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### The Advocates Tip Corner~

Think you need to know more about the legislative process but don't want to ask? The Kansas Legislative Research Department has produced an excellent primer called "Legislative Procedure Manual". Not only can you pick up a free copy in Legislative Research at the Statehouse you can also go online and scan the full version. It can be found at <http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-portal/index.do>

All current calendars, journals, status, and agendas of both the Senate and the House are readily available online at:

<http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-portal/index.do>

From this website you can access all bills, including full text by clicking on "Bills" and then either "Full Text of Bills" or "Single Bill Tracking" These services are free to the public.

## Youth Advocacy Trip Highlight of the Week!

Eight youths from our Independent Living Program at SFCS were chosen to attend what we hope to be an annual event...**A Youth Advocacy day** on Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this day was to give them the opportunity to experience the legislative process first hand and about the role SFCS plays in this process. The Director of Legislative Services **Jeff Russell** and the Director Facilities Management **Marilyn Jacobson** began the day with them by telling them about the environment and some special stories about the current Statehouse Restoration Project that is in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of an 11 year project. They also met with Representatives **Janis Pauls**, Hutchinson and Representative **Josh Svaty**, Ellsworth. In addition they heard from **Tanya Keys**, the Commissioner Children and Family Services, **Allie Milhon** an intern in the Governor's office about internship opportunities and Executive Director of the Children's Alliance **Bruce Linhos** and the Advocacy Coordinator for SFCS **Melissa Ness** about what it is like to be an advocate.

Our guess is that one of the highlights of the day was the trek to the Statehouse Dome....all 296 steps! All of them have t-shirts to prove it. Thanks to our Independent Living Staff **Debbie, Joe, and Mandy** and to **Sharon Ringler** Vice President of Community Outreach services for spending the day with us!

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## First adjournment around the corner~

The last day of the regular legislative session is Saturday, April 5, rather than April 12, as first considered by the legislature. After this date, no bills will be considered, with the exception of the Omnibus appropriations and reconciliation bills and bills vetoed by the Governor. The 2008 veto session is set to begin April 30 but that is also subject to change. The date of *sine die* or the official ceremonial end of the session has not been announced.

[Click here](#) for copies of our testimony. You can also see a copy of our 2008 agenda. Note: all blue highlights are hyperlinked.)

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## Budget Watch

### Ensuring resources for services that are available and acceptable to support children and families<sup>1</sup>

The budget bill will be heading to conference committee next week. Neither the House or the Senate added the dollars supported by SFCS and several other organizations for the replacement of lost federal dollars being used in the state for Child Protective Service activities. Those dollars should be reviewed during the omnibus session. On the other hand, dollars for Child Advocacy Centers that were part of the Governor's recommendation **were** placed in the Senate version of the budget bill but not the House. Consequently that item will be a conference committee item BEFORE first adjournment.

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### **Other items not recommended by the Legislature but were part of SRS's priority requests for child welfare services included:**

<b>Adoption Support Caseload</b>
Provides funding for the projected caseload increase in the adoption support program. This program will serve an estimated 6,476 monthly children in FY 2008 and an additional 423 monthly children, for a total of 6,899 children, in FY 2009. \$4,761,522
<b>Permanent Custodianship Caseload</b>
Provides funding for the projected caseload increase in the permanent custodianship program. FY 2008 – 26 additional monthly children; FY2009 – 19 additional children. \$109,800
<b>Independent Living Subsidy Caseload</b>
Provides funding for the projected caseload increase in the independent living subsidy caseload. This program will serve an estimated 929 children in FY 2008 and an additional 132 children, for a total of 1,061 children, in FY 2009. \$782,701

We hope to see these items along with the \$9 M for Child Protective Services Revisited in the Omnibus Session. For a complete summary of SRS's requests [click here](#).

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## Bill and Committee Highlights

### Building resources for the child welfare system with an emphasis on human resources<sup>2</sup>

#### **Achieved passage...**

#### **HB 2570** AN ACT concerning individuals authorized to conduct adoption assessments

After successful cooperative efforts of a small coalition of organizations including SFCS, as of March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008 this bill has **passed both the House and Senate by substantial margins**. After unsuccessful attempts by opponents to amend this bill, it is now on its way to the Governor for her signature because the House and Senate versions that passed were identical requiring no conference committees. As you recall the bill expands who can provide adoption assessments and is no longer limited to a court approved social worker. **Thanks to all of those who provided information and helped guide us through this process.**

#### **HB 2938** AN ACT concerning the grandparents as caregivers act; eligibility requirements

With no opposition this bill passed the House floor today and since it is in an exempt committee is not subject to the bill deadline. According to the Legislative Research Department's supplemental bill brief HB 2839 would amend the Grandparents as Caregivers Act by removing the requirement that a grandparent possess legal custody of a

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<sup>1</sup> Indicates SFCS policy area

<sup>2</sup> Indicates SFCS policy area

grandchild in order to participate in the Grandparents as Caregivers Program. The bill would replace the legal custody condition with the requirement that a grandchild only reside with the grandparent. This bill must still pass the Senate. **In Conference Committee...**

**HB 2641** AN ACT concerning income taxation; relating to **income tax deductions**, property taxes paid by certain taxpayers; **sales taxation of certain cash rebates on sales or leases of new motor vehicles**; **sales tax exemptions**. The bill SFCS has worked on all session is now in conference committee. In addition to other tax issues, it provides sales tax exempt status for SFCS, CASA and other non-profit organizations I Kansas. Three members from the House and three members from the Senate will serve on this committee

### **Advancing a rural perspective in public policy and child welfare**<sup>3</sup>

**Substitute SB 453** AN ACT concerning rural development; establishing the Kansas commission on rural policy; establishing the division of rural development within the department of commerce.

