5-13-1985

Public Policy Statements : 1985 : 05 : 13

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PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS
JUVENILE WELFARE BOARD
OF PINELLAS COUNTY

PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS

MAY 1985

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The Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) is an independent special taxing district established by a state statute in 1945 for the sole purpose of providing services to children. The JWB does not provide services to children directly, but funds delivery of service through other community agencies.

The JWB coordinates, plans, funds and evaluates services, addresses legislative needs related to children, and provides technical support to child serving agencies and the community at large. The Board is empowered to assess an ad valorem tax of up to one-half mill ($.50 per $1,000 non-exempt property evaluation).

The JWB recognizes the importance of children in our society and the need for special safeguards and care for them because of their physical and emotional vulnerability. Children do not vote, they do not pay taxes, and they have little voice over matters that affect them.

The following public policy statements are the Juvenile Welfare Board's commitment to assuring the well-being of all children and their families. The public policy statements cover six (6) areas:

- Children in Families
- Economic Security
- Education
- Abuse & Neglect
- Juvenile Justice
- Mental Health
I. CHILDREN IN FAMILIES
I. CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

To ensure a permanent, nurturig family, to maintain the safety and well being of the child at home and in the care of others, and to develop alternatives to long term foster care:

A. FAMILY SUPPORT

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board encourages the development of a full range of supportive social, health, and educational services which:
   a. Prepare individuals for the assumption of responsibilities of marriage and parenthood.
   b. Strengthen family functioning and individual relationships.
   c. Reduce interpersonal and daily stress and conflict.
   d. Prevent unwanted pregnancies.
   e. Provide temporary physical relief during periods of extreme physical and emotional demand.
   f. Prevent family break-up or child placement.
   g. Augment the resources and capabilities of the young and/or single parent.

2. Individual and family awareness of services should be facilitated through comprehensive and targeted community education, effective referral, and active outreach activities. Services should be provided:
   a. By competent professional personnel supported by appropriate para professionals and volunteers in a manner and at a place which minimizes inconvenience to individuals and families and encourages them to make maximum use of the service opportunity.
   b. In a fashion which recognizes and builds upon the inherent strengths of families and individuals and encourages the development and utilization of self help and mutual aid capabilities.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated or facilitated development, financing, and extension of family support groups, outreach services, family planning information and services, family life education, respite care, services to teenage parents, family violence programs, and services to prevent unnecessary foster care placements.

B. CHILD DAY CARE

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes quality child care in family day care homes and child care centers as:
   a. An essential support element for families with two working parents, single parent households and families with special needs.
Public Policy

b. A primary means of prevention of child abuse and neglect.
c. An effective vehicle for early identification of physical and emotional problems which facilitates timely and appropriate early interventions which prevents development of more serious problems.

2. Day care services should be delivered in a coordinated system which:

a. Provides care only in licensed, supervised families and facilities with qualified, trained staff.
b. Provides subsidized care to prevent the costs of child care from unduly burdening the family's financial capability to meet its basic needs.
c. Includes specialized programs and supportive services to insure adequate assessment, referral and, appropriate treatment services.
d. Encourages the active, informed involvement of parents in the initial and ongoing placement of their child(ren).

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated or facilitated statewide licensure of all center and family day care, local involvement and support of licensing activities, state financial support of local licensing, expanded subsidized care, training of child care and licensing personnel, and the development and funding of a variety of day care service options.

C. FOSTER CARE

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes the need for a strong foster care program in order to reduce the term or frequency of placement and the need to place children in more costly institutional settings. Such programs should:

a. Provide substitute care for a planned period of time for children whose own family is unable to care for them.
b. Discourage inappropriate placement of children.
c. Secure permanent placement for children with their biological or adoptive families as soon as possible.

