

# Prepare 2012

*Public policy strategies for economic justice*





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# The State of Our State

The recession that has gripped the nation for the last several years has had a dramatic impact on the State of Florida. Overall poverty rates increased in 39 of Florida's 67 counties between 2007 and 2010. The 2010 U.S. Census found more than 3 million Floridians (16.5 percent of the population) living under the federal poverty line – and that number has increased over the past year.

School-aged children are among those hardest hit by Florida's economic downturn. With high unemployment rates, more houses are going into foreclosure as struggling families find it difficult—impossible—to make their mortgage payments. Consequently, more Floridians than ever before are finding themselves homeless. A growing number of families are living in cars, hotels or shelters, struggling to keep their children fed and in school.



Florida lawmakers can help stem the tide of Florida's poverty epidemic, and they must make it a top priority in 2012. This includes:

- Stopping the proposed budget cuts impacting homeless programs funding
- Protecting Florida's health and economy through Medicaid
- Ensuring continued funding for Florida KidCare as a valuable resource for families who need affordable health insurance for children under 18
- Preventing a raid of trust funds intended for affordable housing
- Ensuring SNAP bonus money from the federal government is re-invested in the SNAP program and not put into general revenue

This is a pivotal year in state politics – not just in Florida, but across the nation. A report from the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers forecasts another challenging year of budget slashing as federal funding continues to shrink.

With a continued emphasis on economic growth and creating jobs for Floridians, Governor Rick Scott and the legislature have a difficult agenda ahead of them. Combined with rising costs in education and Medicaid spending, lawmakers could face a \$2 billion budget shortfall in the election year ahead. Anticipating a budget deficit makes it difficult for legislators who have to prioritize every dollar allocated. As always, there are hundreds of issues that are considered “high-priority” budget items, and yet even those will be looked at very carefully for reductions—or cuts altogether.

## Redistricting

One of the biggest issues over the past year and affecting the 2012 Session is redistricting. The Florida House and Senate have been working on the once-a-decade process of redrawing Florida's state legislative and congressional district boundary lines. Those lines can significantly alter the demographic makeup of a district and have a dramatic impact on representation at all levels of government.

This process, intended to be objective, quickly becomes highly politicized as legislators try to draw boundaries to their own advantage. Florida is no exception; in November 2010, voters overwhelmingly sent a message to Florida politicians. Floridians passed Amendments 5 and 6 with 63% of the vote. These amendments established rules in the Florida Constitution to stop politicians from designing districts to favor themselves. While carefully protecting the rights of minority voters, the constitution now prohibits political favoritism, and requires that districts be compact, contiguous, and follow city or county lines where feasible.

Florida's troubled economy has had a disproportionate effect on minorities, and redistricting could have an additional impact. Ensuring continued and much-needed funding for addressing homelessness, hunger and healthcare will provide Floridians with resources that will enable them to get back to work and keep our children healthy and safe.

# Proposed Cuts Impact Homeless Programs

Florida is known for many wonderful things—like miles of beautiful sandy beaches, millions of tourists who visit our resorts every year, and excellent seafood, among many others. But, sadly, Florida is also known as the state that shelters one-third of America's homeless families. This is a statistic that we are not proud to promote.

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) reported that in the 2010-2011 school year Florida totaled 56,680 homeless children. This is up drastically from 49,104 in 2009-2010—a statistic illustrated by 60 Minutes ([http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560\\_162-57330802/hard-times-generation-families-living-in-cars/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57330802/hard-times-generation-families-living-in-cars/)).

If the state's proposed 2012-2013 budget reduction gets passed, Florida's homeless epidemic will worsen.

These budget reductions would impact two critical homeless programs: the Challenge Grant (funding level \$2,031,654) and local homeless coalition staffing grants (funding level \$345,729).

The Challenge Grant helps fund local homeless services consistent with the community's homeless assistance plan. The grant funds each of the 28 local homeless planning areas covering 64 of the 67 counties.

