

JLFL SPAC
2009 Legislative Priorities
Talking points for Committee Members

These three priorities were voted and approved on Sunday, October 12th by a delegate from each of the participating Leagues of the JLFL SPAC in attendance at the Fall Conference in Jacksonville, FL. In an effort to streamline our advocacy message, we will focus on these three issues while supporting other proposed focus issues with grassroots efforts designed to engage the members of the participating JLs.

- Booster Seats The JLFL SPAC Legislative Analyst, Charlotte Mather, agreed to work the bill this legislative session, again. In her professional opinion, she felt that with our major opposition termed out the bill had a real chance of passing this year. Also since it's a tighter budget year, and this bill won't cost the state anything, it may be the 'feel good' issue legislators are looking to support. Senator Altman has agreed to sponsor the bill. Charlotte is working with Senator Altman's office to secure a House sponsor.

Motor Vehicle accidents claim the lives of more Florida children over the age of 4 than any other cause and are a leading cause of injury, hospitalization and disability in children of all age groups. Many of the injuries are preventable if children are appropriately restrained, but Florida law only requires children through age 3 to have age appropriate restraints.

Research has shown that children age 4 though 7 using booster seats have significantly better outcomes in motor vehicle accidents than children in adult seat belts.

Children in booster seats are 59% less likely to be injured than children using seat belts alone (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2003)

Children in seat belts alone are:

-4 to 5 times more likely to sustain head injuries (Pediatrics, 2002)

-3 times more likely to sustain abdominal injuries (Annals of Surgery, 2004)

-28% more likely to die. (The Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2006).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics) children who have outgrown child safety seats (CSS) with internal harnesses should be properly restrained in a belt positioning booster (BPB) seat until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9".

The Barriers to Booster Seat Use

A study conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia explored reasons for booster seat use and non-use.

Key findings are:

-Parents were unaware of the purpose of booster seats.

-Non-booster seat users had a low risk perception of injury from a crash.

-Parents looked to state laws for guidance to appropriately restrain children. One parent stated "the state law indicated that child safety seats only needed to be used until age 4. I figured that meant a seat belt was safe for my 4 year old child." Source. Pediatrics, October 2002.

Head and Face Injuries are most common

-71% of serious injuries to 4-8 year olds are up to the head or face.

-Children in seat belts are 4 times more likely to suffer head/brain injury as compared to children who use Child safety seats and Belt Positioning Booster seats.

-The Brain is the organ least likely to recover from injury.

More Stats

-48% if children between the ages of 4 and 8 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2001 were unrestrained. Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System, April 2003

Road-safety advocates ask U.S. to force states' compliance

NAMIC DAILYLEAD | 01/13/2009A coalition of groups representing insurers, consumers, law enforcement personnel and others is requesting that the federal government deny funds to states that do not comply with a 15-item list of measures found to reduce highway deaths. The group Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety released its "2009 Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws," a report on existing legislation that covers seat-belt requirements, use of child booster seats, teen driving, drunken driving and the wearing of motorcycle helmets.

NTSB urges Texas and 6 other states to adopt measure to save young lives

By TERRI LANGFORD Copyright 2008 Houston Chronicle

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FATALITIES

According to the NTSB, from 1998 to 2007, more than 3,500 child passengers ages 4 to 8 died in traffic crashes, about half of whom were unrestrained. Most of the remaining children were improperly restrained in a belt designed for adults.

Texas lawmakers are ready to take another stab at passing a booster seat law for children over age 3.

Last week, Texas was singled out by the National Transportation Safety Board as one of seven states lacking a booster seat law.

The agency, which investigates transportation accidents, cited a booster seat law as one of the five things it would like states to either adopt or improve in 2009.

"We're urging states to take a number of actions to reduce the number of crashes and the number of deaths and injuries," NTSB Chairman Mark Rosenker said.

Currently, 43 states and the District of Columbia require use of booster seats, although only 21 states and D.C. require them up through age 7. In Texas, only children who are younger than 5 and shorter than 36 inches are required to be secured properly in child-passenger safety seats.

Board member Debbie Hersman said seat belts fail to help children who are not propped up by a booster seat.

"Children who are too small for seat belts need a booster seat to position the seat belt properly," Hersman said, adding that a booster seat can be had for as little as \$15.

Without a booster seat, a seat belt can injure a child through choking or causing abdominal injuries during a crash.

The agency recommended that Texas and the other six states — Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Minnesota, Ohio and South Dakota — pass laws that provide protection for children over age 3, in the form of a booster seat.

State Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, wrote such a bill in 2007, but it died in the Texas House of Representatives because no action was taken on it before the legislative session ended. She has refiled the bill for the 2009 session.

Without a booster seat law, children are being improperly buckled into vehicles, she said.

"I was approached by pediatricians who explained to me how important that is," she said. "Some (children) have been hurt severely because they were not in booster seats."