2. Foster care is substitute care in which the role of the biological parent(s) is supplemented (or substituted for) by another set of parent(s), in this regard foster care is:

a. Designed to be temporary.
b. Provided only in licensed, quality homes with adequately trained foster parents to meet the special needs of the child in placement.
c. Financed through realistic support payments to foster parents.
Public Policy

d. Committed to permanency planning for the child(ren) in a timely fashion.
e. Committed to working with the parent(s) to maintain a relationship with the child and resolve problems in order to permit the child to return home.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated the goal of family reunification, permanency planning for all children, minimum training requirements for foster care parents, additional support services for children remaining in foster care in excess of three (3) years, and a comprehensive medical and dental program for foster children.

D. ADOPTION

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board supports the premise that no child should be deprived of the opportunity to have a permanent family of his own and recognizes adoption as:

a. Appropriate for those children whose parents cannot assume responsibility for them even if supportive and supplementary services are provided.
b. Primary means of helping children who would otherwise not have a home of their own and who can benefit from and contribute to family life.

2. Adoption services should be provided through a coordinated system which:

a. Places children through licensed agencies, authorized by law to provide adoption services.
b. Provides resources for older, handicapped, and minority group children.
c. Subsidizes children who are placed with families who are able to provide positive family life experiences but are unable to assume full financial responsibility.
d. Provides services for the biological parent(s) who are considering placement of their child(ren).
e. Offers realistic services for the adoptive applicant(s) and parent(s) which include realistic screening, completion of legal adoption, and post placement services.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated or facilitated passage of the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, restriction of adoption to licensed agencies, increased resources for "special needs" children and the development of the HRS Permanent Commitment Specialist.
E. CHILD CARE FACILITIES

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes the need for child care facilities which provide congregate group care rather than substitute family care for the child whose special needs are so significant that they cannot be met in a family setting augmented by supportive services or whose parents cannot or will not fulfill their parental responsibility.

2. Various child care facilities should be maintained for:
   a. Dependent and neglected children.
   b. Physically handicapped children.
   c. Developmentally disabled children.
   d. Juvenile delinquents
   e. Emotionally disturbed children.
   g. Facilities for diagnosis or observation.

3. Quality treatment services should be offered in child care facilities which:
   a. Are licensed facilities with qualified and trained staff.
   b. Offer a full range of supportive services which include casework, social group work, education, medical care and any other services that will be beneficial to the child.
   c. Seek to prevent alienation resulting from prolonged separation of the parent and child.
   d. Provide permanency planning.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated or facilitated statewide licensure of all child care facilities.
II. ECONOMIC SECURITY
II. ECONOMIC SECURITY

To ensure financial resources for parent(s) to provide a basic level of food, shelter, clothing, and health care for their child(ren) through employment or public income maintenance.

A. ECONOMIC SUPPORT

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board encourages self-sufficiency and enhancement of parent's ability to provide their child(ren) with the basic necessities of life. The Board promotes:
   a. A commitment to full employment with adequate job creation.
   b. Access to long-term employment opportunities.
   c. Development of job training programs which are compatible with private sector employment opportunities.
   d. A system of mandatory and automatic wage deductions for parents who fail to voluntarily comply with a court order requiring child support.

2. Economic support programs should maintain children in their home by providing an income for children in need because a parent is absent from home, disabled, or unemployed. Such programs should:
   a. Provide adequate support to improve economic conditions rather than perpetuate poverty.
   b. Be available to all needy persons, regardless of family status or composition.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated development of a current standard of need for AFDC assistance, state-wide child support enforcement system, transportation system to facilitate the use of social and health services by persons for whom transportation is a barrier, assistance to families with unemployed fathers, emergency assistance programs, and job training, development and placement opportunities.

B. HOUSING

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board supports adequate access to decent housing for families with children.

2. Protection should be provided to assure families with children that:
   a. Discriminatory rental practices are prohibited.
   b. Provides a desirable and safe environment.
Public Policy

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated for amendment of the Pinellas County Human Rights Ordinance and the Florida State Fair Housing Act, special zoning to allow housing for families with children and residential care facilities.

C. HEALTH

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board supports an adequate health care policy which assures:
   a. Access to health care services.
   b. Comprehensive, prevention oriented services.
   c. Early identification and management of disorders that can impair development and affect adult life.