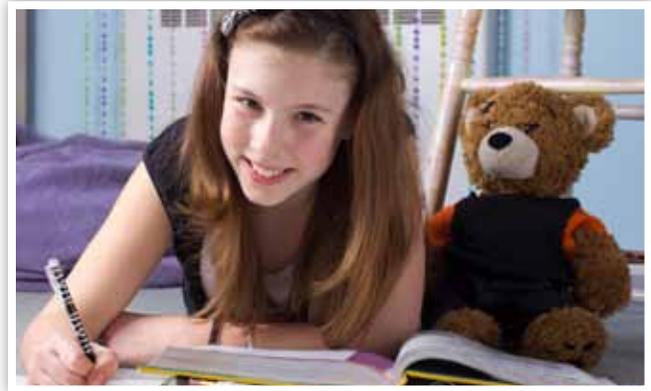
In fiscal year 2010-2011 the grant was used to:

- Fund 120 local homeless service agencies
- Serve 61,530 homeless people or at-risk of becoming homeless
- Provide safe housing to 22,050 people in 67 homeless housing facilities
- Assist 6,627 with short-term financial aid to enable them to stay in their current housing through local agencies
- Provide essential services to 32,850 people including meals, transportation, health care and identification materials

The Challenge Grant's proposed elimination will reduce direct services to persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. All of Florida's 28 homeless planning areas will be impacted and lose funds for these services.

The tragic result is that more people are becoming homeless due to foreclosures and evictions. Fewer temporary housing beds will be available with the loss of

operating dollars. Those who become homeless will find fewer agencies able to address their daily needs of food, transportation and health care.



The local homeless coalitions are the community partners to the Department of Children and Families in coordinating the delivery of services to the homeless. The loss of the homeless coalition staffing grants will reduce the capacity of the community partners to undertake essential planning. In parts, the grants provide for:

- Annual homeless counts
- A continuum of care plan, updated each year
- Submission of competitive federal grant applications

Twenty-two of these coalitions are local non-profits, and six are county government agencies. The ability of the non-profit coalitions to replace the staff grant money from private contributions or local government support is unlikely because of the national downturn in charitable giving and limits on Florida's local government revenues.

As many as half of the non-profit coalitions would face the prospect of having to close or rely totally upon volunteers to carry out their responsibilities.

The coalitions at the greatest risk of closing are those that:

- Have only one professional position
- Serve less populated and rural counties
- Have a limited homeless service network
- Operate where homeless are most likely on the street or camping in the woods

