

Samples

- Letter to the editor ■ Editorial ■ Op-ed article ■ Newsletter articles
■ Letter to TV or radio news director ■ Sample radio scripts for public
service announcements ■ News/Press release

Newspaper Name
Address
City, ST 12345

Attention: Editorial Page Editor

Dear Editor:

Florida's children are our state's most valuable resource; we must do everything we can to ensure a bright, healthy and successful future for them. Unfortunately, our children are at risk of losing essential programs that protect their health and help them succeed in school and beyond.

It is vitally important that the Florida Legislature continue to fund important prevention initiatives like Healthy Start, the Florida Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, child care and early education programs, as well as programs that prevent child abuse and neglect.

We know these programs save money because the results are healthier children, better students, more productive workers and responsible citizens.

Each of us work hard every day in our communities on behalf of children, but during the week of March 18, 2001, I will join thousands of advocates at the State Capitol to speak with one voice in support of our children.

In this past year's election, many people told us they support children's issues. Now is the time for them to stand up for our kids. We know state budget shortfalls may cut deeply into these important programs.

Please call or write your elected officials and ask them to support Florida's children. Ask them to ensure that the future of our children remains bright.

Sincerely,
(Sign name)
Print Name

**Letter to the
editor**

Editorial

*Published in the
Tallahassee
Democrat Online,
Wednesday,
November 7, 2001,
updated at 9:26 PM*

Foster Care Needs More State Support

On the whole, Florida's thousands of foster parents are no doubt extraordinary souls who desire to help children. They're certainly not in it for the money. Child advocate Jack Levine said Florida's foster parents are reimbursed about 50 cents an hour for a daunting task: providing a warm, if temporary, haven for children who have been abandoned or abused by their parents.

But the state has relied too much on that spirit of altruism to protect the 20,000 children who are in foster homes. According to an investigative report by the Florida Times-Union, Florida's rate of abuse - about one out of every 11 children - is 15 times higher than the national standard. Worse, the number of children abused in foster care has risen annually since 1998. That statistic was tragically illustrated by the recent death of 17-month-old Latiana Nakia Hamilton, who was beaten and drowned in her Jacksonville foster home.

Department of Children & Families officials have called the figures misleading and point out that most foster care parents do a good job.

There's no way to fully erase the element of harm from any child care, but more thorough background checks might have saved Latiana. Her foster parents had been investigated for complaints of child mistreatment in Michigan. The complaints were substantiated, yet those records were neither required nor sought by the DCF when the couple was licensed for foster care in Florida. When the supervision of such vulnerable charges is at stake, this kind of information must be available. Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association President Suzanne Stevens said it's imperative that the state recruit more foster parents; 4,200 homes for 20,000 children aren't enough.

The state also must do more to prepare and support foster parents in their jobs. They must be fully informed of emotional or physical concerns about a foster child, and they should have access to support services ranging from mental health care to dentistry.

These improvements will take political will - and money. Overworked staffs may not have time to do essential background searches. But if the state can't find better ways to keep children like Latiana from falling through the cracks, Floridians should be more than appalled—we should be ashamed.

Invest in Children

The issue: Protecting our children

We suggest: Realign Washington priorities

Here's a tiny digest of information that you probably do not want to absorb just before bedtime. It will—or it should—keep you awake. Every one of these situations occurs daily in the United States.

- 15 children are killed by firearms violence.
- 2,660 children are born into poverty.
- 2,822 young people drop out of school.
- 8493 children are reported as victims of abuse and/or neglect

Those are the old flinty facts. They should be an embarrassment to this nation and its inhabitants. We believe we are the beacon of freedom throughout the world. We are—in many respects. We also have some dirty laundry that cries out for a thorough cleansing.

On Saturday, nearly a quarter million people gathered in Washington, D.C., to give America's children a figurative hug. The massive rally, "Stand For Children," featured celebrities who mouthed dreary statistics and uplifting rhetoric. If oratory were cash and commitment there would be no hungry, unloved, abandoned, drug-ravaged youngsters in America. Sadly the agenda for America's youngest citizens is set not by the altruistic, good-hearted folks who gathered around the Lincoln Memorial to celebrate and to protest, but by a Congress that demonstrates clearly skewed priorities.

