increase access to quality childcare by raising the maximum income level for subsidy eligibility to 130% FPL and implementing a reduced proportionate rate between 131% FPL and 185% FPL

STEPS TAKEN

- Build a majority of Missouri Legislators willing to support the increase
- Work with child advocates across the state

RESULTS

- Bills introduced in the 2006, 2007 and 2008 General Assembly; however they did not pass
- Governor appropriated additional money for FY08 to move the eligibility rate to 127% and for families in transition to 139% FPL. Families are in transition when they are no longer eligible for full subsidy due to a pay increase. This is an improvement from 108% FPL, with no provisions for families in transition.

NEXT STEPS

- Seek proposed legislation for 2009
- Continue to build state-wide coalition
- Connect to other early childhood efforts

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REIMBURSEMENT RATE

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Child care providers that care for children receiving subsidies are reimbursed at only half the market rate of care even though the federal government suggests a reimbursement rate equal to the 75th percentile of the market rate. The market rate of care for a four year-old in St. Louis is \$660 a month. The State of Missouri will reimburse the provider \$330 a month. This creates multiple barriers to accessing quality, licensed child care.

PRIORITIES:

- Increase access to quality child care by increasing the amount of subsidy reimbursement payments to licensed providers by the State of Missouri

STEPS TAKEN

- Worked with Department of Social Services to create a differential between licensed and registered providers

RESULTS

- 5% base rate increase for licensed and regulated (church-based), first rate increase since 1991

NEXT STEPS

- Seek additional appropriations in 2009 General Assembly

STREAMLINE CITY LICENSING PROCESS

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Center-based and home-based licensed child care programs are regulated to comply with a comprehensive set of specific health, safety and quality standards. Child care homes in the City of St. Louis face multiple barriers to obtaining licensure, thereby dissuading providers from becoming licensed.

PRIORITIES:

Streamline the child care licensing regulation process in the City of St. Louis by working with the Building Division, Business Assistance Center and Board of Aldermen.

STEPS TAKEN

- Child Day Care Association convened key stakeholders to outline barriers and strategies to overcome them

RESULTS

- Agreement among key City offices on the process toward licensing

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- CDCA produced brochure to assist potential providers

NEXT STEPS

- Meet with individual Alderman to stress the need for additional licensed child care

PARENTS AS TEACHER (PAT) SATURATION RATE

BACKGROUND/ PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Parent Educators in the City of St. Louis face unique challenges because they serve families in very high needs neighborhoods. For various reasons, these families are reluctant to allow Parent Educators into their homes. Less than 20% of the eligible families in St. Louis participate in PAT (e.g. whereas in Kirkwood, MO, participation rate is 75%).

PRIORITIES:

- Increase the number of Parent Educators
- Change the funding for PAT visits
- Encourage businesses to use resources and influences to increase public visibility of Parents As Teachers

STEPS TAKEN

- Met with key business and philanthropic groups to enlist resources for additional Parent Educators
- Met with DESE and PAT National Center about possible changes in funding (fund all families as "teens" where group meetings = home visits)

RESULTS

- While there was private support for the concept, changes in administration has made it difficult to secure funding for Parent Educators
- Changes in DESE administration of PAT prevented pilot funding from moving forward

NEXT STEPS

- SLPS strategic plan and Superintendent search are underway

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

In St. Louis, there is little strategic focus on ensuring that adequate provision is made for meeting early developmental needs of children. Providing for such needs would

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ensure that more children are put on a positive life trajectory and it would spur economic development and improve the quality of life in the St. Louis area.

PRIORITIES:

- Increase public awareness and citizen engagement in early childhood education through the Invest in Kids campaign, specifically targeting a higher level of involvement from business and civic sectors.

