


Michigan's Children: Changing Outcomes for Kids and Families

April 7, 2010
Child Welfare Services 6th Annual Training
Voices Leadership Training
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Becoming a Voice For Your Cause

- Moving concerns into ACTION
- Using influence for CHANGE
- Changing Attitudes and Behavior

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Why Get Involved/Why Advocacy

- You Can
 - You already have the skills you need
 - It doesn't take that many of us
- You Should
 - There are things we want changed
 - Democracy=Responsibility
 - Decision-makers REALLY need our help

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How do we make change?

- Get the attention of the people who can make the change you want
- Talk to Decision-Makers
 - A concern that you have about your life
 - A concern that you have about their work
- Talk to Other People
 - About an issue
 - About policy-maker's views or positions
 - About how to act

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- **Works Directly With Policy Makers**
 - Guided by Legislative Priorities
 - Individually and in Partnership
- **Provides Tools for Other Advocates**
 - Information
 - Training
 - Opportunity

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What You Need to Know

- WHAT we are talking about – the issues
- WHO can give us what we want – the players
- WHEN to target them – the process
- HOW to get them to listen – the message

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Know the Issues

- We Know the Issues
- We Are Experts in Life and Work
- Solution as important as the problem

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Michigan's Context

- Good News! Everybody is for kids
- Good News! We know what to do
- Bad News! The state is broke
- Bad News! Limited political will to change the situation

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Michigan's Track Record

- Poverty Increases=Support Reduced
- Abuse/Neglect Rises=Prevention Cut
- Early Childhood Evidence=Cut
- Medicaid Increases=Access Threatened
- Education Key=Support Cut

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Michigan's Reality

- Michigan Has Huge and Growing Budget Problems. Fastest growing areas:
 - Corrections and Medicaid – Ill-served Children, Youth and Families Contribute to Both, Costing the State \$\$
 - Ill-prepared Youth Cause the State To Lose \$\$
- Michigan Doesn't Have Adequate Strategies to Protect Children, Families and Communities.



Why the Disconnect?

- Lots of competition for fewer dollars
- Ideology about the role of government
- Policy makers don't hear about issues of concern

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Current Progress

- Task Force on Over-representation of Children of Color
- Children's Rights Lawsuit Settlement
 - Focus on Foster Care and Permanency
 - Threatens Prevention and Poverty Programs
- Child Welfare Improvement Task Force
 - Stalled With Budget Retraction
 - Contrary to Settlement Agreement
- Child and Family Service Review Process
- Federal Fostering Connections Act



Know the Players

- Who can make the change
- What influences them
- Who Do We Know
- Who Do We Need

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Know the Process

- Laws, ordinances or resolutions
- Budgets
- Rules and Regulations

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Civics 101

- The Clock is Ticking – Session
- Always Looking for a Majority
- Two-party System – Majority in Power
- Bi-Cameral Legislature
 - The Senate – 38/20
 - The House of Representatives – 110/56
- The Governor

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Where Do We Fit?

- Generate an idea
- Help write it down
- Get it discussed by policy makers
- Talk to committee members
- Make sure your elected officials support it
- Convince the administration to support it

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How Do WE Get Involved: Advocacy From The Inside

- TELLING OTHERS WHAT YOU KNOW
- Providing Background/History
- Telling Stories
- Collecting and Interpreting Statistics
- Evaluating Impact of Changes
 - Is a Policy A Good Idea
 - Is a Program Good Use of Tax Dollars
 - Is a Policy Likely To Be Supported

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Taking Action

- On Your Own Time
 - Most People Aren't Paid To Advocate
 - Do You Know Who You Know Exercise
- Through Groups or Coalition Membership
 - You Can Even Be Unlisted Members
 - You Already Belong to Them
- Through Local, State or Federal Advocacy Groups
 - MI's Children; MI Federation for Children and Families; Others?
- By Serving On Non-profit Agency Boards
- INVITING POLICY MAKERS TO YOUR PROGRAMS
 - This is providing information, not lobbying

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Next Steps

- Pick a Policy That Doesn't Work Well
- Describe The Problems
- How Could It Work Better – What Could Be a Solution
- How Could You Move Your Solution Forward

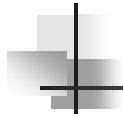
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What Did We Learn?

- Many Different Issues of Concern
- Many Different Solutions
- Many Different Actions To Be Taken

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