Ideology, not foresight, will determine how many more children will be victims of a system that overlooks and minimizes their long-term needs, and that sacrifices the strategic investment in education and social programs for the tactical goal of improving next quarter's profits.

In the 13th century, in what has become a historical footnote, thousands of youngsters, most under the age of 12, joined together to march on the Holy Land. Their ill-fated adventure became known as the Children's Crusade. Most died en route or were sold in slavery.

There seems to be an unofficial crusade against children in Washington. Education funds are being cut by the Republican-dominated Congress while tax breaks for corporate executives are being fast-tracked. Children, who represent 100 percent of our future, are being short-changed for the benefit of the two percent of Americans at the top of the economic heap.

We must insist on more—and more efficient—funds and programs to help those deprived children survive and thrive. This is not about "big government," as fiscal conservatives like to crow. In the words of Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, this crucial argument is about "just government."

You have the power

Jack Levine, Executive Director of Florida Center for Children & Youth, is an activist for our youngest citizens. His efforts deserve support. Write/call Jack Levine, Florida Center for Children & Youth, P.O. Box 6846, Tallahassee, FL 32314, (850) 222-7140, (850) 224-6490 Fax

Op-Ed Article

Published in the Opinion Page of Our Views section of The News, Boca Raton, FL

Newsletter Article

Child Abuse Prevention Month presents opportunities to promote child abuse prevention in a newsletter or newspaper article. This sample article may be modified for the intended audience.

Observing Child Abuse Prevention Month

Since 1983, when April was designated Child Abuse Prevention Month, communities across the country have used this month-long observance to increase awareness of child abuse and its prevention. It is a time when individuals, schools, businesses, hospitals, religious organizations, and social service agencies join forces in the battle against child abuse.

Child maltreatment is one of society's oldest, most insidious problems. More than one million children are confirmed as victims of maltreatment every year, with three children dying each day as a result of abuse and neglect. Recognizing that everyone can participate in efforts to eliminate this serious threat to children, communities across the country are stepping forward to promote the message that child abuse can and must be prevented.

The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse offers the following suggestions about ways to help prevent child maltreatment in your community.

Help parents in your community

- Establish a parent support group. Plan a regular time when parents can get together to talk about and find solutions to parenting challenges.
- If you know a parent under stress, offer him or her a break. Take care of the children for a while so the parent can relax.
- Organize a regular playgroup so children and parents can all benefit.

Respond when you see abuse in public

- Strike up a conversation with the adult to direct the parent's attention away from the child. Say something comforting like "It looks like it's been a long day for both of you."

- Praise the child and parent at the first opportunity.
- Divert the child's attention (if misbehaving) by talking to the child.

Examine your own parenting practices

- Recognize that you are the most important person in your children's lives. What you say to them and how you treat them determines how they feel about themselves. Offer them honest praise at every opportunity.
- When you're feeling troubled or lonely, and when pressures build up, don't lash out at your child. Stop and take a deep breath. Remember you are the adult. Close your eyes and pretend you're hearing what your child is about to hear.
- If you think you need help, you're not alone. Being a parent isn't easy for anyone, and sometimes it's very hard. Take the first step. Reach out for help. Check your community's resources for a child abuse or crisis hotline, parenting group, or family service agency.

Report suspected abuse or neglect

- Protecting children requires everyone to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- To report suspected maltreatment, call your local department of children and family services, usually listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book under Health and Human Services Department, or call the police department.

Prevent Child Abuse America is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization, established in 1972. Visit www.preventchildabuse.org for more information about child abuse. ■

(Date)

Dear (news director's name):

The Florida Children's Forum is preparing to launch a major, statewide campaign championing the importance of quality child care for Florida's infants and toddlers and we'd like for you, as a community educator, to help us out. We know that the quality of child care that children receive from birth to three serves as a major impact on the rest of their lives. And we think the average parent probably knows this as well. What concerns us is the lack of credible information out there on how to select quality child care.

