

# Colbert County Children's Policy Council

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## County Needs Assessment

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2002 - 2003

# P r e f a c e

Code of Alabama 12-15-134 sets out the duties and responsibilities of each counties Children's Policy Council. One such duty is to articulate and communicate to the local community the needs of children and to submit to the Department of Children's Affairs, the Chief Justice and the Administrative Office of Courts by July 1 of each year an assessment of local needs and recommendations of the Children's Policy Council. The Department of Children's Affairs by September 1 of each year submits its statewide report to the Alabama Children's Policy Council which is then used to support legislative efforts to meet the needs of the children of Alabama and of Colbert County.

If you would like to have input into the next Needs Assessment you may contact Judge George Carpenter at (256) 386-8524 for additional information.

George E. Carpenter, Chairman  
Colbert County Children's Policy Council

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

### **Issue 1:** Births to unwed mothers.

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Ensure appropriate prevention education.
2. Ensure that services designed to stabilize the family, commence prior to birth.
3. Make available opportunities for job training.

Goal: Reduce births to unwed mothers by 10 percent and give current and new unwed mothers a fighting chance.

### **Issue 2:** Daycare and Transportation

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Expand career development opportunities.
2. Expand public transportation opportunities.
3. Expand GED preparation opportunities.

Goal: Make sure young mothers have marketable job skills, can get to and from work and can provide for their children.

## HEALTH

**Issue 1:** Children will have local access to basic health services

Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Children will have access to a one-step at risk evaluation for their physical, educational and mental health needs.
2. Children will be identified and enrolled in health insurance programs such as Medicaid and All-Kids.
3. Children will be immunized

**Issue 2:** A multi-agency Treatment Program that provides physical, mental/behavioral and prevention/educational services will be available for all children of Colbert County

Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Process will be established for agencies to uniformly identify special need's children in the area and bring them to the attention of other agencies.
2. Identify available agencies' resources (funds, facilities, personnel etc.) that may be directed to a Treatment Program and provide services.
3. Promote programs directed toward prevention of abuse of alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs by children and adolescents.

**Measure:** Kids count

Baseline: Colbert County had 21.0 % children living in poverty in 1997, ranked 13th in the state.

Goal: Decrease percentage.

**Measure:** Covering Kids

Baseline: 2000 data report that 9.54% or 116,478 children in Alabama under the age of eighteen are uninsured.

Goal: Decrease percentage

**Measure:** Kids count

Baseline: Colbert County in 1998 had 31 cases of juvenile substance abuse arrest, also Kids count reports that this trend is worsening.

Goal: Decrease cases

State Program:

1. Exp. Early intervention . . . . . Code: CD2
2. Exp. Physical Health Services . . . . . Code: PH5
3. Exp. Alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse prevention/intervention . . . . . Code: MH1

## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

**Issue 1:** Colbert County children from birth to age three need Early Intervention referrals and services.

### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Partner with Early Intervention (contact: Patrick Kelly 1-800-283-9352) at district office to research and explore the following:
  - a. Identify all appropriate referring providers in Colbert County
  - b. Identify persons who are currently being served and how they were referred
  - c. Compare numbers of Colbert referrals and service recipients with comparable counties
  - d. Explore with Colbert County's four Boards of Education, statistics on children in special education programs who should have received Early Intervention services.
2. Conduct an awareness campaign to educate providers and parents, of professional and personal responsibilities, to identify and refer children needing Early Intervention services. Raise awareness of the various medical, developmental, educational and social benefits of Early Intervention services.
3. Partner with County government and providers to recommend policy/practice and tracking changes to assure all babies, birth through age three in Colbert County, are screened for Early Intervention services through referrals by medical and agency professionals. (obstetricians, pediatricians, nurses, social workers, counselors)

### Measure :

Baseline: In June 2002 only nineteen (19) Colbert County Children are receiving Early Intervention services.

Goal: All Children living in Colbert County birth through age three will be referred for Early Intervention screening and receive appropriate tracking and rehabilitative services. This effort will be to prevent children from entering preschool and school systems unable to perform necessary age/grade appropriate tasks to become productive students and citizens.

