



# United Way of Greater Kansas City 2012 Policy Principles & Positions

## 2012 Policy Principles

People in every community across the region benefit both directly and indirectly from government investment in health and human services. United Way of Greater Kansas City recognizes that public sector funding and/or programs are often critical to the consumers who also benefit from the community-based, charitable programs United Way supports. In addition, public funding is an important part of the budgets of many United Way funded programs – critical to their ability to deliver positive results and change lives.

In the current challenging economic climate, United Way of Greater Kansas City seeks to promote and protect public sector investment in health and human services, recognizing that federal, state and local governments are a major provider and funder of critical services that daily contribute to community quality of life and strengthening people's lives.

United Way of Greater Kansas City joins others in the health and human sector in sharing a commitment to the value of human services and to the principle of community where all people have the opportunity to be successful and achieve their full potential. We believe:

- The infrastructure for success includes education and health and human service supports such as food and nutrition programs, job training opportunities, work supports, affordable housing, health and wellness programs, and a robust safety net.
- Investing now in human service supports for all, particularly the most vulnerable, offers everyone the opportunity to contribute to our shared prosperity. And, that investment can prevent more substantial costs to our communities in the future.
- Human services in Missouri and Kansas represent a joint public–private venture requiring adequate levels of state and federal government investment.
- The cost of essential government functions, like human service infrastructure, is an obligation Missouri and Kansas taxpayers expect to share in order to keep our communities safe, productive, and vibrant.
- Monies must be made available to provide the health and human service supports that residents of Missouri and Kansan need.

# 2012 Platform Positions

## Missouri 2012 Platform Positions

- Prioritize working families by support for funding of Child Care Assistance at 130% of the federal poverty level for working families and 145% for families transitioning off assistance.
  - *Background:* Missouri currently ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the country for its level of support for child care assistance. This puts the Kansas City region at distinct disadvantage in efforts to support working families. The program helps working parents to keep their jobs while knowing that their children are accessing quality, affordable child care and afterschool programs.
- Support universal, voluntary Pre-Kindergarten.
  - *Background:* Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) is available in dozens of states across the country, and seen as a critical resource for working families to access quality, affordable care and early learning to prepare young children for school. Children who attend pre-kindergarten, for example, are shown to have much higher age-appropriate reading levels than other children without pre-kindergarten.
- Maintain national child welfare accreditation standards by supporting current fiscal year funding to ensure sufficient staff and adequate training of staff in the Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division.
  - *Background:* Advocates have worked tirelessly for years with the Missouri Children's Division and the Missouri General Assembly to put in place the proper policies and funding to ensure the Division is nationally accredited. This has led to better outcomes for children, their biological families, foster families and adoptive families. Maintaining funding is critical so that Missouri does not slide back in our efforts to support children who have been abused and neglected.
- Support changes to Missouri's predatory lending regulation laws to cap interest at a rate that is reasonable for Missouri's working families.
  - *Background:* Many families are forced into the trap of predatory lending out of a need for cash or a loan to help pay a medical bill or other immediate necessity. Unfortunately, Missouri law allows lenders to charge these families up to or more than 400% interest on these short-term loans, which perpetuates the financial struggle these families are already faced with. Slight increases in regulation would allow these businesses to still make a profit, but not at a rate that takes advantage of those that can least afford it.
- Support the renewal of Missouri's Social Contribution Tax Credits.
  - *Background:* More than a decade ago, Missouri implemented several Social Contribution Tax Credits to help nonprofit agencies raise funds. By Donating cash, stock, bonds, real property or other marketable securities, Missouri taxpayers can help fund Domestic Violence Shelters, Food Banks and others. It is important to protect these critical tax credits for the benefit of the individuals that nonprofit agencies serve.

## Kansas 2012 Platform Positions

- Protect the funding and the strategic focus of the Children's Initiative Fund.
  - *Background:* Kansas policymakers made a commitment to strengthening the future for Kansas' children by creating the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) – funded by state Tobacco Settlement Funds. CIF is invested in evidence-based programs that ensure more young Kansas children have a positive start in life.
- Support changes to the KIDS Program, Education Savings (529) Accounts, to allow third parties to contribute into the accounts.
  - *Background:* By 2018, six out of 10 jobs in Kansas will require some form of post-secondary education or training. Kansas set-up the KIDS Program to provide an incentive for families of children growing up in low-income households to save for the cost of higher education and vocational programs that too often can be out of reach. Expanding the KIDS Program to become a public-private partnership would provide the opportunity for third-party, charitable entities to contribute, which would assist more qualified families in saving for their children's higher education.
- Support public assistance that promotes long-term financial stability for low-income families and their children.
  - *Background:* In this challenging economy, the state should maintain an effective, accessible public safety net that provides services for those who are eligible in a timely manner. Work promotion approaches should recognize the importance of education and skills training to achieving long-term financial stability.

## Joint Kansas and Missouri 2012 Platform Positions

- Improve access to health care to promote healthy lives across the region by protecting Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP), and endorsing state design of fair and appropriate implementation of the Affordable Care Act, including a state insurance exchange and sufficient funding for sustainability of healthcare providers that serve those in need.
  - *Background:* States should use the various tools available to them to strengthen connection to health care coverage and access to care, including preventative care. For example, when children are helped to enroll and retain coverage, this not only increases access to medical care, but it also provides for a better continuum of medical care throughout a child's life.
- Support for State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by maintaining Kansas EITC and creating a Missouri EITC.
  - *Background:* State EITCs are built as a percentage of the federal EITC, a recognized tool that rewards and encourages work for low-to-moderate income working families. Research documents that families use EITC funds to pay for basic necessities. The federal EITC lifts more children out of poverty than any other program.

## 2012 Federal Positions

United Way of Greater Kansas City is part of a national United Way movement seeking to invest in and advance long-lasting, positive community change. United Way of Greater Kansas City will work with United Way Worldwide and other United Ways across the country to advance public policy goals that **Advance the Common Good** in Education, Income and Health.