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Nevada Institute For Children's Research & Policy

NICRP

Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy
Quarterly Newsletter - Special Legislative Issue

Winter 2009

Dear Friends,

February 2, 2009 marks the beginning of the 75th Regular Session of the Nevada State Legislature. Our State is experiencing severe economic hardships which have taken a devastating toll on programs and services for children and their families. Our elected officials in Carson City are embarking on the daunting task of cutting (or reducing) essential programs and services and/or improving state revenue streams to support these needed social services. No area is immune - health, education, juvenile justice and child welfare are all feeling the effects of these difficult times. Now, more than ever, it is important to not only understand what is going on in our State Legislature, but also to get involved in the process to make your voice heard.



This issue of the NICRP Newsletter is dedicated to providing you with information and tools to advocate on behalf of our children. Please use these resources to learn more about what is happening in the Legislature over the next 120+ days and to take action!

Sincerely,

Denise Tanata Ashby
Executive Director
NICRP

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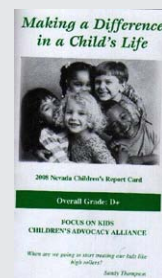
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2008 Nevada Children's Report Card

The Children's Advocacy Alliance biennial report card gives Nevada an overall grade of D+ when looking at state rankings in the categories of Health (D+), Safety and Security (C-), Education (F), and Teen Years (C-). To learn more about the Children's Report Card or to get a copy, please contact NICRP at 895-1040



Tips for Advocating at the Legislature...

Here are a few tips on advocating at the Legislature:

Know the Legislature and the Process

Nevada has a citizen legislature which meets for 120 days once every two years, beginning the first Monday in February of odd numbered years. The Legislature is made up of 63 members - 42 in the Assembly and 21 in the Senate. Bill Draft Requests (BDRs) may be introduced by legislators, legislative committees, the Governor, state agencies and local governments. Not all BDRs will become bills and some bills may never be heard by a committee. To learn more about the Legislative Process, visit the Nevada State Legislature website at www.leg.state.nv.us.

Know the Issues

There are currently (as of 1/30/09) 964 bill draft requests pending. The NICRP has reviewed each one of the BDR and has compiled a categorized list of all BDR/Bills related to children. This list will be updated weekly during the session and will provide a direct link to the bill as well as information on the status of the bill, including any

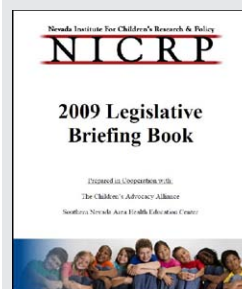
upcoming hearings. The NICRP has also collaborated with a wide array of experts from across the State to compile the 2009 Legislative Briefing Book. This book provides information on a variety of topics related to children and provides a guideline for some of the most pressing issues in our State. Both the bill tracking list and the Legislative Briefing Book are available on the NICRP website at <http://nic.unlv.edu>.

Make YOUR Voice Heard

- Contact your legislators - write letters and emails, make phone calls or visit them in Carson City.
- Talk to your friends, family, co-workers about the issues and encourage them to contact their legislators as well.
- Connect with a like-minded group - advocacy in large numbers can have a powerful impact.
- If there is a hearing on an issue important to you, testify before the committee.
- If you are a government employee you CAN still advocate, but you must do it as a private citizen and make sure that you follow any guidelines set forth by your employer.
- If a Bill is up for a hearing or vote, email or call you legislator and let him/her know your opinion. On most bills, Legislators say usually only two or three people will call and their opinion matters. Why not yours?

Go to www.leg.state.nv.us to find out who your legislators are, how to contact them, when hearings are scheduled and specific information on bills.

2009 Legislative Briefing Book



The NICRP worked diligently with community partners across the state to compile the NICRP 2009 Legislative Briefing Book. The purpose of the Children's Legislative Briefing Book is to provide a quick snapshot of some of the most pressing issues facing Nevada's children in order to provide advocates and policymakers with a stepping stone in creating positive changes to improve the lives of Nevada's children. While this book will not cover every issue facing our children, it is intended to highlight those of greatest concern, covering issues in education, health, safety and security, and the juvenile justice system.

This Briefing Book is intended to be a compilation of statistics and policy recommendations from across the state, authored and supported by the practitioners, agencies, organizations, individuals and others who work with and advocate for the well-being of children in Nevada. The NICRP 2009 Legislative Briefing Book is now available on the NICRP website and in paper form by request.

2009 Legislative Bill Tracking

The 75th Regular Session of the Nevada Legislature will begin on February 2, 2009. It is important to be aware of the new legislation being put forth that will affect families and children in the State of Nevada. NICRP provides up to date lists of Bill Draft Requests (BDRs) and bills for the 2009 Legislative Session that may have an impact on children and their families. A separate list is also compiled with regards to public health and/or medical issues in the State of Nevada. These lists are updated approximately once a week and available for download on the NICRP website. For more information you can visit the State website at www.leg.state.nv.us. Please be an active participant in this years legislative session by contacting your assembly, senate and congressional representatives with your opinions. Lets all work together to make Nevada a great place for families and children.



Nevada Medicaid and Check Up Programs

Barriers to Utilization and Enrollment

In 2008, Nevada was ranked fifth in the country for the percentage of children in the state without health insurance coverage (Families USA 2008). The health and financial consequences uninsured children and families face are extraordinary. In an effort to understand the particular barriers to health care access and utilization Nevada's children and families face with the Medicaid and Nevada Check Up programs, the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP) conducted a small qualitative study examining these barriers. NICRP staff conducted twenty-six telephone interviews with various members of the community, including services providers, administrators and parents of children seeking enrollment in or enrolled under Nevada's public health insurance programs.



The study identified five common barriers Nevada's children and families face at both the enrollment and utilization levels:

- Limited public knowledge of public health insurance programs and services that they cover
- The complexity and duration of the enrollment and renewal process
- Elimination of vital services covered under the programs
- Lack of available service providers, particularly specialist providers

The purpose of this study is to assist policymakers and advocates in developing policies and practices which will help families gain access to health care services for their children. The full report will be available on the NICRP website in early February.

2008 -2009 Kindergarten Health Survey



In the fall of the 2008-2009 school year the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy partnered with the Clark County School District to create a survey regarding the health of incoming kindergarten students in an effort to collect baseline information for the area. This survey was then reviewed and adopted by all other school districts in the state of Nevada. The survey was distributed to the schools in all 17 school districts and surveys were returned from all districts with the exception of Lander and Lyon county school districts. Data were collected on 11,073 kindergarten students, which is an estimated 36% response rate for the state. Parents were

asked to respond to questions regarding general demographic information about their child and family as well as their insurance status, general physical and mental health as well as some general health behaviors including immunizations, routine well checks and barriers to accessing health care among others. A report with data analysis and findings will be available on the NICRP website in early February.

NICRP Welcomes a New Research Analyst



Helen Zaikina-Montgomery

Helen received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Experimental Psychology from the California State University, San Marcos in San Diego, California in December 2001. Helen received her Master of Arts Degree in Psychology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in December 2005. Her research interests include quantitative methodology and statistics, children's safety on the Internet as well as the social development of disadvantaged children in the United States. As a graduate student Helen has taught statistics for the Department of Psychology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. At NICRP Helen hopes to work on projects that help facilitate data-driven change in policy that directly impacts Southern Nevada children's well being and welfare.

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