2. The maintenance of a child's health is further ensured by a nutritious diet provided at home, school, and/or in child care facilities.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated more significant and visible incentives to increase the number of Medicaid service providers, on-site health exams at schools, comprehensive medical and dental program for children in foster care, access to proper renatal care, School Health Services Act, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program and increased resources for neonatal care centers.
III. EDUCATION
III. EDUCATION

To ensure all children access to equal and quality educational opportunities based on individual needs.

A. SCHOOLS

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board acknowledges that each child must receive sufficient formalized schooling to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to become a productive member of society.

2. The school setting should provide opportunities for all students to achieve their maximum potential. Services provided should:
   a. Recognize cognitive, physical, cultural, and individual differences in children.
   b. Provide a flexible curriculum which meets the needs of the learning impaired.
   c. Reduce the number of students who are truant, suspended or dropouts.
   d. Emphasize positive alternatives to corporal punishment.
   e. Provide alternative education programs for disruptive students.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated truancy prevention and reduction programs, expansion of time out rooms, development of alternative education programs, centralized coordinated effort for the prevention of truancy, suspension, and drop-outs, additional vocational opportunities, and higher school financing for mainstreamed exceptional students.

B. PREVENTION

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes the primary and secondary educational setting as a place for providing basic prevention services.

2. The educational system can complement the family by:
   a. Preparing young people for adulthood.
   b. Providing opportunities for self development.
   c. Providing family life education as part of its overall curriculum.
   d. Providing support services to teen parents.
   e. Providing training for school personnel in the detection of substance abuse, child abuse, and disruptive behaviors.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated the development of a model integrated K-12 family life education program, support services to teen parents, and primary substance abuse prevention programs.
IV. ABUSE AND NEGLECT
Public Policy

IV. ABUSE AND NEGLECT

To insure a full range of services to protect children from maltreatment and exposure to family violence and to provide necessary, timely and appropriate intervention and treatment.

A. CHILD MALTREATMENT

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board believes children must be protected from neglect, abuse, and exploitation, which includes:
   a. Physical abuse.
   b. Emotional abuse.
   c. Sexual abuse.
   d. Neglect (physical, medical, emotional, and educational).

2. The Juvenile Welfare Board supports the development of an integrated child protective system which possesses:
   a. A definition of abuse and neglect.
   b. Mandatory reporting mechanisms.
   c. Immunity for those reporting.
   d. Procedures for prompt investigation.
   e. Confidentiality of records.
   f. Interdisciplinary and interagency cooperation.
   g. Support of self-help groups.
   h. Treatment mechanisms that demonstrate effectiveness.
   i. Public education about child abuse and neglect.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated integrated services of agencies dealing with abusive families, recognition of the special needs of children who are sexually abused, emphasized treatment of the abuser vs. punishment, interdisciplinary team evaluations, and revisions of statues to encourage self-reporting.

B. FAMILY VIOLENCE

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes the family plays the major role in teaching norms and values, including the use and approval of violence. Children, whether abused themselves or witnesses to the abuse, are victims and may be drawn into a cycle of abuse and perpetuate maltreatment in future generations.

2. Family violence often results from the inability to cope with stress and the absence of adequate support systems. Family support services should focus on the prevention of family violence.
Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated temporary shelter for victims of spouse abuse and their children, expanded services to violent families, and increased training of law enforcement personnel in working with violent families.
V. JUVENILE JUSTICE
V. JUVENILE JUSTICE

To ensure a juvenile justice system which protects the community and recognizes the needs of each child.

A. PREVENTION

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board encourages a wide range of efforts to address children's actions to prevent the child from entering the juvenile justice system.

2. Initial prevention efforts must begin in the child's home by enhancing positive growth in individuals and strengthening family relationships. Prevention support services may also be provided by:
   a. Schools.
   b. Law enforcement.
   c. Community based programs.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated prevention programs, expansion of law education for youth, special police juvenile units, and increased training of law enforcement officers.