In Florida, in particular, parents have been so bombarded with stories about licensed vs. non-licensed facilities, homes vs. center, and nannies vs. day care, it is no wonder that many of them are just too confused and overwhelmed to make an intelligent decision. Because of this, the Florida Children's Forum (FCF) has designed a new web site [www.flchild.com] and hotline [1-888-FL-CHILD] that will introduce parents to an entire clearinghouse of information on quality child care.

Today, more than ever before, it is critically important that all of us in [INSERT AREA] community, work together to ensure that our children are getting the quality child care that they need and deserve. One way that we can do that is by providing parents with thoughtful, useful informational resources that they can reference. We would like to suggest a feature story on quality child care and the efforts that FCF is taking to create and maintain positive awareness towards child care through the campaign. We think this would be an article of interest to your readers.

If you would like additional information on the FCF quality child care campaign, or FCF, please contact me at (PHONE NUMBER). You can also find information on the FCF web site at www.flchild.com.

Sincerely,

Name
(AGENCY AREA)

**Letter
to TV or
radio news
director**

**Sample
radio scripts
for public
service
announcements
(PSAs)**

1. Hello, this is Wilbur Smythe, Chief of Police here in Carson City. I am shocked to learn that three children die every day in our country because of child abuse. And most of these kids are under the age of five. People who know tell me that child abuse is one problem that can be prevented. Call 888-8888 to find out more about preventing child abuse here where we live. What will you do today that's more important?
2. This is (Reverend, Father, Rabbi) John Elliott of (Church, Temple). My congregation will be observing Child Abuse Prevention Month by offering special services during April. The theme is "Communities Rising to the Challenge," and we invite you to join us as we explore ways to build healthy families. Preventing child abuse is important to us, and we think it's vital to our community. Call 888-8888 for more information.
3. This is Greg Caldwell. Yes, I'm the one who plays right field on the Red Sox team. Is my job tough? It sure is. But the biggest challenge I face isn't on the diamond; it's at home being a dad to my four kids. As a parent, I'll do anything to make our community a better place for parents and kids. That's why I'm a volunteer. I invite you to call 888-8888 to find out how you can be part of a program that I believe makes a difference right here in Madison. Call today.
4. Think about it. What you say to your children can make a big difference in the way they feel about themselves. It's called self-esteem and kids who have it generally become more successful than kids who don't. Hearing words like "You're worthless" and "You're stupid" will not make kids feel good about themselves. But you can make kids feel really good by saying, "You're special" and "Thanks for trying." Think about it.
5. Hi, if you're a parent like me, I don't have to tell you how tough a job we have. Sometimes it's so tempting to lash out and say things you don't mean. When the stress of being a parent feels overwhelming, it's time to do something - like joining a parenting class or a support group. Yes it can make a difference in the way you feel about your kids - and the way they feel about themselves.

*Provided by Prevent Child Abuse America, 200 S. Michigan Ave.,
17th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604 www.preventchildabuse.org*

Contact Person/Phone Number:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and in Florida, it is time to focus on creating a brighter tomorrow by preventing child abuse today. Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since that time, individuals and organizations have joined together during April to raise the public's awareness of child abuse prevention and to educate everyone within our communities about what can be done to prevent the tragedy of child abuse.

"It is time for the voices of our most vulnerable population, our children, to be heard," said Stephanie Meincke, former President/CEO of The Family Source of Florida. "It is time that we stand together on behalf of Florida's children and commit to working together to end the nightmare of abuse and neglect in their lives."

While other crime statistics continue to decline nationally, unfortunately, the incidence of child abuse and neglect cases continues to increase. Nationwide, the number of children who are reported abused and neglected each year has risen to nearly three million. In Florida, 85,644 children were verified as having been abused or neglected, in cases closed during 1999/2000.