STEPS TAKEN

- Employers Invest In Kids Tool-Kit
- Year long series of articles in Commerce Magazine focusing on the return on investment of early childhood
- 6,000 bumper stickers distributed
- Children's Summit 2005 focused on Invest in Kids theme
- Policy Briefing at RCGA on investing in early childhood

RESULTS

- Higher awareness of the value in investing in children
- Link between early childhood and economic development

NEXT STEPS

- Bumper stickers on all city vehicles
- Briefing sessions with Gubernatorial candidates

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ACTION GROUP: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

**GOAL: All Young Children will be Free of Abuse and Neglect
(Thriving and Connecting)**

All Children Have Positive Self Awareness (Connecting)

**All Young People Have a Sense of Independence as Well as Positive
Relationships with Those Around Them**

FAMILY SUPPORT TEAMS

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Students identified by schools as having attendance, learning or behavior difficulties often experience difficulties in their home environment making them at risk of child abuse and/or neglect. Interventions focusing on the child are often unsuccessful in dealing with the root cause of the symptoms manifested in the classroom. Schools with Family Support Teams (FST) can flag problems and help families connect with holistic support needed to deal with complex issues. FST bring together formal and informal partners working with a family to produce an action plan that is strengths-based, individualized to the families needs and has family support and buy-in.

RECOMMENDATION:

SLPS identify at least two schools to pilot FST in the 2006-2007 school year. By 2010, Family Support Teams are method in which schools partner with community to support vulnerable children and families.

RESULTS

- Improving the quality and quantity of team practice meetings (FST, TDM, PPRT) – including a pilot with St. Louis Public Schools and the continued diversion of children from out-of-home care
- Continued building community partnerships including increasing the services provided to families through the visitation centers (St. James Center and Nana's House). There were 857 Family and Child visits in 2007.

NEXT STEPS

- See below

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

St. Louis City Children's Division receives over 5,000 reports per year child abuse and neglect hotline calls, newborn crisis assessments and letter referrals. Increasing public awareness and community-based programming that provides education and support for families are two key components of comprehensive child abuse and neglect prevention strategies. The Blue Ribbon Campaign, often associated with Child Abuse Prevention Month activities in April, is an effective tool for increasing public awareness about child

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abuse and neglect and coordinating community-based events geared toward prevention efforts.

PRIORITIES:

Increase human and financial resources to coordinate, promote and implement Blue Ribbon Campaign events and activities in City of St. Louis.

STEPS TAKEN

Annual Blue Ribbon events, with the last at City Hall, had over 200 people in attendance.

RESULTS

- Launching a new website – www.stlfamilycommunity.org
- Broadening the scope and impact of the Strengthening Families Initiative in St. Louis – leveraging additional dollars and resources, doubling the number of child care centers in the pilot and expanding the scope beyond early care settings to include all child serving agencies
- Hosting successful Blue Ribbon events and expanding impact through partnerships with Cardinal's Care and St. Louis Public Schools

NEXT STEPS

New Priorities

- See below

FOSTER FAMILIES

BACKGROUND /PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Each month, 29 St. Louis City children enter foster care system due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Most older children (average age 11 ½) in system are harder to place in foster and adoptive homes due to emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges. As a result, children remain in foster care for an average of 49 months - more than double the state and national average. The number of youth over age 11 greatly exceeds the homes available. Over 30% of all youth in care live in a residential group home instead of a family setting.

PRIORITIES

- Increase the number of Foster Care families in the City of St. Louis
- Target Family Reunification when possible

RESULTS

- The nearly 3,000 St. Louis City children in foster care three years ago was reduced to 1,287 due to "best practices" enacted by St. Louis City Children's Division and Family Courts.

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- Continued the downward trend in the placement of children in congregate care. As of March 2008, only 6 foster children 10 years and younger were in congregate care.
- Increased collaboration to expand recruitment and training opportunities for foster parents.
- Trained workers help bring resource parents and birth parents together to improve outcomes for children.