**Where does your county stand in the equation of homeless people and grant funding?**

Homeless Coalition/Lead Agency	County(s) Served	Homeless People			Challenge Grant	
		2009 Estimate	2010 Estimate	2011 Count	FY09-10	FY10-11
Alachua Homeless Coalition	Alachua	1,596	879	1,034	\$96,000	\$63,397
	Putnam	911	288	141		
	Bradford	78	5	39		
	Levy	115	15	0		
	Gilchrist	N/C	1	6		
Homeless Coalition of NW Florida	Bay	352	317	378	\$0	\$63,397
	Calhoun	N/C	N/C	1		
	Gulf	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Holmes	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Jackson	N/C	11	34		
	Washington	3	N/C	N/C		
Brevard County	Brevard	1,207	1,221	1,889	\$57,600	\$63,397
Broward County	Broward	4,154	4,154	3,801	\$96,000	\$63,397
Charlotte Homeless Coalition	Charlotte	541	598	716	\$36,414	\$63,397
Mid Florida Homeless Coalition	Citrus	297	405	502	\$57,600	\$63,397
	Hernando	185	136	148		
	Lake	491	766	1,008		
	Sumter	52	48	57		
	Columbia	554	554	462	\$96,000	\$63,397
United Way Suwannee Valley	Hamilton	123	343	103		
	Lafayette	69	69	57		
	Suwannee	343	123	280		
	Collier County	Collier	329	401	390	\$96,000
Highlands County Coalition	Desoto	319	761	15	\$0	\$63,397
	Glades	220	220	N/C		
	Hardee	1,410	1,410	104		
	Hendry	727	727	16		
	Highlands	1,782	1,782	105		
	Okeechobee	383	383	32	\$0	\$63,397
Homeless Coalition of Jacksonville	Duval	3,244	3,910	4284		
	Clay	N/C	7	113		
	Nassau	N/C	61	165		
EscaRosa Homeless Coalition	Escambia	713	713	549	\$96,000	\$63,397
	Santa Rosa	317	317	72		
Hillsborough Homeless Coalition	Hillsborough	7,473	7,473	7,336	\$114,000	\$100,000
Treasure Coast Homeless Services	Indian River	662	648	606	\$114,000	\$100,000
	Martin	211	517	306		
	St. Lucie	788	995	771		
Lee County	Lee	931	1,041	1,054	\$96,000	\$63,397
Big Bend Homeless Coalition	Leon	437	437	683	\$57,600	\$63,397
	Franklin	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Gadsden	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Liberty	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Madison	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Taylor	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Jefferson	N/C	N/C	N/C		
	Wakulla	N/C	N/C	N/C		
Suncoast Partnership/ Community Coalition	Sarasota	787	787	787*	\$96,000	\$63,397
	Manatee	558	528	528*		
Marion County Homeless Coalition	Marion	678	356	941	\$96,000	\$100,000
Miami-Dade Homeless Trust	Miami-Dade	4,333	3,832	3,777	\$96,000	\$63,397
Southernmost Homeless Assistance	Monroe	1,040	1,040	926	\$114,000	\$100,000
Okaloosa Walton Continuum of Care	Okaloosa	2,361	1,842	2,145	\$96,000	\$63,397
	Walton	85	420	619		
Homeless Services Network Central FL	Orange	1,279	1,494	2,872	\$0	\$63,397
	Osceola	374	443	833		
	Seminole	368	397	810		
Palm Beach County	Palm Beach	2,147	2,147	2,148	\$57,600	\$63,397
Pasco County	Pasco	4,527	4,527	4,442	\$57,600	\$100,000
Pinellas County Coalition	Pinellas	4,163	3,948	3,890	\$96,000	\$63,397
Polk Co Coalition/Tri County Human Services	City of Lakeland				\$65,340	\$100,000
	Polk	820	820	1,095	\$0	\$63,397
St. Johns Homeless Coalition	St. Johns	1,237	1,237	1,386	\$57,600	\$100,000
Volusia/Flagler Homeless Coalition	Volusia	1,874	2,076	2,215	\$96,000	\$63,397
	Flagler	39	79	98		

\*Data for 2011 not yet reported • N/C=No Count Conducted • Counted as of May 26, 2011 Office on Homelessness

# Protecting Florida's Health and Economy Through Medicaid

According to Florida Chain, Community Health Action Information Network, a balanced and responsible approach to deficit reduction must be put into effect to keep Florida's economy and people healthy. This plan must include significant revenue while keeping Medicaid intact for the 3 million seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income families who rely on it in Florida.

In order to ensure that Florida's future health and economy will be vibrant, consider the potential impact of these approaches to deficit reduction if approved:



## **Deficit reduction based on spending cuts**

Deficit reduction based on spending cuts alone will undermine essential government programs that provide jobs, which will stifle Florida's economic growth. If Florida lost just 5 percent of federal Medicaid funding, it would cost the state 11,320 jobs and over \$566 million in business activity.

## **Cutting Medicaid**

Cutting Medicaid would hurt people who depend on the program for access to health coverage, and it would hurt

their caregivers. In Florida, 12.8% of seniors, 42.8% of people with disabilities, 58.3% of nursing home residents, 100,600 people with home and community-based services, and millions of children relied on Medicaid in 2010. By reducing Florida's deficit by cutting Medicaid, we would be hurting our most vulnerable residents.

