

UNITED WAY OF TUCSON AND SOUTHERN ARIZONA PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA 2010



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Public Policy Rationale

Government, at all levels, plays a significant role in the delivery of health and human services. Periodically, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona (UWTSA) must communicate with local, state and national governments to advance our priorities and/or to react to pending legislative initiatives that might favorably or adversely affect our community impact efforts, community impact partners and/or the individuals we serve.

United Way engages in public policy advocacy because we recognize that it is our civic obligation to use our experience and knowledge to help inform the decisions of policymakers regarding the policy and funding of government human services programs.

To best meet our public policy goals, UWTSA has established the following three strategic tiers to guide our action and investments.

Tier One: Leadership

UWTSA will assume a public leadership role to proactively communicate, educate and lobby to bring visibility and a voice to issues affecting the human services sector, with a particular focus on UWTSA's current community impact areas. A commitment of financial resources and significant UWTSA staff/volunteer time may be considered when addressing issues at this level.

Tier Two: Advocacy

UWTSA's public policy committee and staff will develop positions, lobby, educate and generate the appropriate support on an as-needed basis about sector-related topics/issues. The commitment of financial resources is not considered at this level, and the involvement of staff/volunteers occurs within the normal course of business or with special direction from the United Way public policy chair and president.

Tier Three: Support

UWTSA is not the lead organization, but may choose to provide visible support by lending its name and reputation to vehicles such as sign-on letters, letters to the editor and marketing collateral. United Way may also provide additional support to local and national coalition partners that are the thought leaders on specific issues supporting UWTSA's community impact areas. The commitment of financial resources is not considered at this level and staff and volunteer involvement is minimal.

**United Way of Tucson
and Southern Arizona**



OVERARCHING PRIORITY:

PROTECT ARIZONA'S CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SENIORS

Revenue projections indicate a significant budget deficit this year and in the years that follow. We must be mindful of the FY 10-11 state budget process. Our primary focus must be on protecting the state funding of programs and services that provide positive outcomes for children, families and seniors in our community.

United Way is also concerned that the legislature is considering taking funds from voter-approved initiatives as a means of balancing the state budget. Voter approved initiatives like First Things First and other education and healthcare initiatives prove that the public supports a strong safety net for the children and families in our state.

UNITED WAY PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

United Way is working to prevent further erosion to the critical services that provide a safety net for people statewide, particularly in respect to those programs that support:

- Quality childcare
- Childcare subsidies
- Out-of-School Time programs for children and youth
- Opportunities for youth employment and job-training
- Support for low-income families and seniors
- Support for domestic violence and sexual assault victims
- Home and community-based services for the elderly and disabled
- Health insurance for low-income individuals and families

United Way is working to advance the common good through its focus on education, income and health. These are the building blocks of a good life: a quality education that leads to stable employment, enough income to support a family through retirement and good health.



EDUCATION: HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL

Tier One Issue:

CHILDCARE

United Way continues to support the state's efforts to invest in high-quality early childhood education and improve the affordability and accessibility of childcare. This includes the support of First Things First, a citizen's initiative that funds quality early childhood development and health.



Other priorities include: the opening of the childcare subsidy waiting list, making subsidies available to all eligible families, implementation of the Empower Pack (the childcare public health initiative to reduce licensing fees) and the continued development of an equitable plan for assessment and payment of childcare licensure fees.

INCOME: PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Tier One Issues:

INCOME SUPPORTS

To help hard-working families that are struggling in these tough economic times, United Way will continue to support legislation to increase tax credits for working families, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit.

United Way also advocates for hard-working families by supporting efforts to increase wages to sustainable levels.

In addition, we will support efforts to lift asset limits for benefits programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). United Way also supports initiatives to extend the renewal timelines for benefits programs like SNAP, AHCCCS and unemployment benefits. In addition, we support increased funding for community-based Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and asset-building initiatives.

United Way will support efforts to increase funding for rental and utility assistance.

United Way is also working to stop the cutting of state programs that are vital to low-income working families. These programs include: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Department of Economic Security childcare reimbursement program, Kids Care and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. United Way also advocates for the enrollment of all eligible families and individuals into the programs for which they are entitled.

EQUITABLE FINANCIAL SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

Support consumer protection initiatives aimed at regulating financial products and services. Support public policies that would promote access to affordable long-term care insurance and reverse mortgage programs for seniors, with individual counseling support provided.

Support consumer protection initiatives aimed at regulating the reporting of healthcare debt. Support public policies that would promote access to low-priced and appropriately-priced products from financial institutions, including banks and credit unions for low-income families, senior citizens and individuals with disabilities. Support consumer protection initiatives aimed at eliminating predatory financial products and services.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Support state and local efforts to provide older workers with access to job opportunities, job training and freedom from age discrimination.

DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE

At the same time the older population is rapidly expanding, the workforce available to provide assistance to people needing home or institutional care is diminishing. In order to ensure an adequate supply of quality, well-trained workers to care for a growing elder population, direct care jobs need to provide workers with adequate wages, reasonable workloads and career advancement opportunities. To accomplish this, United Way will support state workforce development programs targeted



at providing the low-wage direct care workforce with career development opportunities. United Way will support efforts to improve reimbursement rates to nursing homes and home care agencies in the form of wage pass-throughs.

Tier Two Issues:

ASSET-BUILDING

Continue to support efforts at the state and local levels to increase the availability of economic education training and expanded outreach for the EITC.

Support state asset-building legislation for low and moderate-income families such as state-supported Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and a state Earned Income Tax Credit.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Support state legislation that enables formal financial education classes in the K-12 system.

HEALTH: IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES

Tier One Issues:

KIDS CARE

Lift the cap on Kids Care. Support, at a minimum, the maintenance of the current levels of funding, eligibility and the continuation of proactive outreach efforts to ensure the enrollment of all eligible children.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Increase healthcare accessibility through technology and policies.