A report issued last year by Prevent Child Abuse America found 50% of Americans do nothing when they witness child abuse or neglect. "A child is abused or neglected nearly every four minutes in our state," Ms. Meincke said. "It is time to raise the public's awareness of the devastation of child abuse, and encourage each and every Floridian to become involved in preventing it."

In communities throughout the nation, thousands of people are becoming involved in child abuse prevention efforts during April. The Family Source is asking other concerned individuals and organizations across the state to demonstrate their commitment to ending child abuse and neglect by wearing a blue ribbon during Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

- MORE -

**News/Press
release**
(sample one)

News/Press release

(sample one,
second page)

“The Blue Ribbon Campaign is one way that everyone in our community can play a role in child abuse and neglect prevention,” Ms. Meincke said. “Wearing a ribbon is a reminder that child abuse is everyone’s business and we must work together to continue to find solutions.”

The blue ribbon was first used by two grandmothers - one in Virginia and one in Florida to commemorate the deaths of children they loved who were killed by abusive parents. “The ribbons are blue because blue is the color of hope,” Ms. Meincke said. “We hope everyone in Florida wears a blue ribbon during the month of April - to show their commitment to helping ensure our children grow up safe and loved in communities that work together, making Florida the best place to be a child.”

(Insert information on local community efforts here)

For information on how to get your blue ribbon and to learn more about Child Abuse Prevention Month activities, contact: (insert appropriate information here).

In addition to the work we do within Florida’s communities, The Family Source of Florida is dedicated to preventing the increasing incidences of child abuse in Florida by providing services to families, communities and advocacy groups who are taking action to prevent child abuse.

To learn more about the Family Source of Florida, or for free parenting assistance and information, call 1-800-FLA-LOVE, or visit The Family Source website at www.familysource.org.

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(LOCAL AREA) CHILDREN SPEAK WITH “ONE VOICE FOR CHILDREN”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT: (Date) (Name and phone)

(City), FL—Children from (organization) are working to give all children a hand as they prepare for Children’s Week in Tallahassee. Handprints of all colors, shapes and sizes created by (local participants) are making their way to Tallahassee to kickoff “Children’s Week 2002: Speaking with One Voice for Children.”

(Local rally and hand collecting information here.)

The annual “Hanging of the Hands” in Tallahassee will begin Sunday afternoon, January 27, combining (local area) children’s hands with thousands from around the state. The hands will hang in the Capitol rotunda for a week as a reminder to the Legislature to consider Florida’s children when casting their votes.

Child advocates will gather in Tallahassee on Tuesday, January 29, to speak with one strong voice for children and for the prevention programs that help them. The press conference will feature children and advocates speaking out for the future of Florida’s children. Lawmakers are expected to attend. Their handprints will be included with those of the children from their district.

Advocates are challenging the Legislature to make 2002 a good year for children and their families, by addressing these issues:

- Healthy Children
- Children Safe in their Families and Communities
- Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School
- Stable and Nurturing Families
- Economically Self-Sufficient Families
- Supportive Communities

A copy of Speaking with One Voice for Children—The Florida Agenda is attached. For more information about the Speaking with One Voice for Children—The Florida Agenda, visit the Children’s Week web site at www.childrens-week.org/.

- MORE -

**News/Press
release**
(sample two)

**News/Press
release**

*(sample two,
second page)*

State budget shortfalls are threatening many children's programs and child advocates are asking the public to speak out on behalf of these important issues.

Children's Week is a statewide initiative designed to highlight the issues facing Florida's children and families during the 2002 legislative session and to encourage lawmakers to fund these critical programs. The Children's Week activities are an annual event sponsored by more than 20 of Florida's child advocacy and interest groups throughout Florida.

