

Escambia Children's Trust FAQ

Our Children. Our Community. Our Future.



What is a Children's Services Council?

The sole purpose of a Children's Services Council (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 community provider 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.

What is the Escambia Children's Trust?

The Escambia Children's Trust (Trust) is the proposed name for the CSC in Escambia County. Every CSC in Florida has its own name. They include the Children's Trust of Alachua; Children's Services Council of Broward County; Kids Hope Alliance of Jacksonville; Children's Board of Hillsborough County; Manatee County Children's Services; Children's Services Council of Martin County; The Children's Trust of Miami; Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County; and Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County.

Why is the Escambia Children's Trust Needed?

The substantial needs in Escambia County, especially now with the negative impacts of COVID-19, dwarf the resources of the service providers working in early childhood education, detection, prevention, and wellness. The Trust would provide additional success-based investments in programs to meet the critical needs of our children with evidenced based proven expanded and new programs. The Trust would also have trained, experienced staff to help coach existing service providers and their staffs in creating systems and processes to set programmatic success metrics and capture the data required to measure and report successes.

The Trust will have a significant advantage in that it will have a sustainable revenue stream with a ten (10) year life that is controlled by an Escambia County organization. Its funding comes directly to the Trust and is not dependent upon fluctuating annual governmental appropriations or the strength of the economy, which is particularly important in unstable times like these when contributions to service providers can drop while demand for services increase.

What Are the Benefits of Early Childhood Education, Detection and Prevention?

1. Low-income children who attend quality preschool **are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.**
2. Adults who complete early childhood education programs **earn 7%-25% higher incomes than those who do not.**
3. Children with pre-K education **are 2.14 times less likely to be arrested and are 50% less likely to ever receive welfare** as an adult.
4. A 50% reduction in high school dropouts translates to **a net benefit of more than \$125,000 over each graduate's lifetime** or \$90 billion each year.
5. **A reduction in the number of juveniles housed** at the State of Florida's local juvenile detention facility **would reduce the \$3.3 million the county spent in FY 2020** reimbursing the State its mandated 6.8% cost-sharing, which increased by \$500,000 from 2019.
6. **A reduction in Medicaid charges would reduce the \$5.3 million the county spent in FY 2020** reimbursing the mandated cost sharing to the State.
7. **Escambia County School District could repurpose the millions of dollars it spends annually on remedial services** if student needs were identified earlier.

What Outcomes Have Other Children's Services Council Seen?

The Florida Children's Council tracks local CSC outcome data on a broad range of measures. Councils have achieved the following overall results:

- **Reduced juvenile crime and violence** through youth support, mentorship and employment services including career-based internships and youth apprenticeships.
- **Increased kindergarten readiness and reading proficiency by third grade** through access to high-quality early childcare, strengthened home visiting programs, and after-school interventions.
- **Reduced rates of teen pregnancy and fewer cases of child abuse and neglect** through intensive, family-strengthening programs.
- **Increased health and mental well-being** through expansion of mental health services, investments in substance abuse prevention, and improvement in access to oral health, vision services, breastfeeding support and nutrition education.

Specific improvements at the county level include:

- CSC literacy initiatives in Martin, Broward and Miami-Dade counties are **increasing the number of third graders reading proficiently at a faster pace than the state.**
- The **St. Lucie County** CSC **showed a 63% reduction in youth alcohol use** between 2000 and 2016, thanks to partnerships with several family-strengthening and after-school programs.
- The **Martin County** CSC funded a breastfeeding coordinator and a collaboration to improve nurse home-visiting services. As a result, Martin County **now ranks #1 in Florida for infant breastfeeding.**

What Are the Effects of Children Not Receiving Quality Early Education, Detection and Prevention?

- 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 keep a person in the Escambia County jail.

How Does Escambia County Compare with Other Florida Counties in Related Statistics?

Per capita Escambia County is **among the highest** in Florida in:

- teenage pregnancies
- reported cases of child abuse
- juvenile arrests
- number of people in jail
- number of violent crimes
- length of incarceration
- black infant deaths
- drug and alcohol abuse

How Many Children's Services Councils Exist in Florida?

There are nine independent special taxing districts for children's services currently operating: Alachua, Broward, Hillsborough, Manatee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and St. Lucie counties. The Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County is the oldest, established in 1945, and the Children's Trust of Alachua is the youngest, approved by voters in November 2018.

