



2009 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

OVERVIEW

On July 15, 2009, the combined Public Policy and Civic Engagement Committee of the Alliance for Children and Families (Alliance) and United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA) amended and approved the following principles, criteria, and public policy agenda for calendar year 2009.

Principles

Issues and policy positions on the public policy agenda shall be consistent with the following general principles.

- Strong families are the greatest asset of strong communities.
- Populations facing the greatest need, lack of access, and greatest disparities should be prioritized.
- Strong, vital nonprofit community-based organizations are critical to strong communities.

Criteria

Issues and policy positions on the public policy agenda shall be prioritized according to the following criteria.

- Timeliness.
- Impact on member organizations and the populations they serve.
- Alignment with the long-term objectives of the Alliance, UNCA, member agencies, and the nonprofit human services sector.
- Substantial agreement among members on policy positions.
- Lack of adequate coverage by allied organizations.
- Ability to achieve a meaningful policy outcome.

2009 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Consistent with the principles and criteria described above, the Public Policy Committee has approved the following agenda and policy positions for the Alliance and UNCA. Issues are prioritized into three tiers: (1) leadership issues, (2) participant issues, and (3) issues to be monitored.

Tier One – Leadership Issues

Tier One issues are those where the Alliance and UNCA will work to become recognized leaders. These issues shall be considered the highest priority of the Washington office, which shall devote half or more of its time and resources to them, and shall be the subject of active engagement by the Alliance and UNCA memberships.

- **Child Welfare**

- Support Title IV-E funding reform that eliminates the tie to AFDC and includes reforms addressing inadequate foster care rates.
- Support increased funding for child abuse prevention and other services funded under Title IV-B and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).
- Oppose exclusion of child welfare services from allowable Medicaid payments.
- Support education assistance for child welfare and foster care workers.
- Support assistance for children aging out of foster care.
- Support extension of the Hershey Amendment to individuals working as houseparents and living on-site in nonprofit institutions caring for orphaned and disadvantaged children. Support exempting them from federal hourly minimum wage and overtime provisions while ensuring a living wage plus room and board.
- Support regulation of non-regulated boot camps, wilderness programs, and other unregulated residential programs. Support exemptions from such regulation for already-regulated residential programs absent a prior federal or state review of the adequacy of existing state regulation and enforcement for such programs.

- **Health Care Reform and Behavioral Health**

- Support universal coverage of adults and children as part of any national health reform plan.
 - Support inclusion of mental health and chemical dependency coverage as part of any national health reform plan.
 - Support requiring the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) to evaluate Medicaid enrollees' access to mental/behavioral health and dental health services.
 - Support requiring states to develop ways to raise reimbursement in fields where payments are determined to be too low.
 - Support requiring states to raise Medicaid reimbursement to at least parity with Medicare.
 - Support establishing therapeutic foster care as a category of Medicaid-reimbursable services or establishing TFC as a permissible service within the rehabilitative option of Medicaid.
 - Support defining "rehabilitative" care as care for the restoration, attainment, and maintenance of functioning.
 - Support allowing states flexibility in determining their payment methodologies for rehabilitative care and targeted case management.
 - Support funding to states for demonstration projects aimed at transforming the delivery of health care for foster children through the adoption of electronic health records (EHR).
 - Support repealing or rolling back the exclusion that prohibits federal financial support for institutes for mental disease (IMDs).
- Support legislation that makes it financially feasible for families with children with mental health needs to stay together and rely on home- and community-based services, including the Keeping Families Together Act, as introduced.
- Support parity in mental health and substance abuse coverage and treatment.
- Support tuition subsidies for students entering the field of child and adolescent mental health or other nonprofit human services fields.
- Oppose funding cuts for substance abuse prevention and treatment, particularly for individuals with mental illness and children in the child welfare system.

