

***23 Years of
Advocacy, Research,
Partnerships and Publications***



***A celebration of
the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute***

APRIL 2006

The Commitment Continues

Since 1983, the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute (NCCAI) has served as a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to improving the well-being of North Carolina's children and youth by using highly-credible research, data collection, advocacy and education to influence the knowledge, attitudes and actions of a broad cross-section of people across the state. In 1984, there were 1,774,415 young people under age 19 in North Carolina. Today, that number has swelled to more than 2 million—almost a 5% increase since 1990.

Twenty-three years ago, impartial data and research on child well-being did not exist in North Carolina. State leaders such as Herb Stout and Linda Garrou believed that a nonprofit organization with an exclusive focus on children was needed to provide current data, credible research and sound policy alternatives advanced from outside state government. John S. Niblock, an innovator in the field of child advocacy, became the founding President of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute in 1983. Under his leadership, the Institute was the first organization in the United States to publish a compilation of child data at the state and county levels and helped lead the way in encouraging civic engagement through candidate forums, county State of the Child conferences, briefing books and other organizing tools. The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute quickly became the North Carolina member of both KIDS COUNT and Voices for America's Children (formerly the National Association of Child Advocates).

With time came transition, and Dr. Jonathan P. Sher, an indefatigable voice for children's rights, became President of the Institute. His vision for all children starting school healthy and ready to learn helped lead to efforts focused on expanding health care coverage through N.C. Health Choice and the guarantee of a sound, basic education for all North Carolina children thanks to the *Leandro* decision in 1997. Dr. Sher helped conceptualize and start the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, while solidifying the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute as the state's data and research leader in children's issues.

The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute's commitment to advance the best interests of children in our state continues in 2006 with Executive Director Barbara K. Bradley—and a new name, Action for Children North Carolina.

This reflection, *23 Years of Advocacy, Research, Partnerships and Publications*, attempts to capture and celebrate a portion of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute's rich history of initiating positive changes for all children in North Carolina.

23 Years of Advocacy, Research, Partnerships and Publications

Through advocacy, research, partnerships and publications, the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute has improved the lives and opportunities of North Carolina's children for more than 23 years.

By joining together with diverse groups across the state, the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute has promoted public policies to ensure that children and families across North Carolina have the tools they need to flourish.

The following sections relate only a portion of the major public policy successes on behalf of children in the areas of Early Care and Education, Child Health and Safety, Child Maltreatment and Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Early Care and Education

1990 Establishment of child care resource and referral agencies across the state, including many in underserved rural areas;

1991 Organization of a consortium of 19 statewide organizations to promote positive discipline practices as alternatives to corporal punishment in public schools and child day care centers. Legislation banning the use of corporal punishment in child day care programs resulted under the leadership of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute;

1993 Planning and development of Smart Start, ensuring that more than half a million children across North Carolina receive quality early care and education so that they can start school ready to learn;

2004 Influence on the state debate to ensure a sound, basic education for *all* of our state's children, which helped result in \$45 million targeted to the Disadvantaged Students Supplemental Fund (DSSF), benefiting students from low wealth school districts;

Child Health and Safety

1984 Increase in awareness of adolescent pregnancy prevention by developing and distributing TV commercials statewide, holding two regional workshops and producing a manual directory and newsletter;

1987 Expansion of Medicaid coverage for pregnant women and children up to age 5 with family income up to 100% of the federal poverty level;

1987 Creation of the Commission on the Reduction of Infant Mortality;

1991 Passage of the Family Preservation Act, making intensive, in-home, short-term services to keep children safe and families together;

1997 Passage of the graduated drivers' license law, which phases in driving responsibilities as teens learn this new skill, decreasing the number of new drivers killed by more than 20%;

1998 Influence on the implementation of and continuing expansion of N.C. Health Choice, now covering tens of thousands more children with the health care they need to be healthy, including access to preventive care, eyeglasses and dental care;

2001 Promotion of the requirement for helmets on bike riders under age 16, keeping children safer and less likely to suffer head injuries;

