

Missouri 2015 End of Session Report



Missouri's 2015 Legislative session ended May 15th with 151 bills passed. Please see below for a recap of bills impacting Missouri children and families. For more information above the bills/topic listed below, please contact Anne Silea at AnneS@lfcs.org.

CHILD WELFARE ISSUES

Many important measures to protect Missouri's children passed this year, including:

- Allowing the Office of the Child Advocate to review child welfare cases and make recommendations to improve policies and procedures (SB341)
- Requiring public and charter schools to post the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline # (SB341)
- Requiring internet safety to be included as part of any sex education curriculum (HB501).

There were numerous bills pertaining to the the state statute governing local Children's Service Funds that passed, including;

- A protection clause, prohibiting the state from 1) mandating fund expenditures or 2) adding any new services to the list of fundable services without going back to a vote of the people (SB 341 & HB1045). **Unfortunately this passed with an amendment exempting St. Louis County from these protections.**
- An omnibus education bill that included changes to the Children's Service Fund statute related to board structure and fund expenditures (HB42). The larger tenants of this bill deal with much needed reform to the school transfer system, however many advocates have expressed concerns about this bills ability to address the financial problems related to school transfers and stop schools from failing and displacing thousands of student. **The Governor may veto this bill.**

Adoption continues to be a hot topic at the Capitol; however no bills were passed this year.

- We worked with Rep McGaugh to file legislation to increase adult adoptees access to their original (un-amended) birth certificate as long as they had the consent of their birth parents (HB1112).
- We offered alternative language or opposed bills that would have stripped much needed protections for those involved (birth parents, adoptive parents and children) in the current adoption process (HB281, HB546, HB647).

Welfare Reform related to the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Program passed with serious repercussions for Missouri's vulnerable children (SB24).

- While there is always room for improvement to any policy, this bill made significant reductions to the safety net for Missouri's struggling families – cutting the present 60 month lifetime limit for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to 45 months. The immediate impact will take away the cash income of an estimated 9,500 Missourians. Of these, 6,310 are children and almost half of those are under the age of 5.

See "**Budget & Revenue**" for information regarding FY2016 Funding for Child Welfare programs.

CHILD CARE ISSUES

There were two important bills addressing the safety of children in child care settings that passed this year, including;

- Requiring licensed child care facilities to implement safe sleep practices for infants as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Department of Health and Senior Services (SB341).
- Requiring all public, private, and parochial day care centers, preschools, and nursery schools to notify parents (upon request), of whether there are children currently enrolled in or attending the facility who have not been immunized (SB341).

Important changes to Missouri’s Child Care Assistance Program were made this year.

Legislators approved an increase in the eligibility rates for the Child Care Assistance Program. Missouri currently provides a full benefit to families with incomes up to 123% of the federal poverty level and a partial benefit to families with incomes to 175% of the federal poverty level. The budget language would increase Missouri’s eligibility for the full benefit to 138% of the federal poverty and for the partial benefit to 215% of the federal poverty level.

See **“Budget & Revenue”** for information regarding FY2016 Funding for Child Care programs.

HEALTH CARE ISSUES

Several bills relating to the health of Missouri’s children were passed this year, including;

- Requiring e-cigarette products to be sold in child safe packaging (SB341).
- Requiring health plans to cover the diagnosis and treatment of eating disorders (SB145).

The MO HealthNet / Medicaid Delivery System was changed with an expansion of **“Managed Care” throughout the state (HB10)**. Previously Missouri offered two systems (fee for service and managed care). Managed care was designated in areas along the I-70 corridor and the rest of the state was fee for service. **There are concerns that managed care may not meet the needs of participants in rural areas where there are fewer provider options.**

Missouri Counties with MO HealthNet Managed Care



While Medicaid Expansion continued to be discussed at the Capitol this year, there was little movement legislatively. Under the federal Affordable Care Act, the federal government will pay the full cost of the expansion for 3 years, starting in 2014, and at least 90% of the cost thereafter. According to a report commissioned by the Missouri Hospital Association, the expansion would bring \$8.2 billion in federal investment to the state by 2020 to generate an additional \$9.6 billion in economic activity and create 24,000 new jobs in the health care sector alone. It is estimated that Medicaid Expansion will expand health care access to 300,000 Missourians.

See **“Budget & Revenue”** for information regarding FY2016 Funding for Health Care programs.

At the Federal Level – the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was renewed for two years.

CHIP is a bipartisan health care plan created 17 years ago that covers children in working families who don’t have access to coverage through their parents’ employer. Without this extension close to 38,000 Missouri children would have lost their insurance and the newly passed “Show Me Healthy Babies” program to cover pregnant women would have ended. All nine of Missouri’s federal delegation voted in support of the extension.

BUDGET & REVENUE ISSUES

The Legislature passed a Fiscal Year 2016 budget (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016) that was signed by the governor without any meaningful vetoes or withholds.

This year's budget was hotly debated at the Capitol as the House and Senate offered differing processes (block grant vs line item funding) as well as different amounts for health, mental health and social services. Significant outcry about the proposed cuts prevented the majority of reductions, and the state budget was approved with a number of improvements including;

- A 3% rate increase for providers within the Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health and Department of Health. This includes Home and Community Based service providers, Children's services, Child Care providers and MO HealthNet providers.
- \$3.5 million in general revenue and \$13.672 million in total funding was provided to establish the Show Me Healthy Babies program. This program was created during the 2014 session but was not funded.
- An increase in eligibility rates for child care assistance. Missouri currently provides a full benefit to families with incomes up to 123% of the federal poverty level and a partial benefit to families with incomes to 175% of the federal poverty level. The budget language would increase Missouri's eligibility for the full benefit to 138% of the federal poverty and for the partial benefit to 215% of the federal poverty level. **It is not clear if the budget actually includes sufficient funding for these eligibility increases.**
- An increase of \$84 million in state aid to local K-12 schools.
- An increase of \$2.462 million for Parents-As-Teachers early intervention program.
- \$14.9 million was included to fund Dental Services for Medicaid adults who do not currently receive them.



*For more information about these issues or LFCS Advocacy
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