SFCS has been tracking this bill all session and have supported its passage as a forum for the “rural voice”. A conference committee will now meet to iron out differences. It has not yet been scheduled.

### **To be debated...**

**HB 2601** AN ACT concerning insurance; providing reimbursement for certain services

Cast as a “vendorship” bill, the supplemental bill description of the to the Legislative Research Department states that HB 2601 would require that whenever a health insurance policy or contract provides reimbursement for any mental health service within the lawful scope of three professions regulated by the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists; Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors; and Licensed Clinical Psychotherapists) for services rendered, the insured individual is entitled to reimbursement regardless of whether the service was provided by a licensed physician or any of the professions identified in the bill.

This amended bill is now on the debate calendar in the House. Since it is an Appropriations bill it will not be subject to this week’s bill deadline and can be debated next week.

**HB 2991** is a bill was an unexpected addition to the mix having been introduced in a House late night session on Wednesday. **2991 creates the juvenile correctional facilities closure commission.** The purpose of this commission is to submit to the governor not later than January 2010 recommendations regarding the closure or “repurposing” of any juvenile correctional facility. According to Heather Morgan this morning... (Her last day at JJA is Tuesday) this bill sets the stage for consideration of establishing a **YRC II in one of the facilities**...the behind the scenes discussion among legislators. Even though the Governor and legislators make appointments to the commission no legislator or an individual affiliated with a Juvenile Justice Committee. Since it is an Appropriations bill it will survive this week’s bill deadline

### **Advancing and supporting public policy that has a positive impact on children and families**<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the previous bills we have other bills noted on our bill tracker. For a complete copy of all bills and our most recent ill tracker each week [click here](#).

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## On the Schedule This Week

**Currently, all committees are listed as being on call of the Chair.** This gives the legislators flexibility to schedule conference committees to resolve differences between the two versions of bills that have met the deadline. The following HAS been scheduled for work next week that fall within the SFCS policy areas:

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<sup>3</sup> Indicates SFCS policy area

<sup>4</sup> Indicates SFCS policy area

**April 1<sup>st</sup> – 10:00 a.m. - Conference Committee on HB 2641** – This bill will provide tax exempt Status for St Francis Community Services and the Kansas Chapter of Court Appointed Special Advocates along with several other non-profit organizations.

[Legislative Post Audit 12:00 noon Sharon 423-S](#) Presentation of the performance audit; Foster Care: Reviewing selected issues related to State contracts for foster care and family preservation services. **Click here** to get a copy of the post audit report once it has been released at this meeting.

### **Budget and the “mega bill”**

The first version of the merged budget bills will be in conference committee on call of the Chairman

[Click here](#) to go to the legislative website throughout the week to track any changes in the legislative schedule.

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## An Advocacy Opportunity

**Here is an easy opportunity to show your support for children and families.** The Child Welfare League of America has been working to reinstate a White House Conference on Children and Youth. In Congress, legislation was recently introduced to convene that conference and was filed by Congressman Fattah and Congressman Porter. This bipartisan bill would create a two-year event that will focus on child welfare issues and challenges. CWLA has been tirelessly working with Congress to file legislation that will convene a long overdue White House Conference on Children and Youth. The White House Conference's for children and youth started in 1909 but discontinued after several decades. Father Bob Mize from St. Francis was one of the delegates in the 1950's.

Currently, none of the Kansas delegation members are listed as co-sponsors of the bill. You can go to the following CWLA links and lend your support to the passage of this bill.

- [Legislation for a White House Conference has been Filed \(HR 5461\)!](#)
- [Cosponsors of the White House Conference Bills \(H.R. 5461 & S. 2771\)](#)
- [Sign On to Support a White House Conference on Children and Youth](#)
- [See who has signed on in support of a White House Conference on Children and Youth.](#)
- [Learn about our Children's Memorial Flag Initiative and how its focus will be on supporting the White House Conference on Children as an effective way to direct attention to the tragedy of violent child deaths and reduce child mortality.](#)
- [Send a Letter to the Presidential Candidates. See CWLA's Sample Letter.](#)
- [Get Your Board to Pass a Resolution to Support a White House Conference!](#)
- [Download \*White House Conference on Children and Youth: What's it All About?\*](#)

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## Resource Library

- **Contact information for SRS** - SRS has recently updated the contact list for Children and Family Services. In addition to adding a Deputy Secretary of Children and Family Services, several other positions have changed. You can obtain this list by [clicking here](#).
- **Contact information for KDHE (Kansas Department of Health and Environment)**
- [Click here](#) to find information about the key resources for children and families in the department.

**Questions? Please contact Melissa Ness, Advocacy Coordinator at [mlness@connections-unlimited.net](mailto:mlness@connections-unlimited.net)**