



Proposal to Reduce Child Abuse by Anne Roberts, Executive Director March 2007

Parenting can often be difficult and stressful, especially when compounded with other stressors, such as job loss, divorce, substance abuse or isolation. Over the past 20 years, Oklahoma has put into place a number of effective programs to strengthen families and help decrease the incidents of child abuse and neglect. Yet the investment has fallen short of the tremendous need.

- Children First is a statewide public health nurse home visitation service offered through local health departments to first-time low-income pregnant women who enroll prior to the 28th week of pregnancy. Services continue until the child is two years old.
- The Office of Child Abuse Prevention uses the Healthy Families America approach. These community-based family resource and support programs serve pregnant women after the 28th week of pregnancy, parents expecting their second (or subsequent) child, and parents of newborns. Current funding levels allow for only 21 programs, covering less than half the state.
- Child Guidance Services focus on the early mental health and developmental needs of children. Funding is needed to reestablish services in currently underserved counties.
- Parents as Teachers is a voluntary program of parent education that provides practical information and guidance to parents regarding the development of language, cognition, social skills and motor development of children. PAT is currently in only 98 out of 540 school districts.
- Comprehensive Home-Based Services is a “secondary prevention” program targeted to high-risk families to prevent further abuse or neglect and assure that children can either remain safely in their homes or return safety to their homes.

REQUEST

The Oklahoma State Department of Health 2008 budget request:

\$1,750,000 for the Children First Program,
\$2,036,000 for the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, and
\$ 387,000 for the Child Guidance Program.

The State Department of Education 2008 budget request:

\$3,000,000 for the Parents as Teachers Program.

Department of Human Services 2008 budget request:

\$3,251,000 for Comprehensive Home-Based Service (CHBS)