



Ensuring Access to Healthcare

Florida's United Ways urge the 2020 Florida Legislature to increase support for access to quality healthcare and behavioral health services for all Floridians.

BACKGROUND

- A recent federal policy change allows for school districts to draw down up to \$46 million to pay for school-based health and mental health services for all Medicaid-eligible children.
- In Florida, in 2017 there were 6,178 opioid-related deaths reported. This is 453 more than the previous year, which represents an 8% increase.
- Florida's fastest growing demographic group is seniors over 65, nearly 20% of the population. Among those seniors, 32% live above the poverty line, but cannot afford even a modest living.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

- Of the Floridians caught in the coverage gap: 54% are in a working family or considered to be ALICE.
- Florida Policy Institute cites the value of providing health services in the school setting, including less absenteeism, better academic performance and better health outcomes.
- Based on the National Survey of Children's Health, the conditions that children in low-income families face include higher risk of mental health and substance abuse disorders. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) shows that over half of U.S. children with ACEs live in homes with incomes less than 200 percent of the poverty level. Compared nationally, Florida children have significantly higher rates of ACEs.
- Investment in prevention and early interventions are the key to reducing mental illness, substance use disorders and rates of suicide.

THE PROBLEM

- A recent federal policy change allows for school districts to draw down funds to pay for school-based health services for all Medicaid-eligible children. Florida policymakers must act quickly for school districts and the 48% of Medicaid-eligible students to benefit from these changes.
- As overdose and suicide ideation rates continue to increase in Florida, the targeted use of Behavioral Health funds for prevention and treatment and are needed to curb this epidemic.
- Currently, **72,000 seniors statewide are on waitlists** for home care support services. Home-based programs have proven to maintain the dignity of the elderly while saving money for families and tax payers.

UNITED WAY'S REQUEST:

Florida United Ways urge the 2020 Florida Legislature to:

- **DELETE** statutory language which restricts access to federal dollars for school-based mental healthcare.
- **INCREASE** targeted funding for prevention and treatment services for substance use disorders and mental health services.
- **MAXIMIZE** home and community-based services for older adults to reduce nursing home costs and waitlists.