If passed, her bill would allow for a one-year warning period before parents could be ticketed in 2010.

State Sen. Kirk Watson, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security, said he'd like to see Texas finally pass such a bill.

"We're one of half a dozen states that haven't done this, and that tells you something," Watson said. "It is a sign that we're out of step."

DOT 24-06
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U.S. Transportation Chief Declares Low Child Booster Seat Use "Unacceptable"

National statistics showing less than one out of every five kids between the ages of four and eight is riding in a car booster seat are a sign of "failure" and must be addressed immediately, U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said today during a visit to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

First responders and emergency room doctors and nurses are "doing their part to address the consequences of this country's failure to put children in booster seats," Mineta said at a news conference, but he labeled "unacceptable" the effort to get kids buckled up. "Starting right now we must all do a better job.

Over the past two years, Mineta said less than 20 percent of kids who should be in booster seats are actually in them when they are riding in cars.

He used the occasion to announce a new federal initiative that will provide \$25 million over the next four years to states that pass and enforce new or tougher booster seat laws. He said 34 states and the District of Columbia already have booster seat laws, but took time to call the names of the 16 states that don't have such protections on the books.

These states, Mineta said, should "do the right thing and pass a law now."

Mineta also called on parents to do a better job, saying they should make sure their children are in booster seats regardless of local statutes.

"Just because they may not be the law of the land, does not mean they should not be the law of your house," Mineta said.

As for the low use rates, Mineta said people were either "unfamiliar with the risks or unaware of the benefits".

"Either way, ignorance isn't bliss...it's deadly," he said.

Mineta encouraged parents to visit www.boosterseat.gov to find out if their child should be in a booster seat and said his Department would spend \$285,000 for new billboard and radio and television advertisements to promote booster seat use nationwide.

Mineta was joined by Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA), whom he thanked for his support and passage of critical highway safety and infrastructure legislation last year.

Correlating position statement- Position Statement on Child Safety Restraint Systems (Adopted spring 2001; reviewed fall 2006)

- Foster Care We will work to preserve funding this year. After discussions recently with foster care providers on statewide boards, like the Florida Coalition for Children, the priority now is to simply maintain funding and avoid further cuts. Last year \$20 million was cut. Many providers are working under budget and having to privately raise one-third of their budget. With the successful new strategy of wrapping families at-risk in services and keeping children in the home combined with a shorter average length of time in foster care, the number of children in the system has been greatly reduced. Providers are hoping this success won't be misinterpreted by legislators as a reason to cut funding, but rather to appropriate funding to prevention programs. Rep. Glorioso has committed to using one bill slot of his each year he holds office to proposing a foster care bill. He will be sponsoring a bill that has yet to be drafted. The group felt that since many Leagues have community projects supporting foster care projects and this has been a priority of SPAC's for several years, it was appropriate for SPAC to take up this issue without a specific bill just yet.

Correlating position statement- Position Statement on Young Adults Emerging from Foster Care (Adopted winter 2004; reviewed fall 2006)

- Girls' Advocacy Project (GAP) Vicki Lukis submitted a thorough summary of GAP. (See attached.) Right now 3 JLs in the state have GAP as a project; Miami, Orlando and Palm Beach. It was relayed to us that one of the reasons the funding for last year passed at all was because of the huge support of the Junior Leagues that these 3 sites receive. The immediate past SPAC Chair, Melissa Fritsch, has joined the GAP board giving them another strong advocate. Only \$150,000 of their \$500,000 budget is currently included in the DJJ budget. They are looking for \$350,000 in funding and need help advocating for that this session. Unfortunately, the Legislature recently sent out a notice due to the state budget shortfall that community budget requests will not be accepted and this critical

program's non recurring funding was secured through the community budget request process. Additional funding is challenging at this time, but we will continue to speak to the legislators to advise them of the merits of the program.

Correlating position statement- Position Statement on Service for Female Juvenile Offenders (Adopted winter 2005; Revised fall 2006)

Here's a link to last year/session's legislative representative marketing material: <http://www.jlflspac.org/id3.html> ; see Girls Advocacy Project (GAP) on page 2, Foster Care on page 1 and Booster Seats on page 1.

It is the hope of the JLFL SPAC board that with the information that will be provided in time to member Leagues by the JLFL SPAC board, each League will whole heartedly support these three priorities with supporting PR, GMM presentations and volunteer activities, in an effort to train members in the advocacy process.

What is GAP and how long has it operated and briefly what is its success?

The Girls Advocacy Project (GAP) was initiated in 1999 to serve girls detained in the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center. **It is the only comprehensive prevention/intervention/education project in the State of Florida specifically serving girls while they are detained in a juvenile detention center.** GAP staff consists of a qualified professional staff experienced in working with girls and their unique gender-specific issues. The GAP Facilitators meet with the girls frequently to conduct group and individual sessions. They are knowledgeable in the area of delinquency and trained on issues pertinent to girls in the detention center. Girls are voluntarily admitted to the program. GAP uses a group facilitation model that combines the Motivational Interviewing approach with Solution Focused practices. This model uses a technique that gets girls to change themselves by increasing their own desire to change. It helps them see the benefits of moving in a new direction by leading her through a comparison between her goals and her current behavior. The goal is to create tension in her, and to place her in charge of the process of resolving the tension in pro-social ways. The focus is on getting her to rely on inner motivation rather than external control.

