



2021 ADVOCACY AGENDA

We all benefit when children and families thrive. At Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, we believe everyone has a role to play in ensuring every child has a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. **COVID-19 has hit Minnesota households with children harder than those without and public programs and policies have been an even more critical bridge to family economic stability — benefitting children across the state.**

As COVID has upended our communities and families, Minnesota state and local leaders have responded with urgency and creativity. We at CDF-MN are ready to work with policymakers to continue the extraordinary leadership and vital investments in families necessary to meet this moment in the following ways and more.

LEAD

INCREASING FLEXIBILITY, COORDINATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Across Minnesota's working family supports, the crisis has revealed new ways of operating that better support children and families. **CDF MN will lead in partnership with advocates, state and federal policymakers and administrators to permanently adopt COVID innovations that make public programs work better for families.**



EXPANDING ACCESS TO PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Access to paid leave to care for oneself or a family member is more important than ever, yet 73% of Minnesotans with children that were not working in late August were receiving no pay. **CDF-MN will lead, in coalition, to advance a state Paid Family and Medical Leave social insurance program that addresses racial and geographic economic and health disparities.**



BUILDING A CHILD CARE SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES HIGH QUALITY CARE TO ALL

A precarious child care system with shortages before the pandemic has been kept on life-support by increased emergency state and federal funding. **CDF-MN will lead efforts to align advocates around a transformation of the early care and education financing system that includes the permanent, new investments needed for a quality, affordable child care system.**



PARTNER

CREATING A MORE EQUITABLE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEM

An estimated 341,000 Minnesotans with children have benefitted from Unemployment Insurance (UI) since March, and another 64,000 applied but were unable to access the program; youth who paid into the system and who use earnings to support themselves and their families have also been excluded. **CDF-MN will partner to update Minnesota's UI system to better serve working youth and families left behind.**



STRENGTHENING THE MINNESOTA FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

At its core the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) supports children, with more than 63,900 receiving MFIP support as of August. While 7 in 10 recipients is a child, the program often focuses on adult activities at the expense of children and has languished for decades with very limited new investments or innovation. **CDF MN will partner with state and federal policymakers to continue and expand vital income support to children that have been affected the most by racial injustice and the combined public health and economic fall-out of COVID-19.**



ENSURING AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY FROM REMOTE LEARNING

Remote learning has accelerated educational disparities, with learning loss and social emotional consequences stretching into the future. **CDF-MN and its Freedom Schools® program will partner to address inequities in discipline (including suspensions) and learning loss through policy change and culturally relevant out-of-school and in-school opportunities.**



SUPPORT

EXPANDING HEALTH COVERAGE AND ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Continuous health insurance coverage with robust mental health supports for new moms and children has never been more important. Medical Assistance and the Children's Health Insurance Program cover 29,572 births and 493,708 Minnesota children each year. **CDF-MN will support coalition efforts to expand automatic Medicaid coverage for new mothers for one year postpartum, reduce barriers to child health care access and ramp up mental health supports for parents and children.**



ADVANCING FOOD ACCESS TO ENSURE NO CHILD GOES HUNGRY

Minnesotans with children are twice as likely as those without children to report food insufficiency within the past 7 days. **CDF-MN will support coalition campaigns to remove school meal barriers, build on pandemic EBT and other COVID innovations and increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) access.**



KEEPING KIDS AND FAMILIES IN STABLE HOUSING

Housing assistance and eviction moratoriums are among the policies that have helped mitigate homelessness and other potential unstable housing harms for children. **CDF-MN will support a continuation of these policies and a variety of approaches to protect children from homelessness and housing instability as Minnesota recovers from the pandemic and continues to address the long-standing effects of system racism on housing access.**



CREATING BUDGETS THAT MOVE MINNESOTA FAMILIES FORWARD

In 2021, CDF-MN supports state and federal level budgets designed to meet needs, not revenue limitations, and a progressive tax structure that opens the door to the middle class. **During a time of uneven economic recovery, CDF-MN will support (1) efforts to address COVID impacts through emergency relief; (2) targeted new, ongoing investments in family economic security; and (3) maintenance of critical programs and tax credits that serve children and families.**



For more information, please contact

Debra Fitzpatrick, Policy and Legislative Affairs Director – Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota
dfitzpatrick@childrensdefense.org