

Adoptation  
 Alliance of Community Assistance  
 Ministries of Greater Houston (ACAM)  
 Alliance Adolescent & Children's Services  
 Arrow Child and Family Ministries  
 Bering Omega Community Services  
 Bay Area Council on Drugs & Alcohol  
 Care for Elders  
 Career and Recovery Resources, Inc.  
 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston  
 ChildBuilders  
 CHILDREN AT RISK  
 Children's Defense Fund  
 Coalition for Behavioral Health Services  
 Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris Co., Inc.  
 Collaborative for Children  
 Communities In Schools  
 Community Family Centers  
 Covenant House of Texas  
 DePelchin Children's Center  
 Family Services of Greater Houston  
 Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse, Inc.  
 Gateway to Care  
 Good Neighbor Healthcare Center  
 Gulf Coast CHIP Coalition  
 Harris County Child Abuse Task Force  
 Harris County Healthcare Alliance  
 Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston  
 Houston Area Association for the Education of Young Children  
 Houston Area Women's Center  
 Houston Area Immunization Registry  
 Houston Food Bank  
 Houston Hope  
 IntraCare Hospitals  
 Jewish Family Service  
 Jewish Federation of Greater Houston  
 Justice for Children  
 League of Women Voters Houston  
 Legacy Community Health, Services Inc.  
 Memorial Hermann Healthcare System  
 Mental Health America of Greater Houston  
 NAMI Metropolitan Houston  
 NAMI West Houston, Inc.  
 Neighborhood Centers, Inc.  
 Neuhaus Education Center  
 Northwest Assistance Ministries  
 Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc.  
 Prepared 4 Life  
 San Jose Clinic  
 SEARCH  
 South County Community Clinic  
 DBA The Community Clinic  
 Spaulding for Children  
 Systems of Hope  
 St. Luke's Episcopal Health System  
 Texans Together Education Fund  
 Texas Children's Hospital  
 The Arc of Greater Houston  
 The Methodist Hospital System  
 The Network of Behavioral Health Providers  
 United Way of Greater Houston  
 Wesley Community Center  
 YMCA of Greater Houston  
 YWCA of Greater Houston



## 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature Position Statements

One Voice is a network of public, private and non-profit organizations in the Greater Houston area working together to ensure that the health and human service needs of all Texans are addressed in legislative, regulatory, funding and other public policy initiatives.

One Voice supports the need for strong prevention and early intervention programs, and the ability to maximize federal funding for health and human service programs in Texas, so that we can "Keep Texas dollars working in Texas."

Our membership has developed public policy recommendations based on our experiences as service providers in each of the following health and human service areas. We hope to serve as resources throughout the legislature session on these issues.

### Basic Needs

- ★ **Energy Assistance:** 1) Reinstate LITE-UP Texas System Benefit Fund to provide assistance to eligible households, shifting the full amount out of the State General Revenue Fund. 2) Petition the Public Utility Commission of Texas for permanent implementation of the moratorium on electric disconnection during the summer months for low-income elderly and critical care customers. Petition for automatic implementation of the same moratorium in the event of a disaster resulting in a State of Emergency declaration.
- ★ **Individual Development Accounts:** Establish a grant program within an agency of the State of Texas to assist local communities in setting up IDAs. The bill would provide the administrative infrastructure for the state to award grants to nonprofit organizations to establish IDA programs and provide matching funds to participants.
- ★ **Payday Lending Industry Reform:** 1) Expand and market competitive services through formal financial institutions (i.e. banks, credit unions, etc.). Provide incentives to financial institutions to encourage creation of products designed to provide access to short-term financing along with installment repayments. 2) Enact legislation, as 15 other states have, that caps interest rates at two-digits, limits rollovers, and restricts the size of payday loans. 3) Tighten statute to establish meaningful consumer safeguards and implement a reporting requirement for payday lenders. Clarify Credit Service Organization (CSO) provisions to exclude payday lenders from getting around usury laws by claiming to be CSO's.

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### Behavioral Health

- ★ **Community Behavioral Health:** 1) Increase funding for mental health services for adults and children and revise allocation formula based upon the demand for services to expand the availability and scope of community mental health services and the levels of care with more flexible policies. 2) Increase access to community-based substance abuse treatment services, including those to people with a primary diagnosis of mental illness. 3) Provide local flexibility and additional resources for on-going and support services (such as substance abuse treatment and housing) and after-care services that enable persons with mental health and substance abuse disorders to live in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to their needs.
- ★ **Decriminalization of Mental Illness and Substance Abuse:** 1) Address the need to provide discharge planning, services and supports to help reintegrate inmates into the community, including increased funding for community supervision. 2) Support the training and adequate reimbursement of qualified treatment providers to build capacity in the state to respond to the need for treatment rather than incarceration. 3) Provide increased services for the large majority of inmates who have co-occurring disorders by increasing capacity for integrated treatment of both substance abuse and mental illness.
- ★ **Workforce Shortage:** 1) Increase funding for psychiatric residency positions. 2) Implement loan forgiveness and repayment programs for behavioral health professionals who agree to work in Mental Health Professional Shortage Area's for a certain number of years.

