

FLORIDA SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION



Florida Sheriffs Association Position on Continued Funding of Healthy Families Florida

March 2011

Florida Sheriffs realize the importance of crime prevention. Sheriffs know the crime of child abuse affects vulnerable children in horrible ways and that's why we believe the best and smartest way to address child maltreatment is to prevent it before it ever happens. Healthy Families Florida helps prevent child abuse in Florida's highest-risk families. This nationally accredited home visiting program spares children from the trauma of abuse, reduces a significant burden upon the law enforcement community, and saves Florida taxpayers many millions of dollars. For a fraction of the cost of serving victims after abuse, Healthy Families Florida provides services for less than \$1,700 per child.

Child abuse is a human tragedy with dire consequences not only for the innocent children who needlessly suffer, but also for every member of the community. According to conservative estimates, Florida pays more than \$64,000 a year per victim for child welfare services, hospitalization, special education and juvenile justice costs associated with child abuse.

The most recent annual Healthy Families Florida performance report shows 98% of children in families served were free from abuse both during and 12 months following services. However, economic pressures resulted in a \$10 million dollar cut to Healthy Families during the 2010 Legislative session. This nearly 36% decrease in program funding resulted in the elimination of services in 12 counties and a significant reduction in the number of families served in the remaining 55 counties. In total, 3,900 high-risk families and their 5,800 children lost critical prevention services.

Prevention, especially when it comes to the crime of child abuse, is a vital dimension of public safety policy.

To save children's lives and save taxpayer dollars, the Florida Sheriffs support the continued funding of Healthy Families Florida at the FY2010-2011 level of \$18.1 million.



www.flsheriffs.org

Revised 3/14/11