

**Palm Beach County's Children's Services Council,  
Early Learning Coalition and Healthy Beginnings Coalition**

***\*\*\*Background and Talking Points\*\*\****

**SUPPORT THE SAFETY OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN**

**Afterschool Funding** – Assure funds for afterschool programs are maintained and distributed statewide. Ensure that funding formulas and policies do not discourage Early Learning Coalitions from serving school age children.

**Background:** Afterschool programs do not have a dedicated funding source to maintain programs. Cuts to subsidized child care often force hard decisions about which children should be served. Increasingly the state and local coalitions are choosing to serve fewer school age children in afterschool programs.

**Summer Camp Personnel** - Implement fingerprinting screening checks for staff in overnight and full day summer camp programs to assure our children are safe.

**Background:** In Florida, summer camps are not required to be licensed and Level 2 background screenings (fingerprints or electronic scans that conduct a national criminal background check) are only required for camp owners/operators.

Discrepancies in requirements exist. If a summer camp cares for young children (pre-school), is run by a licensed child care center, or is a year-round after-school program licensed as a child care facility, then the laws for child care licensure apply – Level 2 background screenings are required in these instances.

The lack of Level 2 background screens for summer camp employees needlessly places the safety of thousands of children at undue risk. It is not sufficient that the safety of children only be protected during the school year or at child care facilities – summer camps should be safe as well and under the current system parents simply cannot be certain of this.

The Governor, the Florida Legislature, and the Department of Children and Families need to be proactive in protecting children in summer camps – before a tragedy occurs.

- 21 States and Puerto Rico require staff to receive criminal background screening for summer camp employees. States requiring background screens include Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, Texas, and New York. (American Camp Association, 2009)
- The American Camp Association, a national organization that provides membership and accreditation for summer camps, believes that camps should use multifaceted screening and hiring programs and supports the establishment of a comprehensive federal biometric (ex: fingerprint, retinal scan) based criminal background checking system that is reasonable in cost, timely in response, and uniform in availability. (American Camp Association, 2009)

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**Child Booster Seats** -Support a mandatory requirement that an approved child restraint device be used for children ages 4-8 while riding in motor vehicles.

**Background:** Child safety seats save lives. Motor vehicle accidents claim the lives of more Florida children over the age of 4 than any other causes and are a leading cause of injury, hospitalization and disability in children of all age groups. Many of the injuries are preventable if children are appropriately restrained, but Florida law only requires children through age 3 to have age appropriate restraints. Seatbelts designed to accommodate a large adult frame utilizing the bony structures of the ribcage and pelvis to absorb the impact, do not fit or properly restrain a child 4 to 8 causing a group of injuries often referred to as seatbelt syndrome. On impact, the shoulder harness, which strikes the child at head or neck level, does not restrain the upper body allowing it to be thrust forward on impact causing injuries to the head and spine. Ejection from the vehicle is also made much more likely. The lap belt, designed to go across the bones of the adult pelvis, strikes the 4 to 8 year old in the abdomen, making them prone to abdominal and spinal cord injuries.

Research has shown that children age 4-7 years old using booster seats have significantly better outcomes in motor vehicle accidents than children in adult seat belts.

This legislation requires a child aged 4-7 years old to be in an age appropriate child restraint system while riding in a passenger car.

Since 2001, 37 states and D.C. have enacted booster seat legislation, including our neighbors, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee, lessening some of the concerns about tourists traveling into our state from states without booster seat laws.

**Important Facts & Statistics:**

- Children in booster seats are 59% less likely to be injured than children using seatbelts alone (Journal Of The American Medical Association, 2003)
  
- Children in seatbelts alone are:
  - 4 to 5 times more likely to sustain head injuries (Pediatrics, 2002)
  - 3 times more likely to sustain abdominal injuries (Annals of Surgery, 2004)
  - 28% more likely to die (The Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2006)
  
- Children who are appropriately restrained are 28% less likely to die in motor vehicle crashes. (The Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2006)
  
- Booster seats can cost as little as \$14.83.
  
- The state's duty to protect a child is greater than that for an adult because children cannot weigh the risks and benefits for themselves. In the case of age appropriate vehicle occupant restraints, the state does not allow the adults to choose for themselves.

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