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## Child Welfare

- ★ **Aging Out of Foster Care:** 1) Adopt appropriate legislation and funding to support development and implementation of a comprehensive program in DFPS Region 6 to aid aging/aged out foster youth to transition to successful adult living, which can be replicated in other parts of Texas. 2) Provide adequate funding in the state budget to sustain existing transition centers, including funding for case managers and services for youth and for satellite facilities, prior to adding new centers. 3) Fund expansion of Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) services to youth ages 14 and 15.
- ★ **Post Adoption:** Restore per capita funding for post-adoption support services to 2003 levels (in constant, not inflated, dollars), to meet the needs of the increased numbers of children moving from the foster care system to adoptive families. Annual cost, \$1,005,343 general revenue, \$4,021,372 all funds (75% federal match) above DFPS budget request.

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## Community Care

- ★ **Quality Attendant Training:** Require 16 hour pre-employment training for all attendants. Minimum training standards must require training in the following areas: cultural sensitivity; communication skills; proper lifting and moving techniques; and dementia and Alzheimer-related issues. Recommendations for training curriculum are based on a 2 year pilot study conducted by Care for Elders in 2005-07. The curriculum is available through the community college system in Texas as well as other local organizations and trainers.
- ★ **Attendant Wage Increase:** Support the LAR budget request to increase wage reimbursement rates for attendant care provided through DADS. The average wage for attendants in Texas is \$6.41 while the national average is \$8.54. A *livable* wage in Texas for a family with one adult and one child is \$13.63. The *poverty* level for a family of one adult and one child is \$6.38. By increasing wages, retention of a direct care workforce is increased, the elderly and disabled are able to remain at home, and the burden and cost to the public care system and taxpayers is lessened.
- ★ **Hospital Medicaid Level of Care Waiver:** The Texas Legislature should direct Texas Health and Human Services Commission to pursue a needed Medicaid Hospital Level of Care (HLOC) Waiver to allow for benefits that are lost to those with serious chronic illnesses or disabilities when they age out of pediatric Medicaid benefits at age 21.

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## Early Childhood Education

- ★ **Expand Pre-Kindergarten:** 1) Expand public pre-K from half day to full day. 2) Increase the formula funding for public pre-K, including a meaningful percentage of resources for mixed service delivery partnerships (public school, Head Start, and licensed child care) with community-based early education programs. 3) Expand pre-K through mixed service delivery models (public school, Head Start and child care). 4) Establish maximum child to staff ratios in public pre-K: 10 to 1.
- ★ **Professional Development:** 1) Fund the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) and other professional development models. 2) Increase required child care pre-service hours to 40 and provide funding support. 3) Increase required annual child care training hours (currently 15) to 24 and provide funding support. 4) Fund professional development scholarships with incentives, ex. bonuses and wage enhancements, tied to college course completion or CDA (Child Development Associate).
- ★ **ECE Rates:** 1) Fund increased reimbursement rates for subsidized care at child care centers engaged in some form of quality improvement initiative. 2) Fund pilot projects to increase community capacity to improve quality of care, including consultation, training and technical assistance, with an emphasis on infant/toddler care.

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## Healthcare

- ★ **Healthcare Reform:** 1) Expand Texas Department of Insurance responsibility and authority. 2) Enable governmental entities to consider health insurance coverage offered by prospective contractors (pay or play). 3) Expand funding and other incentive programs for critical healthcare workforce shortage areas. 4) Create innovative healthcare coverage programs for employees of small businesses (multi-share). 5) Support the creation of a subsidized CHIP buy-in program for parents and children over 200% of the federal poverty level. 6) Continue funding for the Texas Incubator Program focused on expansion of existing Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC).
- ★ **Immunization Issues:** 1) Allow adults and their health care providers the option to shelter immunization information in ImmTrac. Allow children currently in ImmTrac to maintain their records in ImmTrac after they turn 19 years old. 2) Permit ImmTrac to link to health information networks in other states, particularly during public health emergencies. 3) Mandate higher reimbursement rates from the insurance companies for vaccines. 4) Repeal the business tax on vaccine inventory so that providers can afford to continue to offer vaccines in their clinics.
- ★ **Medicaid Eligibility:** 1) Adopt a 12-month eligibility period for the Children's Medicaid program. This recommendation would align the Children's Medicaid program's eligibility periods with current private insurance and CHIP practices in Texas. 2) Appropriate sufficient funding for Eligibility System and increased outreach.

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## Public Education

- ★ **Comprehensive Sex and Family Life Education:** 1) While continuing to emphasize abstinence from sexual activity as the standard for behavior in §28.004 of the Education Code, expand the Code to require that human sexuality health information be provided including preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, in a format that is age appropriate and medically accurate. 2) Expand §28.002 of the Education Code to include professional, research-based curricula in healthy relationships, child development, and parenting skills for students, beginning in middle school.
- ★ **Discipline Policies:** 1) Increase professional development training and support for teachers / administration regarding discipline management and cultural competency as part of required continuing education. 2) Create a process of accountability for reviewing / evaluating students of referrals, including the percentage of students, demographics, benchmarks, and reason for referrals. 3) Include behavior management in teacher certification requirements for alternative certifications. 4) Allocate resources to TEA, including funds and staff, to provide oversight and accountability.
- ★ **Teen Pregnancy:** 1) Extend funding to school districts for Pregnancy Related Services (PRS) to teen parents until graduation. 2) Require districts to coordinate Life Skills grants for parenting students with PRS services for seamless continuum of service.

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