2004 Passage of the booster seat law, reducing motor vehicle deaths of young children (ages 5 to 7) by an expected 60%;

Child Health, continued

2005 Passage of the All Terrain Vehicle (ATV)-Safety bill, reducing ATV-related deaths and serious injuries of children by an expected 50%;

2005 Passage of the Child Nutrition Standards bill, improving healthy food selections available to children in school vending machines and lunchrooms;

Child Maltreatment

1991 Founding of the N.C. Child Fatality Task Force, which examines the reasons behind child deaths and promotes public awareness and other strategies to reduce future tragedies. Since the founding of the Child Fatality Task Force, the child death rate has dropped more than 20%;

1991 Release of *Child Deaths Reporting in North Carolina: Closing the Loopholes*, resulting in the:

- Creation of a State Child Fatality Task Force and Child Fatality Review Team mandated by legislation;
- \$10.25 million in new funding allocated to improve child protective services for the biennium at the request of Representatives Diamont, Ruth Easterling, Edd Nye and Senator James Richardson;
- Funding of \$1.7 million over two years approved by the General Assembly to improve administration and training of child protective service workers as well as \$150,000 for an independent study of the state's CPS system;
- Creation of County Child Protection Teams to review child deaths;
- Two-day conference on child abuse and neglect co-sponsored by the County Directors of Social Services Association and several other groups. The group developed an action agenda for improving the system;

2003 Passage of the **Safe Haven Law**, increasing the likelihood that ill-prepared new mothers will leave their newborns in safe places;

2005 Increase in national awareness of the greater likelihood of child abuse homicides in military families;

All the following started since 1989 with NCCAI's involvement:

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|----------------------------|---|
| -Smart Start | -N.C. Health Choice for Children |
| -Family Preservation | -Health Check (Medicaid version of Health Choice) |
| -Family Resource Centers | -County Child Fatality Prevention Teams |
| -School Health Services | -Child Care Resource and Referral |
| -Child Support Enforcement | -Preschool Immunizations |
| | -Kindergarten Health Assessment |

"NCCAI has a 23-year record of excellence in research and advocacy for issues affecting North Carolina's children. Under the new banner of Action for Children we will build on those successes by working to educate and engage people across the state on behalf of children and families."

—Bill Jamieson, Current Chair, Action for Children Board of Directors



Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

1999 Creation of Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils, addressing the unmet needs of the thousands of juveniles in the community;

2003–present Promotion of education alternatives for incarcerated youth so they are ready to re-enter our communities as productive citizens; and

2005 Promotion of smaller, more treatment-intensive facilities to help teens involved in the juvenile justice system.

Other Milestones

- 1983** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute published *The State of the Child in North Carolina* report, which provided facts on 30 different issues affecting children in North Carolina;
- 1983** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute held a candidate briefing to convene and educate interested citizenry;
- 1984** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute was the first state advocacy group in the nation to develop an annual index identifying "leading indicators" of child well-being. Many other states followed the Institute's lead;
- 1984-1985** The North Carolina Child Advocacy held a Conference on chronically-ill children, which resulted in a report on the well-being of North Carolina's chronically-ill children;
- 1984-1985** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute organized four regional Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Workshops;
- 1984-1985** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute co-sponsored a prevention program on teen suicide in Wilson County;
- 1984-1985** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute served as the call-in resource center for eastern North Carolina during the Public Broadcast System's series on child sexual abuse, recruiting volunteer psychologists, social workers and attorneys to take calls;
- 1984-1987** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute held 13 county State of the Child Conferences to raise awareness and concern about problems faced by communities involving children by bringing together parents, professionals and legislators;
- 1985-1986** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute produced three public service announcements on teen pregnancy prevention and school systems' use of corporal punishment in the classroom;
- 1985-1986** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute co-sponsored a prevention program on teen suicide in Rocky Mount to bring attention to issues faced by teens;
- 1985-1986** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute co-sponsored the Umstead Lecture Series on "Adolescents in Crisis" to bring more attention to the needs of North Carolina's adolescents;
- 1986-1987** The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute published a "Children's State Budget" for North Carolina;

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1986–1987 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute held a Quality Preschool Conference, proceedings of which were made available to the public in a published report;

1986–1987 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute served as host of the National Conference of Child Advocates;