## **Find Medicaid savings by shifting costs to Florida and its families**

Proposals that achieve savings by reducing the federal Medicaid match will simply shift costs to Florida. This will put greater pressure on Florida to cut benefits or eligibility and/or reduce provider payments.

## **Cut federal Medicaid funding**

Simply cutting federal Medicaid funding shifts costs to the rest of us in Florida. Cutting Medicaid means more people uninsured in Florida – meaning less access to preventive care, delaying treatment, and ending up in the emergency room. That raises health care costs for the rest of us. Family coverage costs an extra \$1,000 or more to pay for the health costs of the uninsured.

## **Change structure of Medicaid in Florida**

Converting Medicaid to a block grant would limit its funding and cripple its ability to cover residents who need it. Caps or deep cuts will also leave the state to limit Medicaid enrollment, undermining the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

## **Eliminate the Medicaid maintenance of effort requirement in the Affordable Care Act**

Eliminating the maintenance of effort requirement would lead states to limit Medicaid eligibility and enrollment. The maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement generally requires that states maintain their current eligibility standards and procedures for Medicaid and CHIP until 2014. For children, the MOE provision maintains current eligibility standards and procedures through 2019. Rolling back eligibility in Florida's Medicaid program would strip medical coverage for the youngest, eldest, and sickest. It will also undermine the Medicaid expansion that's the foundation of the Affordable Care Act's coverage expansion.

**Source: Florida Chain [www.floridaCHAIN.org](http://www.floridaCHAIN.org)**

# Florida KidCare is a Valuable Resource for Families and Children

Florida leads the nation in reducing the number and rate of uninsured children, according to a recent study by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. From 2008 to 2010, the number of Florida's uninsured children fell by more than 160,000 to 506,934. The overall rate dropped from 16.7 percent to 12.7 percent.

This great stride for Florida is a direct result of the continued dedication to the Florida KidCare program.

Florida KidCare is the state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for uninsured children under age 19. The program partners – Medicaid for children, Florida Healthy Kids, MediKids, and the Children's Medical Services Network – provide comprehensive health coverage to 1.9 million Florida children.

The decrease in Florida's uninsured children can be directly attributed to:

- Numerous local outreach efforts that have used a mix of state and federal grants to target uninsured children through billboards, television advertising and other marketing methods.
- More kids becoming eligible for Medicaid as a result of the families' declining income in the economic downturn.
- Reducing CHIP barriers, which lowered the penalty for failure to pay CHIP premiums from 6 months loss of eligibility to 60 days.

To ensure that KidCare remains available for those families who need affordable, quality health insurance for their children, we must continue to make it easy to enroll and remain in the program.

The state must fully fund the Florida KidCare program, including its annualization needs, projected growth, outreach, and increased medical and dental costs in order to maximize the use of Florida's CHIP federal funds and include all eligible uninsured children.

Additionally, in order for Florida to remain a leader in reducing the number of uninsured children, the following recommendations need to be put into place for long-term improvement and sustainability:



- Extend full pay Florida KidCare coverage to infants from birth with family incomes above the established federal income eligibility for CHIP.
- Implement 12 months of continuous eligibility for all Florida KidCare components.
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement for physician and dental services provided to children ages 0 to 21, in order to ensure access to care.
- Cover pregnant women with incomes 185% to 200% of the federal poverty level with Title XXI funding and presumptive eligibility.
- Take advantage of federal matching funding by extending coverage to otherwise eligible legal immigrant children, pregnant women and public employees' children.

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# SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program



SNAP--the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program--is the food assistance program popularly known as "Food Stamps." SNAP provides a means for low-income individuals and families to buy nutritious food, serving as a safety net for those who are "food insecure." And as many Americans—and particularly Floridians—have been negatively impacted by the downturn in our economy, the SNAP program has increasingly become an important safety net for those in need.

The USDA's estimate of how much it costs to buy food to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals determines the amount of food assistance benefits an individual or family receives. Food assistance benefits are a supplement to a family's food budget.

