The Children’s Action Alliance (CAA), established in March 1988, is a statewide, non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of Arizona’s children and families through research, education, and statewide advocacy. The Alliance acts as a strong and independent voice for the children of Arizona in the legislature, in the mass media, and in the community. We focus particular attention on children and families who are poor or at-risk. Our fundamental mission is to make children’s issues the subject of intense thought, debate and action by all policy and decision makers, the news media, and the public.

The stakes are getting higher as the conditions of many of Arizona’s children are worsening and the consequences becoming more dire. Far too many Arizona children begin life at a disadvantage due to poverty, drugs, teen pregnancy, or child abuse, at a time when healthy, productive adults are needed to be the energetic, creative and multi-talented workforce of the twenty-first century.

The agenda for the Children’s Action Alliance this past year has been full:

**HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

We have continued our multi-year focus on homeless children through our Children’s Action Alliance Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth supported by the Margaret T. Morris Foundation. This effort has resulted in state legislation that assists homeless families whose children are ready to leave foster care; the creation by the legislature of a Task Force to address the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth; the convening of a major conference on homeless children and families; and, the in-depth report - Arizona’s Forgotten Children: Promises to Keep. The next few months will see the implementation of either administrative or legislative action to afford homeless youth the ability to access health care; a survey and focus groups to better determine the demographics and needs of homeless children and youth; a second conference on homeless children and youth which will focus on local and national solutions; and, through a contract with the Department of Economic Security, a comprehensive statewide plan to provide critically needed programs for runaway and homeless youth.

**EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION**

SUCCESS BY 6, guided by a public-private steering committee and funded by Honeywell, U S West, and the Arizona Republic/Phoenix Gazette newspapers, worked to support the State Department of Education’s preschool at-risk legislation; provided leadership toward a multi-million dollar urban demonstration project to build an early care and preschool education center for at-risk children; and developed a legislative package to improve and expand early childhood programs for Arizona’s at-risk young children. In the coming months, SUCCESS BY 6 will work with the Arizona Children’s Campaign to provide direction for the 1991 legislative effort for increased funding for at-risk preschool programs;
CHILD WELFARE

Even within its traditional service areas—child protection, foster care, and adoption—the Arizona child welfare system is overwhelmed and has great difficulty carrying out its basic responsibilities. To address the need to restructure child welfare in Arizona, through a contract with the Department of Economic Security, a report was produced, A Framework for Child Welfare Reform in Arizona. The report addresses the need to strike a balance between continued incremental improvements in the current system while at the same time testing a more fundamentally restructured system.

ADVOCACY

To bring order and rationale to our advocacy efforts, and to develop a long-range strategic plan for improving the conditions of Arizona’s children and their families, the CAA launched the Arizona Children’s Campaign sponsored by the Children’s Defense Fund and the Arizona Community Foundation. To date the campaign has produced and broadcast a prime time television program about the plight of homeless children in Arizona; initiated a statewide media campaign; held briefings with gubernatorial candidates; widely distributed a “Platform for Arizona’s Children” which outlines the campaign agenda over the next decade; sponsored the first statewide opinion poll conducted on children’s issues; and hosted a forum for over 800 people in which Marlon Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund, and the Republican and Democratic candidates for Governor talked about children’s needs. Over the next number of months a legislative package for 1991 will be introduced, a significant media campaign will be launched, and child advocacy organizational efforts will be initiated around the state.

KIDS COUNT

In 1990 the Children’s Action Alliance, in collaboration with the Morrison Institute on Public Policy at Arizona State University, was awarded an important national four year grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation in conjunction with the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Out of 71 applicants from 49 states and the District of Columbia, eight states, including Arizona, were awarded grants to improve the collection and analysis of reliable data on key indicators of child well-being, to translate that data into annual state statistical profiles on the status of children, and to develop strategies for using this new information to improve outcomes for children. The Arizona Children’s Campaign will serve as the vehicle for strategy development as well as to make the information regarding the status of Arizona’s children more accessible to policy makers and the public.

THANK YOU — THANK YOU — THANK YOU

The work of the Children’s Action Alliance is made possible only through the vision and commitment of individuals, foundations, and corporations who understand that the quality of our state’s children is the single most important determinant of Arizona’s future. We gratefully acknowledge their contributions:

- The Steele Foundation, Inc.
- The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
- Arizona Community Foundation
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- American Express Foundation
- Margaret T. Morris Foundation
- Tucson Community Foundation
- McKesson Foundation, Inc.
- Honeywell Inc.
- US West Corporation
- Arizona Public Service
- Melody S. Robidoux Foundation
- The Arizona Republic/Phoenix Gazette
- Arizona Department of Economic Security
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center
- Chase Bank of Arizona

We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of hundreds of concerned and committed Arizona citizens. Many have provided personal financial support. Others have volunteered their time and expertise by serving on CAA’s numerous committees and task forces as well as helping with CAA projects. Thank you all.

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