



ESCAMBIA CHILDREN'S TRUST

Our Children. Our Community. Our Future.

These are multigenerational, unprecedented terrible times and governments are taking unprecedented immediate actions to help keep citizens safe and provide financial support for businesses and workers. There needs to be the same level of response to help support our most vulnerable population, our children.

The Opportunity

COVID-19 impacts everyone, but it disproportionately impacts those who are already struggling; our most vulnerable, children under 18. It has shown the gaps in their safety net, and the urgency in which we should move to ensure they have the services they need to be healthy and successful.

There will be a time when the crisis passes, and a recovery plan implemented. An Escambia Children's Trust, a Children's Services Council (CSC), can be a significant partner in that recovery plan as well as a comprehensive ongoing partner with existing service providers to help expand and enhance their services.

Nine Florida counties have independent CSCs, which provide an additional level of support involved in investing in success-based programs to established groups providing children's services. These CSCs have stepped outside of their daily role to move quickly to provide additional financial and technical support to children's services providers to help ease the COVID-19 burden on these children and their families.

Some of their COVID-19 specific emergency activities include creating a COVID-19 respond fund for emergency food, shelter and other basic needs including cleaning supplies, and salary supplements to early childhood teachers.

CSCs, like the proposed Escambia Children's Trust, have a significant advantage in that they have a sustainable annual revenue stream that is not dependent upon a fluctuating annual government allocation or the strength of the economy. This provides an additional level of critical investment continuity particularly important in unstable times like these when contributions to service providers can drop while demand for services increase.

Children's Services Councils Focus on Our Most Vulnerable Population

The sole purpose of a CSC is to invest in the well-being of children by maximizing resources and ensuring accountability. CSCs do not deliver services; instead they invest in evidenced based successful programs which can demonstrate measurable desired outcomes through a competitive review and accountability process. Florida Statute Section 125.901 gives counties the authority to place a referendum before the voters to approve the creation of the CSC.

The Florida CSC tracks the nine individual independent county CSC outcomes on a broad range of measures, and it has found the CSCs have achieved notable, measurable results, including:

- Reduced juvenile crime, violence and incarceration
- Increased kindergarten readiness and reading proficiency by third grade
- Reduced rates of teen pregnancy and fewer cases of child abuse
- Increased physical and mental health and well being
- Reduction in the infant mortality rate
- Reduction in youth alcohol use

This terrible pandemic will pass and there will be additional lingering needs for which we must be planning now to accommodate. History shows:

- The impoverished will be more impoverished and need additional services.
- There will be:
 - Additional cases of reported child abuse, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual abuse.
 - Increased needs for children's mental health counseling
 - Increased needs for mentoring and tutoring to help children catch up.

How the Escambia Children's Trust Would Be Funded

The Escambia Children's Trust would be funded by a .5 mill increase in ad valorem taxes, which **would cost the average homeowner an additional \$40 per year and the average commercial property owner an additional \$67 per year. The additional 0.5 mill will not be collected until 2022.** We know that this is a hard time to ask homeowners and other property owners to pay any additional cost, but we hope they will see that this investment will pay substantial dividends. Examples include:

- A reduction in Medicaid charges would reduce the County's FY2020 \$5.3 million mandated reimbursement to the State.
- A reduction in the number of juveniles housed at the State's local detention center would reduce the County's FY2020 \$3.3 million mandated reimbursement to the State.
- Escambia County School District could repurpose the millions of dollars it spends annually on remedial services.
- A better educated workforce.
- Children with quality pre-K education are 2.14 times less likely to be arrested and are 50% less likely to ever receive welfare as an adult.
- A 50% reduction in high school dropouts translates to an additional income benefit of more than \$125,000 over each graduate's lifetime.
- Adults who complete quality early childhood education programs earn 7% to 25% higher incomes than those who did not.

Conversely, the effects of children not receiving quality early education, detection, intervention, and prevention include:

- 93% more likely to enter the child welfare system by age 9.
- 25% more likely to drop out of school.
- 40% more likely to become teenage parents.
- 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.
- It costs \$33,000 per year to house one person in the Escambia County jail.

The Trust would also have trained, experienced staff to help coach existing service providers and their staffs in creating systems to set success metrics and capture the data required to measure and report successes.

Steps to Create the Escambia Children's Trust

The Escambia County Commission must vote to put a referendum creating the Trust before the voters on the November 3, 2020 general election ballot. We know the Commissioners have a crowded meeting calendar and we would certainly wait until later in the year to ask them to discuss the referendum but time does not permit. We must have the ballot ready language to the Election's Supervisor by mid August or we will have to wait for an additional two years for the next election and our kids can't wait any longer.

The process to put a referendum on the ballot takes three meetings. It is first placed on a Committee of the Whole (CoW) agenda for discussion and a straw vote to place it on the next regular meeting agenda, where a vote is taken to place it on a subsequent regular meeting agenda with a preceding public hearing on the referendum ordinance. It is at that third meeting where the Commissioners vote to place it on the ballot. We expect that the Trust referendum be on the June 16th County Commission CoW agenda.

The creation of the Escambia Children's Trust is supported by a growing broad base of organizations, citizens, and community and business leaders, including the Greater Pensacola Chamber of Commerce, Sheriff David Morgan, School Superintendent Malcolm Thomas, the Escambia Education Association and the Escambia Support Professionals who represent 4,000 teachers and support professionals, Century Mayor Henry Hawkins, Baptist Health Care, and Achieve Escambia.

How You Can Help

- Agree to publicly support the creation of the Escambia Children's Services Trust in our voter education material.
- Send us a letter supporting the establishment of the Escambia Children's Trust so we can use your name and letter to encourage the Commissioners to please vote to put this referendum on the November 3, 2020 general election ballot.
- Make a contribution to the Trust to support our efforts to educate the voters about the need for the Trust and the positive things it can do. You can send your check to Escambia Children's Trust, **P.O. Box 1255, Pensacola, FL 32591**. Please note your occupation on the check memo line to help us comply with election financial reporting requirements.
- Get involved in the education campaign by inviting us to virtually speak to your civic, service or community organization as we shelter at home, introduce us to your pastor, talk to your friends, family and neighbors and ask for their support.

Please call (850) 462-4790 with any questions, to volunteer or to set up a virtual meeting.