The USDA reports that it has been serving record numbers of Americans through the SNAP program in the last fiscal year. On average, more than 40 million Americans depended on those benefits each month—half of whom are children — with more than three million in Florida.

Like many states, Florida has been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. With foreclosures reaching

an all-time high across the state, many Floridians found themselves unemployed for the first time. This year more than 3 million Floridians received food stamp benefits.

But there is good news too. Earlier this year, the USDA announced the lowest combined payment error rate in the history of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a direct result of a concerted effort by states to demonstrate integrity and sound stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The payment error rate for fiscal year 2010 was 3.81%, down from over 4% the previous year. And that is down from 9% over a ten-year period.

With the steady effort to improve the payment accuracy, this means that 96.19% of American households and individuals receive the proper amount of benefit through the program from states across the country (in Florida, that's 99.22% of households).

For the last several years Florida has outpaced most other states with the best payment accuracy rate in the country. Last year that rate was 0.78%--a remarkable achievement. As an incentive, the USDA offered bonus awards to the top-performing states for their excellence

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in administering SNAP. Maintaining payment accuracy and improving negative error rates were the results of the shared nationwide commitment to reduce error payments and improve the administration of the Supplemental Assistance Program.

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Last year Florida's low error rate in food stamps resulted in a \$11.5 million bonus that was used primarily for IT system projects and updates (for SNAP) as required by federal mandates. This year's repeated low error rate is attributed to a smarter use of technology and continual front-line training.

With Florida's distinguished and concerted efforts to lower the food stamp error rate, it has consistently received bonus money over the last several years to put back into the program for needed enhancements and small employee bonuses for workers who go above and beyond to ensure quality and accuracy. In the past, bonus money also was transferred into general revenue rather than the full amount going back into the SNAP program. As we move forward, it is imperative that any federal bonus money received for low error rates continue to be re-invested into SNAP as a means to help those Floridians who need that assistance the most.

*Continued from Page 5*

- Reinstate and implement presumptive eligibility for all Florida KidCare program components.
- Implement a medical income disregard for children with catastrophic illnesses who would otherwise qualify for Title XXI subsidies.
- Using Title XXI funding, adopt a seamless system for children with special health care needs by moving to Medicaid CMS Network (CMSN) eligible children with family incomes up to at least the established federal income eligibility for CHIP.
- Implement the state option Family Opportunity Act pursuant to the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

Use a single entity to determine a child's financial eligibility for all of the Florida KidCare program components.

**Source: Florida KidCare Coordinating Council 2011 Annual Report <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/alternatesites/kidcare/council/reports/KCC2011report-Web.pdf>**

**Source: Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/index/despite-economic-challenges-progress-continues-children-health>**



# Sadowski Coalition Opposes Affordable Housing Trust Fund Raid

The Sadowski Housing Coalition is a nonpartisan collection of 24 statewide organizations. The coalition came together in 1991 with the goal of obtaining a dedicated revenue source for Florida's affordable housing programs.

The Act that created the dedicated revenue source for Florida's affordable housing programs is called the Sadowski Act, and monies dedicated from the Act to the state and local housing trust funds are called Sadowski funds.

The Sadowski Housing Coalition is hoping to prevent a fourth straight year of heavy raids on the Florida's affordable housing trust fund. The Coalition's priority for

2012 is to urge the Florida Legislature to use Florida's housing trust fund monies solely for housing.

The Coalition recently unveiled its new website (<http://www.sadowskicoalition.com/>) focusing on reversing the recent trend of lawmakers using the fund to beef up the state's general revenue. This online resource aids the Coalition's membership organizations, supporters of affordable housing throughout the state, and elected officials in understanding that using housing trust fund dollars exclusively for its intended purpose—housing—creates approximately 9,000 jobs, \$900 million in economic benefits, and decreases future state budget deficits.