B. DIVERSION

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board encourages effective alternatives to formal adjudication of status or minor delinquent offenders.

2. Diversion programs are community based services for youth committing minor offenses. These programs generally should:
   a. Operate separately from the juvenile justice system.
   b. Provide counseling, education, and referral services.
   c. Require youth to make restitutions, perform volunteer services and/or adhere to certain restrictions.

3. Other alternatives supported by JWB which may deter delinquency include:
   a. Screening programs at the police level to divert and refer.
   b. Early intervention and treatment services for the family.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated early intervention programs, legislation with appropriations oriented toward status offenders, and expansion of community arbitration programs.
C. STATUS OFFENDERS

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes that most status offense behavior (running away, truancy, and ungovernability) is caused by a conflict or a breakdown in the parent-child relationship.

2. Programs and services need to be designed which:
   a. Enhance family functioning and communication
   b. Provide crisis intervention and referral
   c. Are school based to resolve school related problems
   d. Provide temporary licensed care which notifies the parent(s) of the child's location

Activities

Under the principle of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated truancy prevention and reduction programs, prevention and crisis intervention programs, temporary shelters, legislation with appropriations oriented toward status offenders and the Florida Runaway and Troubled Youth Act.

D. DELINQUENCY

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes that children who commit antisocial or criminal acts should receive treatment and rehabilitative services.

2. A full range of rehabilitative programs suited to meet the needs of children found to be delinquent are necessary and should:
   a. Offer a specialized court (juvenile/family) for the individualized protection and handling of children.
   b. Ensure full complement of due process protections in administrative and juvenile court proceedings.
   c. Perceive delinquency as a family problem and treat it as such.
   d. Provide closer collaboration between the legal and mental health system.
   e. Provide a continuum of care and services ranging from prevention to institutionalization.
   f. Separate juveniles in institutions from adults.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated or facilitated psychological services for the court, expansion of residential treatment programs for non-committed delinquent youth, stability in the administration of the Juvenile Division of the Circuit Courts, establishment of a minimum jurisdictional age for handling a child as a delinquent, and separation of the adult and juvenile judicial system.
VI. MENTAL HEALTH
Public Policy

VI. MENTAL HEALTH

To ensure policies and programs that provide a full range of services and appropriate individualized treatment in the least restrictive setting.

A. CONTINUUM OF CARE

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board supports the development of a continuum of care with simplified access to services provided in or as close as possible to the child's home and/or community.

2. A continuum of care includes a range of components to match the need identified. The components include:

   a. Prevention Programs.
   b. Diagnostic and Evaluation Services.
   c. Crisis Counseling.
   e. Day Treatment Services.
   f. Therapeutic Foster Homes.
   g. Therapeutic Group Homes.
   h. Residential Treatment Homes.
   i. Crisis Stabilization Units.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy, the Juvenile Welfare Board advocated and facilitated the development of day treatment services, continuum of care services, state prevention policy, establishment of emergency mental health diagnosis and holding facility for after hour use, and expansion of pre-school programs for special needs children.

B. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes the stress of substance abuse promotes disintegration of the family support system.

2. To deal effectively with the problems of substance abuse among children a continuum of care services is also needed which will address prevention, intervention and treatment concerns. The services offered would:

   a. Promote family involvement.
   b. Improve tolerance for stress and the ability to cope with stress.
   c. Provide an atmosphere that promotes emotional, social and physical fitness.
Public Policy

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated the development of prevention and intervention programs for children with emerging substance abuse problems, residential treatment services and emphasized the utilization of school resources.

C. RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

1. The Juvenile Welfare Board recognizes residential treatment services as a special component of the continuum of care.

2. Residential facilities should have the competence and capacity for education, socialization, treatment, vocational training or such other constructive activities as is appropriate to its population group.

Activities

Under the principles of this policy the Juvenile Welfare Board has advocated and facilitated expansion of residential services for emotionally disturbed youth, exemption of licensed residential treatment facilities from local land use plans and zoning ordinances, and stronger non-punitive group home zoning requirements.

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