HOME-BASED SERVICES

Over the past several years, funding for home-based services has decreased despite an increase in the number of at-risk seniors and adults with disabilities. This funding decrease has placed more seniors and disabled individuals in life-threatening circumstances and is also linked to a rise in the institutionalization of seniors.

For these reasons, United Way supports any possible maintenance and growth in funding to area agencies for adequate in-home services through Arizona's non-medical home and community based services. We also support the current levels of state funding for capacity-building services for organizations servicing seniors in our state.

Tier Two Issues:

ORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Support the inclusion of senior's oral health and mental health needs into expanded statewide programs. In support of oral health programs for seniors, restore the annual dental benefit of \$1,000 for Arizona Long Term Care System members.

PROTECT SENIORS FROM ABUSE & NEGLECT

Support the current level of funding for Adult Protective Services and support efforts proposed by area agencies to review and respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation. In conjunction with the multidisciplinary Elder Abuse and Exploitation Teams, maintain present staff levels to investigate reports of abuse and neglect. In addition, guard against any efforts to reduce the current quality of care standards for the care of seniors and vulnerable adults.



Promote adequate sanctions against licensed individuals practicing in securities, real estate, insurance or payday loans who exploit senior citizens. At this time, there are few remedies available to these victims.

TRANSPORTATION

Important to improving people's lives is their ability to access community programs, resources, healthcare providers, social activities and events, and family and friends. Older adults often face a difficult decision regarding when to give up their own cars and begin to rely on other transportation options. Having adequate transportation options in both rural and urban locations is critical to facilitating these individual decisions. United Way will support state efforts to improve transportation alternatives that provide a public solution to this dilemma.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Support state funding for critical family and intimate partner violence crisis intervention and law enforcement efforts, including adequate funding for the network of family shelters across the state.

NATIONAL ISSUES

Tier Three Issues:

The federal budget should express a practical commitment to building a nation that allows every American, young and old, to be free from hunger, adequately housed and have access to quality healthcare. Therefore, we strongly oppose reducing or eliminating services in Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other programs that provide critical help to vulnerable people.

EARLY QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As a matter of economic and education policy, we need a greater federal investment that reaps economic and education benefits for the nation by helping children and families thrive.

Support the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). This includes incentives for market reimbursement rates in all states to ensure that parents are not forced to choose sub-par childcare facilities. Support the requirement that each state develop, within five years, a statewide quality rating and improvement system. Support the requirement that QRIS systems dedicate resources to increase compensation for early childhood educators.

Support reauthorization of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act/NCLB. This includes providing joint professional development for teachers of young children in schools, child care programs, state-funded pre-kindergarten, Early Head Start and Head Start. Support the use of Title I funds for early education programs for children ages zero to four years.

Require school districts to report to the state and to the U.S. Secretary of Education what percentage of Title I funds are spent on children, by age group, below kindergarten and whether the funds are coordinated with other public or private funding to provide high quality programs serving children younger than kindergarten age.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Support the increase authorized funding levels and appropriations for 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Supplemental Educational Services (SES). Increase accessibility of SES funding for nonprofit and community based organization after-school programs and Summer Youth Employment Programs.

Support the use of Title 1 funds for educational enrichment programs during out-of-school time for children K-12. Require school districts to report to the state and to the U.S. Secretary of Education what percentage of Title 1 funds are spent on children, by age group, kindergarten through 12 grade and whether the funds are coordinated with other public or private funding to provide high quality out-of-school time programs serving school-age children and youth.

HOUSING

United Way supports the continuation and expansion of Section 8, federal housing and other community development programs.

Support federal efforts to minimize the negative impact of the subprime mortgage and foreclosure crisis on working families and retirees to protect them from further exploitation and abuse.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT/ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Support the continuation and expansion of the EITC and other tax credits as a major source of financial support for low-income working families.

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

Increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER NATIONAL BOARD PROGRAM (EFSP)

Increase funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program.

STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (SCHIP)

Support removal of the state imposed enrollment cap for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This program, jointly financed by states and the federal government, provides comprehensive health insurance coverage to more than four million low-income children who would otherwise be uninsured.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE REFORM

The widely-recognized deficits in our nation's healthcare system call for major reform. The current system must be improved for United Way to achieve its goal of improving the health of people in our community. United Way supports the federal efforts to improve the current healthcare system to both reduce costs and increase access.

NUTRITION

- Support federal, state and local efforts to decrease food insecurity and obesity. The school hours allotted for physical education and recess have greatly diminished because of a greater emphasis on academic achievement and standardized test scores. Federal programs such as the Carol White Physical Education Program and the Safe Routes to Schools program help ensure that children have the opportunity to play and increase their physical fitness despite these cutbacks.
- Support state and local efforts that encourage improved nutrition labeling on restaurant and school menus. This would allow the community to make better-informed decisions regarding food choice and caloric intake.
- Support local city planning and zoning efforts that ensure neighborhoods and housing developments include or have easy access to multi-use paths, parks and other recreational facilities. Support local policies that promote physical fitness and are designed to increase the use of underutilized facilities such as school gyms, community pools and fitness centers.



2-1-1

Pioneered in Georgia, and since replicated in 46 other states, 2-1-1 is a three-digit phone number that connects individuals and families seeking human services or affected by a declared disaster to the help they need.

United Way advocates:

Implementation of a statewide 2-1-1 information and referral system available by both telephone and the internet.

Adoption of federal calling for 2-1-1 legislation to support state systems.

NURSING HOMES AND ASSISTED LIVING

Support national efforts to improve quality in nursing homes and assisted living through cultural changes that address both quality of life and quality of care.