- Support an expansion of behavioral health services in schools in partnership with community organizations, including the Mental Health in Schools Act (S. 1332 and H.R. 3430) as introduced.
- **Neighborhood Initiatives**
 - Support place-based initiatives that comprehensively and effectively address the needs of children, families, and communities.
 - Support a federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative that seeks better outcomes for children, families, and communities by integrating previously siloed programs, such as early childhood and afterschool programs, K-12 education, college preparation, job training, parental education, health care, neighborhood revitalization, and tax policy, and is built on public/private partnerships between nonprofits, government, health care organizations, local businesses, and schools.
 - Support increased federal funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

Tier Two – Participant Issues

Tier Two issues are important to the Alliance and UNCA, but for reasons of timeliness and relative importance to the membership, are secondary to issues designated as Tier 1 at this time. Such issues may be elevated to Tier 1 in importance between meetings of the committee, at the discretion of staff, when action is not similarly pending on one or more Tier 1 issues, thus freeing up the resources needed for effective engagement. At other times, the Washington office shall contribute to the coalition work led by other organizations, and the Alliance and UNCA membership shall be engaged selectively and strategically, where their contributions can produce a meaningful policy outcome.

- **Budget and Appropriations**
 - Support funding for priority federal programs.
 - Support budget reforms that promote fiscal discipline at the federal level without imposing undue or disproportionate cuts on programs serving children or the disadvantaged.
 - Support earmark reforms that increase transparency. Oppose prohibitions on earmarks for 501(c)(3) charities.
- **Nonprofit Sector Issues**
 - Support tax incentives for increased charitable giving.
 - Support proposals that would expand and provide educational or training assistance for the nonprofit workforce.
 - Support tuition and training subsidies for those entering, or in, the nonprofit human services field.
 - Support expansions of AmeriCorps. Support the creation of a Human Services Corps within AmeriCorps or the Corporation for National and Community Service focused on human service-providing charities.
 - Support prompt payment policies for governmental entities (federal, state, local), requiring them to pay charitable organizations for services rendered under grants or contracts within 90 days.
 - Support the creation of a federal low- or no-interest bridge loan program for charitable organizations facing short-term cash flow problems due to lack of prompt payment by governmental agencies.
 - Support changes to the Pension Protection Act of 2006 that give nonprofit agencies with defined benefit pension plans additional time to make up funding shortfalls created by the recent decline in the financial markets.
 - Support reforms of the charitable sector that increase transparency and accountability, without imposing undue administrative burdens.
 - Oppose restrictions that limit the lobbying or advocacy rights of 501(c)(3) charities.
 - Take no position on, but closely monitor, the following issues and keep the memberships informed of related developments.

- Charitable choice, as it relates to faith-based hiring.
- Changes in labor law that may affect unionization of nonprofit employees.
- Restrictions on itemized deductions to pay for health care reform.

Tier Three – Issues to be Monitored

Tier Three issues are important to the Alliance and UNCA, but present few realistic opportunities to affect a meaningful policy outcome at the present time, either due to timeliness of the issue or a lack of sufficient staff resources, or are otherwise not fully consistent with the public policy criteria. These issues can easily become higher priorities when events warrant. On such issues, activities of the Washington office shall largely be limited to monitoring, issuing occasional statements, signing joint letters initiated by allies, making occasional reports to the Alliance and UNCA memberships, and other actions requiring minimal time or resources.

Tier Three issues can also include those where there are significant divisions within the Alliance and/or UNCA memberships. On such issues, the activities of the Washington staff shall be limited to monitoring and occasional reporting to members.