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SPONSORING PARTNERS

Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
 Florida Children's Forum
 Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
 Florida Partnership for School Readiness
 The Lawton Chiles Foundation
 United Way of Florida/
 Success By 6 Partnership

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

Center for Florida's Children
 Children's Home Society
 Commission on Responsible Fatherhood
 Communities in Schools of Florida
 Early Childhood Association of Florida
 Florida ARF
 Florida Children's Campaign
 Florida Head Start Association
 Florida Interagency Council for Infants & Toddlers
 Florida Pediatric Society
 Florida PTA
 Florida School-Age Child Care Coalition, Inc.
 Florida State Foster Adoptive Parent Association
 Friends of Children, Inc.
 Healthy Families Florida
 Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida
 Pinellas County Head Start/Early Head Start
 Southeast Evaluation Association
 The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation
 The Family Source of Florida
 The Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies
 The Mary Brogan Museum of Arts & Sciences
 The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children
 VSA Arts of Florida

CORPORATE SUPPORTER

Kaplan Companies, Inc.

Children's Week 2002
 c/o United Way of Florida
 307-B E. 7th Avenue
 Tallahassee, FL 32303
 Phone 850-488-8276
 Fax 850-681-9137
www.childrensweek.org

Speaking with One Voice for Children— The Florida Agenda

The well-being of children and families is the highest priority in Florida and public policies will be established to be consistent in their support of this priority. The key indicators of well-being are:

- All of Florida's children are healthy, safe and ready to learn at every age.
- All of Florida's families are stable, nurturing and economically self-sufficient.
- All of Florida's communities are supportive of families raising children.

Healthy Children. The benefits of beginning and living a healthy life are enormous and long lasting. The consequences of beginning life unhealthy can be lifelong and costly. To safeguard our health, we need accessible and affordable health care. Particularly important is a healthy start prenatally and from birth. Children should have the supports and services necessary to live full, healthy and productive lives.

Children Safe in their Families and Communities. The quality of life in our communities depends upon feeling and being safe in our communities. Children are among our most vulnerable citizens. They require protection and nurturing to help them grow up to become responsible, law-abiding and nurturing adults.

Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School. Quality early education and care beginning in the infancy period should be affordable and accessible for all children. It is the first and crucial step in creating a well-educated work force and citizenry to help build better lives for Florida's families and a prosperous economy for Florida as a whole. Our best investment is to capitalize on the capacity for young children to learn in the early years and to teach our children how to live and work in our rapidly growing and complex world. At the outset, all children should enter school ready to succeed and continue to succeed as they grow.

Stable and Nurturing Families. Florida reflects a society comprised of four generations - children, parents, grandparents and super-elder great-grandparents. For all Floridians to participate fully in society, families need to thrive - children need to be able to grow to full potential and elders need to feel secure and believe they are needed.

Economically Self-Sufficient Families. Low-income and/or single parent families, some with inadequate or unsafe housing, face extraordinary challenges in providing the basic necessities of life. Such families are vulnerable to an array of social and economic challenges: unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy, lack of an adequate education and the need for public assistance. Eliminating poverty is an initiative likely to strengthen our communities in many ways, not just economically.

Supportive Communities. For Florida's communities to thrive and for children to grow up to become contributing adults who take their personal and community responsibilities seriously, a stable neighborhood environment that nurtures and supports the four generations represented in our communities is essential.

The key evidence-based policies and practices that are required to achieve well-being are:

- All children and families in Florida have access to health care.
- All children and families in Florida have access to home-visiting services.
- All children and families in Florida have access to affordable, quality early education and care services.
- All children and families in Florida have access to integrated health, economic and family support services.
- All communities in Florida, in partnership with the state are supportive and provide for a comprehensive, integrated continuum of natural, primary and specialized supports and services that are available to all children and families.
- All public and private employers in Florida promote family-friendly employment practices and a livable wage for all people who work.



The Florida Agenda was developed by The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children. *The vision of The Policy Group for Florida's Families & Children is that, together, we will ensure that a generation of young people grow up to be responsible adults—ready, willing and able to contribute to self, to family and to their community.* For more information about the agenda and the work of The Policy Group, consult their website at www.policygroup.org.

Attachment to News Release *Speaking with One Voice for Children— The Florida Agenda*