1990 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute released the First National KIDS COUNT book, being the state's Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT partner;

1993 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute held its first-ever "Children's Summit" for North Carolina;

1995 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute helped develop the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, a coalition of more than 150 social service organizations which collaborate to influence public policies;

1995 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute published the state's first *Early Childhood Index*, designed to provide a benchmark for the progress North Carolina intended to make in improving the lives of its youngest children;

1998 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute held a candidate forum to encourage the public and the media to engage in a dialogue with the candidates about children's issues;

1999 Governor James B. Hunt declared November 20, 1999 "Day of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute" in North Carolina;

1999 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute, in partnership with the N.C. Institute of Medicine, released its first *N.C. Child Health Report Card* whose purpose is to heighten awareness—among policymakers, practitioners, the media and the general public—of the health of children and youth across our state;

2004 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute released the state's first *Child Protective Services (CPS) Data Card* whose purpose is to serve as a reference tool for viewing the interrelationships among social services, court interventions and the Child Fatality Prevention Teams, and to present data and information from CPS units across our state; and

2005 The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute sponsored the state's first Pollsters' Forum to train child advocates in polling and candidate research regarding children's issues.

Results for Children in North Carolina

The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute's leadership has resulted in remarkable changes benefiting and protecting children and families statewide. Below is just a snapshot of how the Institute has taken action.

Education

Since the inception of Smart Start in 1993, 175,140 families have received child care subsidies so they can work; 514,000 children have been educated in higher quality child care facilities; 276,500 parents have received health and parenting education; and more than \$200 million in private contributions have been invested in early childhood education.

Smart Start programs have created 56,455 additional child care spaces for working families, since 1993. (Smart Start quarterly report data)

Since Smart Start was created in 1993, the number and quality of child care centers in North Carolina has risen from 726%—from 576 centers in 1993, to 4,759 centers as of September 2005. (NC Division of Child Development data)

In 2001, 83% of child care teachers in North Carolina had a college degree or received some college credits—as compared to 41% in 1993. (Child Care Services Association, 2002)

In 2003, the percentage of 4th graders who scored at or above proficient in reading exceeded the national percentage.

In 2003, the percentage of both 4th and 8th grade students in North Carolina who scored at or above proficient in math exceeded the national average.

When testing began in 1993, 60% of students tested proficient; at the end of the 2005 school year, more than 80% of students tested proficient. While holding schools more accountable, the federal, local and state governments have all supported the school system with increases in funding over the past 13 years (even after adjusting for inflation). Since 2001, scores on end-of-grade tests have risen between 7% to 17%.

Child Health

In 2003, 89% of all two year olds were fully immunized—this percentage exceeds the national percentage. More than 99% of children were fully immunized at school entry.

Youth cigarette smoking has declined in recent years. In 2006, one in four youth report smoking in the past month. Recent policy campaigns such as the move to make all schools tobacco-free, the implementation of a cigarette tax and the increase in funds for teen tobacco prevention campaigns should help North Carolina continue this trend.

Currently, more than 130,000 children receive health insurance through N.C. Health Choice—a 144% increase since 1999.

Child Safety

In 2005, 92% of foster children had no more than two different placements in one year (compared to 61% in 2001).

In 2005, 61% of children who were removed from their homes were reunited in less than 12 months, and there was no recurrence of maltreatment within six months in 93% of cases.

As of 2006, North Carolina is the first state in the southeast region to have successfully completed the federally-mandated program improvement plan for how the state cares for abused and neglected children.

In Gratitude to the Tireless Members of the Board of Directors

The names of 2006 board members are italicized.

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"The North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute is changing its name but not its work. We are more committed than ever to affecting legislative decisions, serving as the convener of local advocacy groups across the state and creating partnerships with various communities in an effort to advance the best interests of children in our state."

—Barbara Bradley, Executive Director

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The vision of Action for Children North Carolina is that our state will be the best place to be and raise a child.

The mission of Action for Children North Carolina is to advocate for child well-being by educating and engaging all people across the state to ensure that our children are healthy, safe, well-educated and have every opportunity for success.



*Working to make North Carolina
the best place to be and raise a child.*

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