

Children's Defense Fund–Minnesota's 2012 Legislative Priorities

Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota (CDF-MN) is advocating for legislation during the 2012 Legislative Session to improve the well-being of children most at risk of developmental delays and poor outcomes. Many young children in Minnesota are experiencing toxic levels of stress that will harm their developing brains if unaddressed. Their capacity to develop to their full potential and become productive adults will be seriously compromised if we do not reduce the extreme adversity in their lives and address its effects. Fortunately, these poor outcomes can be avoided. Early interventions can have a tremendous positive impact on a child's development, improving their potential to fully experience the joys of childhood while mastering the skills and building the knowledge necessary to excel as Minnesota's future parents, workers, and leaders. Investing today in the youngest Minnesotans is a smart, compassionate and cost-effective decision to ensure a brighter tomorrow for all Minnesotans.

1. Enhance access to early intervention services for infants and toddlers at risk of developmental delays because of abuse or neglect.

HOW: Ensure infants and toddlers reported for abuse or neglect are referred for early intervention screening.

House File 1202: Greiling, Abeler, Mack, Hosch, Slawik, Simon, Peterson, S.

Senate File 1165: Nienow, Olson

2. Increase attention to the well-being of children involved in the child protection system.

HOW: Improve the use of existing information to better focus on children's well-being; require state agencies that have policies and programs touching the lives of children to connect information and outcomes at the individual child case planning level and state/county/tribal level.

House File 1203: Lanning, Abeler, Gottwalt, Slawik, Slocum, Allen

Senate File 2338: Hayden, Sheran, Torres Ray, Stumpf, Bonoff

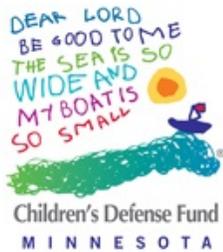
3. Address the well-being of homeless and formerly homeless children while working to end child homelessness.

HOW: Expand early intervention eligibility to infants and toddlers who are homeless or formerly homeless. Require the Interagency Coordination on Homelessness to develop a statewide plan (Visible Child Plan) to improve the well-being of homeless children.

House File 2698: Abeler, Clark, Gunther, Slawik, McFarlane, Mariani, Lanning, Barrett, Huntley, Hosch, Murphy, E., Fritz, Champion, Slocum, Moran, Paymar

Senate File 2352: Nienow, Lillie, Daley, Hayden, Stumpf

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4. Reduce the incidence of maternal depression and its impact on children.

HOW: Apply a two-generational approach to early childhood and maternal depression that ensures access to services for the identification and treatment of maternal depression, and early childhood services.

House File 2911: Greiling, Murphy, E., Huntley, Hosch, Fritz, Slocum

Senate File 2585: Sheran, McGuire, Stumpf

House File 2980: Mack

5. Strengthen the economic security of children, their families and Minnesota.

HOW: Improve the financial stability of families by increasing the state minimum wage, fully funding and expanding eligibility for child care, and creating a state version of the Child Tax Credit.

House File 3043: Hortman

Senate File xxxx:

6. Improve the well-being of children in families receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) assistance.

HOW: Increase attention to children in families receiving MFIP assistance at risk of developmental delays by providing parents with information about the availability and benefits of early childhood resources, counting parental attendance at early childhood activities as work activity, renaming the MFIP program the Minnesota Children and Family Investment Program, and creating a task force to review the adequacy of state programs and tax policies in helping families move to economic security.

House File 2954: Hosch, Murphy, E., Huntley, Fritz, Slawik, Slocum

Senate File 2584: Marty, Lourey

For more information on CDF-MN's legislative proposals, please contact Alexandra Fitzsimmons, CDF-MN's Legislative Affairs and Advocacy Director, at 651-855-1178 or fitzsimmons@cdf-mn.org.