What Is the Next Step to Establish the Escambia Children's Trust?

The Escambia County Commission must approve an ordinance to place the referendum to establish the Trust on the November 3, 2020 general election ballot.

How Is the Escambia Children's Trust Funded?

The Trust, if approved by voters, will be funded by an additional one-half mill (0.5 mill) of taxable ad valorem tax on the property's taxable value after exemptions. **The average cost for an Escambia County homeowner is \$40 per year. The average cost for the owner of any other type of property is \$67 per year.** The additional 0.5 mill combined with the 6.6165 mills the county has collected since 2014 would be a combined 7.1165 mills. This is less than the 8.017 mills the county collected in 2008 and slightly more than the 6.9755 millage rate the county collected until 2014. Further, by state law the annual taxable value on an owner-occupied residence can only increase by the amount of the CPI up to a maximum of 3%. It has recently been less than 3%. **The additional ½ mill would not be collected until 2022.**

Would the 0.5 Mill Ad Valorem Tax Be Permanent?

No, reauthorization of the 0.5 mill ad valorem tax **must be placed on the ballot for voter approval every 10 years**. This provides continuing accountability. To date, no CSC has failed to win reauthorization at the end of its initial term. This is likely due to (1) the evidence-based reporting, accountability and collaboration requirements embedded in state statute; (2) prohibitions against duplicating services and being used in place of existing funding; and (3) tangible, lasting, measurable improvements on targeted child well-being outcomes.

What Are the Criteria for Funding?

The Trust will fund early childhood education, development, detection, prevention, and wellness programs to expand and enhance current services and include more children. Funding is contingent on the provider's ability to implement the proposed program, the soundness of the proposed methodology and reporting, how it will measure and be accountable for success, and its administrative and fiscal capability. To be eligible to receive funds, programs must incorporate at least one of the following:

- Demonstrate new measurable approaches and techniques based on research and/or promising practices.
- Use existing approaches and techniques that are best practices validated by measurable, proven results.
- Demonstrate cost-effectiveness and provide tangible benefits to children

Is There Anything That Cannot be Funded?

Yes, Florida statute prohibits the Trust from funding:

- Programs under the exclusive jurisdiction of the public-school system.
- Programs requiring worship or religious instructional activities as a condition of participation.
- Acquisition of property.
- Supplementing operating reserves for an ongoing corporation.
- Supplanting an agency's existing funding.
- Payment of fines or penalties.
- Expenses not otherwise approved through the budget or budget amendment process.

What Would Be the Trust's Funding Focus?

The final priorities would be established by the Trust's governing board with recommendations from the public and following a comprehensive assessment of countywide needs by an independent evaluator. Generally, funding would be targeted to improving outcomes in areas in which Escambia County ranks lower than the state and/or nation overall. Of specific concern in Escambia County, compared to Florida, are these statistics:

- Higher rate of infant deaths and deaths of children ages 5-9.
- Higher percentage of low-birthweight babies.
- Lower rate of Gold Seal (accredited) childcare programs.
- Lower rate of kindergarten readiness.
- Higher overall juvenile arrest rate of children under 18.
- Lowest ranking on the state child well-being index since the index debuted in 2016; in 2019, Escambia ranked #47 out of 67 Florida counties.

Three general areas have emerged based on critical needs and service gaps in Escambia County. These areas are **not listed in order of importance**. Final funding decisions would be made by the Trust governing board with public input.

1. **Children are Ready to Learn and Succeed:** school readiness services and family supports for young children are designed to foster a nurturing, safe and healthy environment at home and at school that improves every child's readiness for kindergarten.
2. **Children are Developmentally on Track:** a countywide, prevention-focused network is aligned toward identifying and treating the developmental needs of infants, toddlers and young children with a diagnosis, delay or disability before they enter kindergarten.
3. **Children are Supported in School and Life:** after-school and summer programs, career-focused internships, and evidence-based mentorships work together to enrich school-day experiences for adolescents and teens while providing youth development services that reduce juvenile crime.

How Were These General Areas Determined?

They were determined based on a review of existing assessments of community needs not currently being addressed with evidenced based best practices. Data collected by coordinating partners including Achieve Escambia, the Department of Health in Escambia County, the Escambia County Healthy Start Coalition, the Studer Community Institute and the UWF Haas Center. Data and information from community organizations about unmet needs and gaps in services also has been critical to helping the organizing committee to narrow down the Escambia Children's Trust focus areas.