NEXT STEPS

New Priorities

- Increase Engagement and Participation: To broaden active engagement and participation of parents and their supports, neighbors, grassroots community partners and other key stakeholders at all levels of the Partnership to strengthen families
- Racial disproportionality and disparity: to raise awareness, promote dialogue and explore solutions to racial disproportionality, disparity and other inequities facing families and children served by individual agencies and the child welfare system as a whole

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ACTION GROUP: Quality Public K-12 Education

**GOALS: All Children Developing Basic Skills and Competencies (Learning 6-13)
All Young People are Fully Prepared for Higher Education of Work
(Learning 14-19)**

STRONG GOVERNANCE

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

St. Louis Public Schools was unaccredited in 1998. As a result of the Desegregation Case Settlement, the District was awarded a provisional accreditation. Years of declining enrollment and poor fiscal management led the district into a financial crisis in 2003 that resulted in major cuts, which continue to this day. The district was declared unaccredited June 15, 2007 and is now under the supervision of the Special Administrative Board.

PRIORITIES:

- Board of Education with high expectations of the employees and students that can hold the administration accountable and be stewards of the taxpayer's money

STEPS TAKEN

- A common platform was established by the St. Louis Education Coalition to bring about serious reform of the governance and management of St. Louis Board of Education. Four candidates were elected to implement the platform. A superintendent was hired based on the platform.
- Anti-reform/union candidates became a majority again in 2006 and dismissed the superintendent

RESULTS

- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education established the Special Administrative Board (SAB)

NEXT STEPS

- SAB is creating a strategic plan and is hiring a new superintendent

CHOICE OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Since 2003, SLPS has lost nearly 20,000 students. At least 11,000 children have left the city and the balance has enrolled in public charter schools. Tuition for Catholic schools in the City has increased as much as 13% in a year. Families that would otherwise choose to live in the City do not because of the schools.

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PRIORITIES:

Create quality public and private school options for children in the City of St. Louis

STEPS TAKEN

- Issued RFP for quality public charter schools to open in St. Louis
- Created Mayor's Charter School Advisory Board to review applications
- Today and Tomorrow Foundation raised \$12 million for 600 K-4 scholarships
- Incarnate Word Foundation supported development of enrollment management programs in all willing City Catholic Schools

RESULTS

- One charter application to the Mayor; three in full application status
- Partnering with Missouri Public Charter School Association for capacity building program of applicants
- 280 students applied for scholarships
- St. John's High School closed June 2008

NEXT STEPS

- Work with developers to find buildings for charter schools (SLPS has 100 year deed restriction)
- Work with potential sponsors and National Association of Charter School Authorizers to establish quality sponsoring programs of Mayor endorsed charters
- Re-issue RFP

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**ACTION GROUP: RE-ENGAGE DISCONNECTED (OUT OF SCHOOL
AND WORK) YOUTH**

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Dropping out of high school is related to a number of negative outcomes, such as loss of income, the difficulty to develop wealth, higher unemployment rates, decline of health and higher incarceration rates. Close to 60% eventually earn a high school credential – usually a GED. Almost half of the dropouts who attain a secondary credential later enroll in a two-year or four-year college. However, only about 10% eventually earn a degree.

CONNECT SERVICES VIA 2-1-1

PRIORITIES:

Identify, catalog and align existing services for out-of-school youth. Build knowledge of available resources among and between service providers. Create strategies to fill gaps in services. Identify how services are accessed.

STEPS TAKEN

- Building Missouri's 2-1-1 database
- Increase access to 2-1-1 via cell phone

RESULTS

- AT&T is completing modifications to its cell phone services to allow 2-1-1

NEXT STEPS

- Populate Missouri's 2-1-1 database, particularly with youth-specific services
- Create marketing and communication plan to connect teens to 2-1-1 service system

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

PRIORITIES: Engage youth in creating solutions so they can successfully complete school, go to work and get involved in community problem-solving

STEPS TAKEN

- Held Youth Summit in January 2008
- Applied to America's Promise for Dropout Summit Grant

RESULTS

- St. Louis has been selected as an AP City

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NEXT STEPS

- Conduct three youth summits in next 18 months

ONE STOP HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION CENTER

PRIORITIES: Create a collaborative system across community groups and city, school and state agencies to respond to the needs of out-of-school youth and their families

STEPS TAKEN

- Supporting The SPOT

RESULTS

- The SPOT opens August 2008

NEXT STEPS

- Link with additional services (e.g., legal, employment)
- Monitor for results. If possible, replicate model in City Recreation Centers.