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THE CHARTER FOR



ILLINOIS CHILDREN

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We are committed to the well being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. For children to prosper, we must meet all their basic needs. We must nurture each child through the full and active participation of families and the broader community, including neighborhoods, schools, business, faith communities and government. When children realize their potential and fulfill their dreams, our communities flourish and we are enriched beyond measure.

We believe in these values and principles and commit to work together to secure the goals of this charter for all the children of Illinois:

- Childhood is a sacred time that should be nurtured, celebrated and preserved.
- Children's basic needs are family, safety, education, health, economic security and arts, recreation and culture.
- All children need to know they belong to loving families and caring communities.
- Just as families must support children, communities must support families, and government and business must support both.
- All children deserve safe homes, safe schools and safe communities.
- Our children's sense of hope and possibility requires equal access to appropriate resources.
- Children are prepared for the future when we teach them and they learn to honor and respect diversity.
- As children mature, we must seek their voices, engage them, and recognize the freedom they need to shape their destinies.
- Children can learn from their mistakes. They deserve systems that give them that opportunity.
- Each child is unique.
- Every child is entitled to respect.
- We must never give up on any child.

# FAMILY

## Our Vision:

All children are part of loving and safe families. All segments of society share responsibility for supporting families in raising their children and future generations.

## **Goals:**

- Protect the dignity and value the diversity of every family
  - Respect and preserve the child's bond with parents, family and community
  - Support children's moral, spiritual, and ethical development
  - Provide families with the skills, knowledge and resources to develop, support and sustain loving homes
  - Empower families to balance the demands of parenting, work and education
  - Encourage parents to be active in the democratic process and promote the interests of children and families
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# EDUCATION

## Our Vision:

All children receive, as a right, free quality education that fosters their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural and creative development.

## **Goals:**

- Foster learning beginning at birth
- Respect and support family as the child's first teacher
- Value and invest in teachers as a key component of every child's development
- Create an educational system that is a partnership of family, community, and school
- Respect and provide for each child's differences and capacities to learn
- Support an equitable, fully-funded system that prepares every child for life-long learning
- Provide safe, excellent, well-funded schools in every community
- Develop the use of schools as community resources during and beyond school hours
- Teach children to understand and respect diversity, multiple cultures and languages, and a global perspective

## **ARTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE**

### Our Vision:

All children can express and celebrate their souls and spirits through arts, culture and recreation. Children have open time to dream, play and create.

### **Goals:**

- Integrate arts, culture and recreation into the core curriculum of education
  - Provide access to a wide variety of affordable, quality arts, culture and recreational programs for children of all ages
  - Create ongoing opportunities to discover, recover, preserve and celebrate traditions across cultures
  - Ensure that museums, libraries, parks and diverse cultural resources are accessible to all children
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## **SAFETY**

### Our Vision:

Every child lives in a physically and emotionally safe environment that cultivates acceptance and peace.

### **Goals:**

- Promote and ensure safe, non-violent family and community environments
- Protect children from the dangers confronting them
- Eliminate children's access to handguns
- Teach and practice conflict resolution in all segments of society
- Promote social justice through the elimination of prejudice and discrimination
- Invest in prevention and intervention programs through legislation, funding, evaluation and research
- Increase safe indoor and outdoor neighborhood recreational activities
- Promote non-violent, positive images that reflect diversity
- Ensure equal protection and due process of law for all children and youth in a system which recognizes their differing capacities and promotes rehabilitation and learning

# HEALTH

## Our Vision:

Every child and family is guaranteed quality, comprehensive health care. All children live in a healthy environment that allows them to thrive.

## **Goals:**

- Ensure that no children go hungry
  - Ensure quality prenatal care is available for all
  - Implement an effective health and nutrition education curriculum
  - Provide integrated, accessible and high quality mental health care
  - Focus on prevention as a key to preserving the health and well-being of children
  - Develop partnerships for clean air, water, land and a healthy ecosystem
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# ECONOMIC SECURITY

## Our Vision:

All children have economic security and economic justice: Meaning access to food, clothing, transportation and safe, affordable housing, and that all families have equal opportunities to provide these basic economic needs.

## **Goals:**

- Provide family-friendly policies in the workplace
- Develop a fair tax policy
- Cultivate marketable job skills through training and education
- Provide accessible, affordable, high-quality child care
- Promote corporate partnerships that strengthen communities
- Provide economic security through government initiatives for the children whose parents cannot support them
- Enhance access to jobs through sound policies for housing and transportation

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