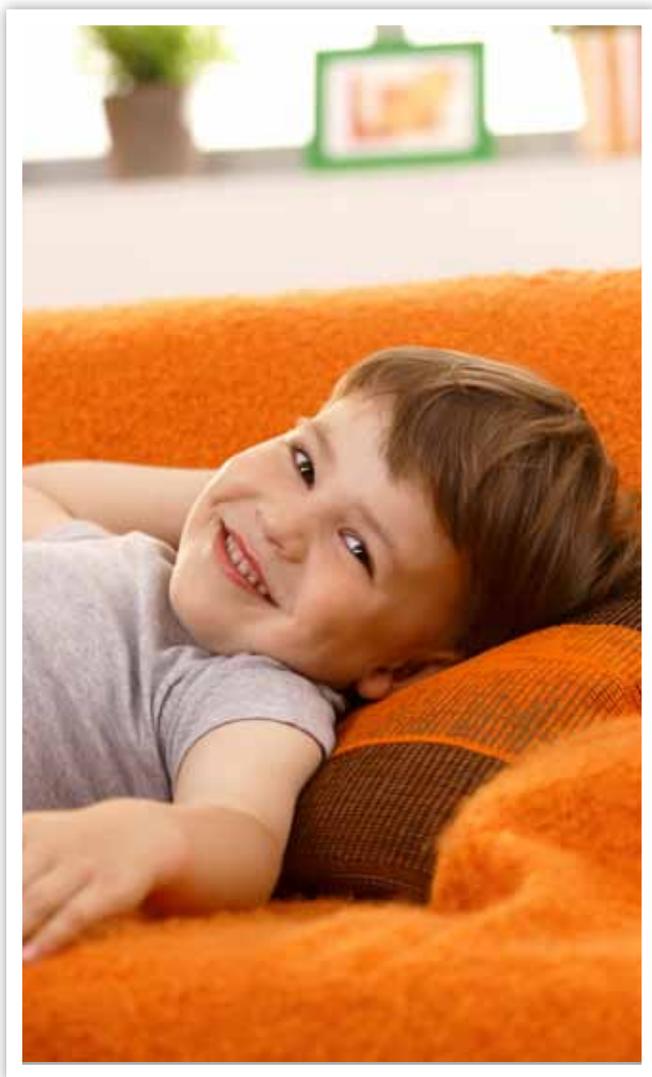
Getting lawmakers to agree to full funding for affordable housing, however, could be a difficult task. When the economy began to tank in 2008 after the housing bubble burst, legislators turned to the affordable housing trust fund to supplement dwindling general revenue funds. In the past three years, \$896 million of the affordable housing trust fund was swept into general revenue. This year no money was appropriated, down from a peak of \$443 million in fiscal year 2005-2006.

As the bottom fell out of the housing market and home prices plummeted, lawmakers also saw less of a need for affordable housing. But the coalition is attempting to change that perception, contending that, although there isn't a great need for new construction in the state, old apartment buildings and abandoned foreclosed properties are in need of repair and rehabilitation, and home prices haven't dropped far enough for the average working family.

"We're trying to educate them [lawmakers], because it's just not accurate, even today," said Mark Hendrickson, who directed the state housing agency when the Sadowski Act creating the trust fund was passed in 1992. "If you have a house that was \$500,000 and now it's down to \$200,000, how does that help out someone making \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year?"

That argument, however, could be a tough sell in a year when lawmakers are facing a potential \$2.6 billion budget shortfall and Medicaid and education costs are rising.

**\*Source: Sadowski Housing Coalition [www.sadowskicoalition.com](http://www.sadowskicoalition.com)**



# Notes



Since 1979, Florida Impact has leveraged nearly \$4 billion in additional public funds to serve an estimated 800,000 low-income Floridians. This is accomplished with aggressive, strategic outreach to maximize federal food and nutrition programs in Florida. Impact organizes the direct involvement of community leaders in advocating for public policies and programs responsive to the needs of low-income families. Impact is a three-time winner of the Congressional Hunger Center's Victory against Hunger Award and serves as the lead, convening organization for the Florida Partnership to End Childhood Hunger.

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