

# ACNJ Policy Agenda

## 2016 Key Initiatives



Advocates for Children of New Jersey works to advance efforts that improve the health, safety and well-being of all New Jersey children, with the goal of giving every child the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated. Each year, ACNJ identifies key initiatives that can be advanced to move New Jersey closer to achieving this vision.

Following is a summary of ACNJ's priority goals and initiatives for 2016.

### **GOAL: GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START**

All young children have access to high-quality child care and preschool to support their critical early growth and development. Quality early learning provides young students with a foundation for early language and math literacy -- key to future success in school and in life.

- Expand high-quality preschool by partnering with other organizations to seek increased preschool funding in the FY 2017 state budget.
- Reduce chronic absenteeism by 5 percent statewide, by supporting legislation that will mandate schools to track, report and address chronic absenteeism.
- Improve access to high-quality child care by ensuring state compliance with new federal requirements of the Child Care Development Block Grant and by advocating for legislation to require criminal history background checks of family child care providers.
- Expand access to early intervention services by developing practices to ensure that potentially eligible children are screened and receive services.

### **GOAL: SUPPORTING FAMILY SUCCESS**

All parents earn enough to provide their children with the necessities they need to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

- Increase the number of low-income students receiving school breakfast by an additional 10 percent in 2016 by leading the Food for Thought Campaign, advocating in school districts, and publishing the 6th annual school breakfast report. The Campaign will explore building on district summer meals programs and developing schools as nutrition hubs to increase the number of children receiving school breakfast.



- Promote a state Child Care Tax Credit for New Jersey. Share research on how other states have used tax credits to promote child care quality and affordability.

### **GOAL: PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Children in the care or custody of the child protection and juvenile justice systems receive appropriate care, services and supports while under state supervision and are returned as quickly as possible to safe, stable homes.

- Examine potential models for oversight of children in foster care and secure legislation requiring the reporting of some of the indicators currently required by the modified settlement agreement by age.
- Work with the Child Placement Advisory Council (CPAC) on legislation to improve the Child Placement Review process.
- Improve educational outcomes of youth in state facilities.

Giving Every Child A Chance