How Will Potential Recipients of Funding Be Expected to Demonstrate Results?

State statute emphasizes the need for data and evidence of effectiveness to play a significant role in the allocation of CSC funding. While there is no single definition of what it means for a program, policy or practice to be evidence-based, one framework widely used by CSCs is based on criteria used in the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the What Works Clearinghouse, which evaluates the effectiveness of educational programs for the U.S. Department of Education. These standards were designed to help organizations and school districts identify evidence-based programs that could be supported with federal funds, reflecting a goal similar to the evidence-based expectations for CSCs in the Florida statute.

All programs funded by the Trust will be expected to collect outcome data and share results with the public. The RFP process and scoring categories will include a strong accountability system that includes program evaluation. Programs will be required to collect outcome data beyond simple counts of people served. For example, an after-school program that seeks to reduce crime rates and increase school performance will be expected to collect data from participants on police interactions, arrests and school activities such as absences, being tardy, discipline infractions, class participation, and academic performance. These findings could then be compared to similar students not in the program for evidence of effectiveness.

How Will the Escambia Children's Trust Be Staffed to Evaluate Program Effectiveness?

The staff shall include members who have experience in evaluation and measurement. They will work directly with applicants to ensure data and outcomes are tracked, and that all recipient organizations are continuously trained on evidence-based program evaluation methods. The staff will oversee evidence-based processes, including RFP proposal development aligned to accountability mechanisms, fiscal and program monitoring and data analysis.

A central goal of the Trust is to increase the ability of our provider community to use and collect evidence of program effectiveness. Technical assistance and training efforts will focus on helping local provider organizations develop outcome measures, collect and report data, implement evaluation plans; and use this information to adjust and improve services continuously.

What is the Escambia Children's Trust Governance Structure, How Are Board Members Selected and What Are The Reporting and Transparency Requirements?

A board of 10 members will govern the Escambia Children's Trust. The composition is mandated by state statute; five members are appointed by the governor and five are positional county leaders including (1) the superintendent of schools; (2) a school board member; (3) the district administrator for the Department of Children and Families; (4) one member of the county governing board; and (5) a judge assigned to juvenile cases. The governor's five appointees must represent the demographic diversity of the county population. By statute, the county governing body, after seeking public input, must submit to the governor at least three names per vacancy.

There are statute mandated reporting and transparency requirements. Each CSC

- must submit **Quarterly Financial Reports** to the Board of County Commissioners
- must submit **Annual Programmatic Reports** to the Board of County Commissioners
- is subject to the same laws and requirements governing local government entities including **annual filing of financial reports, public audit requirements, and operating transparently under Sunshine**, etc.

How does the Escambia Children's Trust Funding Focus Connect to Broader State Workforce and Economic Development Goals?

A record-breaking 26 million people will call Florida home by 2030, and 1.5 million more new jobs will need to be filled. To prepare for this continued growth and ensure Florida remains competitive, the Florida Chamber Foundation recently released a blueprint for Florida's future called *Florida 2030*. "Improving Florida's Talent Pipeline for a Better Workforce," one of the six priorities outlined in the report, is directly related to the Escambia Children's Trust, which would specifically address the following *Florida 2030* goals:

- 100% of children are ready for kindergarten
- 100% of Florida 3rd-graders read at or above grade level
- 100% of Florida 8th-graders read and perform math at or above grade level
- 95% of entering high school students graduate within 4 years
- >60% of Floridians 25-64 have a high-value postsecondary certificate, degree, or training experience
- >80% of Florida's workforce has essential employability skills

Who Supports Creating the Escambia Children's Trust?

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 Hawkings, Baptist Health Care, and Achieve Escambia.

Who Can I Call if I have Questions or Want to Volunteer?

We welcome your questions and feedback! Please call **(850) 462-4790** to reach the Escambia Children's Trust with any questions or to volunteer to help. Please leave a message if there is no answer, and your call will be returned as quickly as possible.

How Can I Contribute to the Campaign to Educate Voters to Vote for the Trust on the November 3, 2020 General Election Ballot?

Please make your check out to Escambia County Children's Trust PAC and send your contribution 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 standards.

Thank you for helping to maximize the potential of all of our children!