

# The Fourth Pillar of The American Legion

## The Department of Missouri Children & Youth Program.

Since our inception, The American Legion realized a need to care for and to protect our nation's most valuable resources – our children. In 1925, our National Child Welfare Division adopted the “Whole Child”, plan. This provides that “the child of every veteran should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity,” and is founded on three guiding principles:

- To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society.
- To extend support to organizations and facilities providing services for children.
- To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the needs of today's young people.

The following programs, though under the National Organizations C&Y Division, they are separate within the Department of Missouri. Clicking on the following will link you to the appropriate committee/commission.

### JROTC

Cadet Patrol Academy

High School Oratorical

Missouri Boys State

Missouri Eagle Scout of the Year

American Legion Baseball

Youth in County Government Day

Youth in State Government Day

Junior Sports Shooting

Scholarships.

The Department of Missouri Children & Youth Commission is comprised of nine (9) members that are available to assist any Post/District C&Y Chairperson. Those members are:

Paul Bennett, Chairman, 660-827-5023

Harrison Ochs,

Arthur Wilson,

Jo King,

Charles Ledford,

Juanita Chapman,

Michael Klingeman,

Sheryl Smith,

Joel Hauck,

The following Children & Youth programs are of concern to the Department's C&Y commission

**FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK..** The Department of Missouri recognizes that families of deployed and activated military personnel face special difficulties and hardships. With the help of National's Family Support Network, they can connect with local American Legion Family members by requesting assistance through the nation-wide toll free number (314-644-5055)

**TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (TFA)..** TFA is the landmark program of the National Commission on Children & Youth and was established in 1925, as a form of direct aid to children. Funds are granted to eligible families when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that all other local resources have been exhausted or are not available to provide the required assistance.

**OPERATION:MILITARY KIDS (O:MK)..** When National Guard and Reserve parents are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs for special support and services. O:PMK exists to garner community resources to provide the needed support and to highlight the challenges these children face.

**CHILDREN'S MIRACLE NETWORK..** Children need specialized care and equipment that only children's hospitals can provide. Children's Miracle Network hospitals provide state-of-the-art care, life-saving research and preventative education 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**COVERING KIDS AND FAMILIES BACK-TO-SCHOOL CAMPAIGN..** Annual Covering Kids and Families Back-To-School campaign is a program designed to encourage the enrollment of uninsured children that are eligible for coverage through Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

**CHILD SAFETY..** To promote child safety, The American Legion National Commission on Children & Youth publishes several useful brochures designed to educate children and parents and supports numerous national initiatives to keep children safe. Some of these brochures are:

1. Gateway Drugs...Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of dependency and delinquency. The commission asks all members of The American Legion Family to educate parents and children in their communities about the dangers of gateway drugs.
2. Warning Signs...the National and Department Commissions on C&Y recognizes the serious, yet often overlooked, problem that continues to plague our nation's youth: Suicide. Suicide is a tragic and senseless act of desperation. As a responsible society, we must equip ourselves with the facts, dispel the misconceptions, and learn the warning signs of youth suicide.

3. Halloween Safety...As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in the various communities, the commission believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible.
4. Fireworks Safety...Alarmed by the number of injured children every year as a result of fireworks, the commission urges local Posts to educate communities, parents and children about fireworks safety.
5. Missing Children...The American Legion encourages Posts to provide or assist in making available child identification activities to give parents a means of providing information to authorities should the need arise.
6. Immunization Program... The commission supports to the fullest, the use of any licensed vaccine to combat communicable diseases, stimulate immunization programs and provide for medically indigent children through federal and state funding.
7. Child Maltreatment... The commission urges school educators, coaches, school administrators and others responsible for children in any capacity to familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment, and report suspected maltreatment.
8. Special Olympics... Special Olympics is a recognized children and youth project. The commission encourages all Posts to participate in their local programs to assist in providing year-round sports training and athletic competition to increase the quality of life opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.
9. American Legion's Home of Ponca City, Oklahoma... The commission supports this vital Home in the care and education of these children left behind.

It is imperative that all C&Y activities at the Post level be reported, using the Narrative Form, that is provided on the next page, so that the Department and National know what activities are being conducted throughout Missouri. This form is to be completed and forwarded to Department Headquarters NLT June 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year.