- **Child Care**
 - Support increased funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).
 - Support expanded training for child care workers.
 - Support funding for technical assistance, accreditation, and renovation subsidies for child care providers to bring their facilities up to standard.
 - Support policies that encourage states to provide special-needs care, sick-child care, after-school care, and care during nontraditional hours.
- **Community Services Block Grant**
 - Oppose cuts and support increased federal funding for CSBG.
- **EITC / Child Tax Credit**
 - Support expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
 - Support expansions of the Child Tax Credit (CTC).
- **Education (K-12) / No Child Left Behind**
 - Support changes in federal education law that make allowances for children with mental disabilities and special needs.
 - Support increased funding and improvements for after-school programs, with allowances for children with mental disabilities and special needs.
 - Support increasing authorized funding levels and appropriations for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and Supplemental Educational Services (SES).
 - Oppose diversions of afterschool funds to other services, such as an extended school day or school year.
 - Support increased accessibility of SES funding for nonprofit afterschool providers.
 - Oppose limiting SES to “high-priority” schools if such limitations reduce or eliminate services for low-income or special needs children in other schools.
 - Support improving sustainability of 21st CCLC programs by renewing grants for pre-existing programs based on merit.
 - Support policies that increase education, training and investment in the afterschool workforce.
 - Support testing and evaluations that measure the educational progress of individual children and schools (e.g., growth models), rather than comparing all children and schools to arbitrary external standards that are unrelated to available resources or barriers.

- Support increased funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) and ESL-related programs, emphasizing universal eligibility and community-based services.
- **Federal Youth Coordination Act**
 - Support FYCA funding.
- **Food Stamps / Food and Nutrition**
 - Support expanded access to the food stamp program.
 - Support increased food stamp benefit levels.
- **Head Start**
 - Support increased funding for Head Start.
 - Support training, certification, workforce development, and a competitive wage for Head Start teachers.
 - Oppose moving Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services to preserve the program's social services to families, such as nutrition and medical care.
 - Support merging Early Head Start and Head Start
- **Housing**
 - Support the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund to produce and preserve rental housing for low-income families.
 - Support legislation that addresses the housing needs of victims of natural disasters.
 - Support funding and related services for SHP permanent and transitional housing programs.
 - Support increased funding for the Section 202 housing program for seniors and support changes to reduce the program's complexity for provider program applicants.
 - Support increased funding for Section 8 housing vouchers.
- **Immigration**
 - Support comprehensive immigration reform legislation that creates a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and ensures that immigrant families have access to supports from government programs.
 - Support legislation that increases access to higher education for immigrants, such as the DREAM Act and American Dream Act, as introduced.
- **Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)**
 - Support increased federal funding.
 - Support withdrawals for automobiles.
 - Support allowing states to create IDAs for youth in out-of-home care that are funded by child support payments.
- **Juvenile Justice / Criminal Justice**
 - Support reauthorization of, and increased funding for, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A).
 - Support the expansion of prevention and intervention services, including educational, medical, and mental/behavioral health services, and workforce development services for agencies providing such services.
 - Support prevention and intervention services that address issues of racial disproportionality and equity.
- **Minimum Wage**
 - Support an increase in the minimum wage.
 - Accept a related tax package for small businesses that is not too expensive and includes the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

- **Seniors Issues**
 - Support increased funding for Older Americans Act programs and support changes to the Older American Act that promote aging in place.
 - Support legislation and funding for programs to recruit, train, and retain a quality nonprofit workforce serving seniors.
 - Support changes in Medicaid, including Medicaid waivers, that support aging in place.
 - Support guardianship programs for seniors.
- **Social Services Block Grant**
 - Oppose cuts and support increased federal funding for SSBG.
- **State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)**
 - Support funding sufficient to increase the number of children receiving SCHIP coverage.
 - Support changes to SCHIP and Medicaid that would end the five-year waiting period for legal immigrant children.
- **Teen Pregnancy**
 - Support funding that would decrease the incidence of teen pregnancy within the foster care community.
 - Support programs that provide education to youth and families about teen pregnancy.
- **Welfare / TANF**
 - Support the establishment of state performance indicators under TANF that measure poverty reduction.
- **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**
 - Oppose converting WIA programs into a block grant to fund vouchers for job training.
 - Support increased funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) and ESL-related programs, emphasizing universal eligibility and community-based services.
 - Support summer youth employment and other employment programs for youth.