**Issue 2:** Colbert County children, age three to five years need preschool services.

### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Coordinate with childcare facilities and local agencies to locate children at risk or in need of special services.
  - a. Work with Headstart to see if children who applied and were not accepted, could qualify for preschool services in their local school systems.
  - b. Compare number of children receiving Special Education services in kindergarten and first grade with those enrolled in Headstart and preschool.
2. Conduct an awareness campaign to educate providers and parents, of professional and personal responsibilities to identify and refer children needing preschool services. Raise awareness of the various medical, developmental, educational and social benefits of preschool

services.

- a. Coordinate with SEAC to conduct free workshops for parents and providers.
- b. Distribute information regarding which children would benefit from preschool services to Pediatricians, childcare providers and Colbert County Health Department.

**Measure :**

Baseline: Children who attend Headstart programs gain skills to achieve in kindergarten and school. All Colbert County children need to have equal opportunity to Headstart or comparable services.

Goal: Colbert County children will enter first grade with skills and knowledge to achieve age/grade appropriate tasks. This will be an effort to prevent later school failure, drop-out rate and related behavior problems that disrupt the learning process and environment for school children.

## **SAFETY**

### **Issue 1: Juvenile Crime**

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Establish data base of statistical information regarding the number and types of crimes and respective ages of offenders.
2. Start a diversion program for first time juvenile offenders.

Goal: Reduce referrals to DYS, transfers to adult court and original adult charges against minors by 50 percent.

### **Issue 2: Child Abuse and Neglect**

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Identify statistical information regarding school and pre-school children who are suffering from abuse and neglect.
2. Initiate and supplement existing programs for parenting.

Goal: Reduce by 25 percent number of reported incidences.

### **Issue 3: Teen Traffic Fatalities**

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Obtain and compile information regarding teen traffic fatalities in Colbert County.
2. Initiate a program to supplement driver education regarding reckless and impaired driving.

Goal: Reduce by 50 percent teenage traffic fatalities.

### **Issue 4: Juvenile Substance Abuse**

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Conduct a complete review and assessment of current substance abuse programs.
2. Establish a coordinated effort to improve the effectiveness of programs and to eliminate unnecessary duplications.

Goal: Identify minors in need of treatment and reduce use of alcohol and drugs.

## EDUCATION

### Issue 1: Last chance/Day Care Treatment Center for at-risk youth

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Develop a one-page working paper of LC/DC Center
2. Seek funding from various sources (i.e., grants, at-risk funds, etc.)
3. Develop an Advisory Board to oversee LC/DC Center

### Issue 2: Mandatory Parent Education Program for at-risk youth

#### Policy Council Action Steps:

1. Develop a one-page working paper/curriculum for Mandatory Parent Education Program (use DWI education as model)
2. Seek funding wherever available
3. Develop Advisory Board to oversee parent education Center

#### Measure :

Baseline: As many as 15 to 25 youth are expelled from the school setting each year in Colbert County.

Goal: To have all students in a school setting each year unless incarcerated

#### Measure :

Baseline: Parents appear to be at a loss of what to do with young people who rebel and become at-risk

Goal: To give parents helpful options in parenting at-risk students

#### Measure :

Baseline: Many students lack social and academic skills to be successful

Goal: To have students who attend LC/DC Center to receive the skills they need to become successful in normal school setting

#### State Program and Policy Recommendations:

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|---|---|
| 1. Increase funding for LC/DC treatment<br>Explanation: Funds hard to find /costly                      | Classification Code: <u>YD1, YD3, YD11, AD1</u>           |
| 2. Increase funding for parent education<br>Explanation: Funds hard to find /costly                     | Classification Code: <u>CD2, FD3, FD12, AD3, AD5, AD9</u> |
| 3. Laws that mandate parent participation<br>Explanation: This will help make parents more accountable. | Classification Code: <u>DS5</u>                           |



## **2002-2003 DESIRED OUTCOMES**

**Priority 1:** Provide services to those who need them at an earlier age. (Birth to age three)

*Recommendation:* Better identify providers and recipients and provide better for exchange of information and referrals.

**Priority 2:** Make sure that no child does without health care

*Recommendation:* Make available services more “user friendly.”

**Priority 3:** Promote opportunities for pre-school children to receive services.

*Recommendation:* Enhance agency coordination and corporation and increase awareness of the availability of and opportunities for service.

# Appendix

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