The girls have shown an improvement in awareness and understanding of the topics presented, which have given them the foundation to make better choices and stay crime-free after their release from detention. In May 2006, ABC News *Nightline* profiled GAP for its unique intervention work.

Incorporation and 501(c)(3) Status

GAP was incorporated in Florida on June 12, 2006 and received its 501(c)(3) exemption on August 16, 2007 with an effective exemption date of June 12, 2006.

Where did it expand and what money was used?

Since 1999, the legislature has funded GAP Miami, which received \$150,000 in non-recurring funds in the amount of \$150,000 until 2006-2007 when it received recurring funds in the same amount. That same year, GAP expanded to Southwest Florida, Orange and Palm Beach Regional Juvenile Detention Centers in Fort Myers, Orlando and West Palm Beach, respectively. The expansion received \$775,000 in non-recurring funds from the legislature. The program did not receive start-up funds from DJJ until December 2006, when it hired three GAP Facilitators. They trained the month of January and began serving girls on February 1, 2007. In 2007-2008, GAP received \$500,000 in non-recurring funds from the legislature to continue the program in the expansion sites. GAP Miami continued to receive its \$150,000 from recurring funds.

Recurring funds are used for programs the state is expected or required to continue from year to year while non-recurring funds are used for programs that are only expected to be funded in the current year. GAP faces a difficult challenge because one-third of its funds are recurring while the remaining is non-recurring. The organization cannot sustain its administrative expenses without the total \$500,000 and therefore, would have to terminate its services even if awarded the recurring funds of \$150,000 because there would not be sufficient funds to pay for administrative and operational expenses required.

How much is currently in budget?

GAP is part of the Department of Juvenile Justice's base budget and receives \$150,000 in recurring funds. The Department has allocated an additional \$300,000 in non-recurring funds. This represents a total current GAP funding of \$450,000 for the three sites. Due to a budget reduction of \$200,000 in 2008-2009, GAP was forced to close its operations in Fort Myers in May 2008. As a result, GAP reduced its total operations by 25%.

What will happen to GAP if funds are not earmarked in 2009-2010?

GAP requires \$500,000 in recurring funds to continue its operations in Miami, Palm Beach and Orlando. If GAP is not successful in securing this level of funding, GAP will be forced to close its doors as of June 30, 2009.

What type of child will go without services and why is this so critical?

Girls come into the juvenile justice system with unique differences. National statistics state that close to 80% have histories of physical abuse. Approximately, 70% are victims of sexual abuse or assault (compared to approximately 20% for teenage families in the general population). As a result of the abuse, girls may run away to escape, endangering their lives and derailing them from healthy growth into adulthood. Living in the streets occasionally leads to prostitution and quite frequently to criminal activity, thus involving them in the juvenile justice system. In addition, running away is considered a crime and therefore, further exasperates her situation. Depending on the criminal charge, they are at risk of entering the adult system at young ages.

According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, girls represent a growing proportion of Florida's juvenile justice population. In 1992, girls represented 24% of all youths referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice, and 10% of all youths incarcerated. But since 2003, girls have represented 30% of all youth referred. And by 2004, girls represented more than 18% of all youths incarcerated, though the rate dropped to 15% in 2007. The number of girls referred for delinquency in FY 2006-07 was 27,303.

While these overall trends are mirrored across the United States, the rates of arrest and incarceration for girls in Florida – that is the number of arrests and incarcerations as a percentage of the total population of girls – are considerably higher than elsewhere. The arrest rate for females in Florida is almost twice that for the nation as a whole. Nationwide, 716 girls per 100,000 population are arrested while in Florida 1,259 girls per 100,000 population are arrested.

What groups across the state have supported GAP?

GAP receives support from American Airlines, American Association of University Women, Dade Community Foundation, The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade County, Miami-Dade County Juvenile Services, Florida Association for Women Lawyers-Dade Chapter, National Council of Jewish Women Greater Miami Section, Museum of Contemporary Art, ArtSpring, Inc, Junior Leagues of Florida State Public Affairs Committee, Junior League of Fort Myers, Junior League of Greater Orlando, Junior League of the Palm Beaches, Miami-Dade County Commission for Women, Miami-Dade

Juvenile Assessment Center, Voices for Children Foundation, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Administrative Offices of the Court-Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court, Planned Parenthood of Orange County, The Comprehensive AIDS Program and Healthy Mothers of Palm Beach and Healthy Babies Coalition of Palm Beach.