

Mission Statement

To ensure the well-being of Alabama's children through research, public awareness and advocacy.

- To accomplish this mission, VOICES for Alabama's Children:
- Researches the conditions of children in our state
- Communicates those conditions to those who can work for change
- Advocates for public policy and private programs that will improve the lives of children and families, and
- Builds coalitions to work for improvement in Alabama's child well-being.

The following are programs of VOICES for Alabama's Children:

Advocacy training

Alabama Kids Count Data Book & Report

Alabama Kids Count Conference

Children's Issues Public Awareness Campaigns

Children's Legislative Agenda

Children's Legislative Report

Community Meetings of Child Advocates


Issues Research

Legislative Advocacy




P.O. Box 4576
Montgomery, AL 36103-4576
334.213.2410 or 800.444.KIDS (5437)

E-mail: vfac@alavoices.org
Website: www.alavoices.org



VOICES' MODEL for CHANGE

A Case Study



VOICES' Model for Change: Improving the Well-being of Alabama's Children

Step 1: RESEARCH—What's the basic problem? What is needed for change?

1992

Child death is one of the indicators in Kids Count in which Alabama has continually ranked among the worst in the nation.

1996

Recognizing the problem, VOICES did research to assess what other states were doing to address the problem of preventable child deaths.

Step 2: COMMUNICATION—Getting the word out about the problem and its solution

1996

VOICES presented the problem in fall regional meetings.

VOICES included child death review on its children's policy agenda.

VOICES wrote guest editorials for daily and weekly newspapers highlighting the problem.

Step 3: COALITION BUILDING—Working with other groups to magnify efforts

VOICES talked with other groups including the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, The Children's Trust Fund, Safe-Kids, Children's Hospital, and others, communicating to them the need for such a system.



VOICES participated in a task force that came forth with recommendations that became proposed legislation.

Step 4: ADVOCACY—Supporting efforts for legislative/administrative change

1997

VOICES served as the lead lobby for the effort to pass the legislation. Other groups included the American Academy of Pediatrics—Alabama Chapter; Corporate Foundation for Children; Children's Trust Fund; Department of Public Health; Children's Hospital of Alabama.



The legislation created a statewide child death review process with regional and statewide child death review teams.

1998

After the legislation was passed, VOICES worked to secure ongoing funding for the Alabama Child Death Review System (ACDRS).

Step 5: SUPPORTING CHANGE—Participating where possible to implement change

1998

VOICES Executive Director was appointed to the Alabama Child Death Review Team to monitor progress in preventing child deaths and disseminate information about progress in this area and what additional efforts can be undertaken.

Step 6: ONGOING EVALUATION—Monitoring and documenting success

VOICES will continue to work with ACDRS, document progress in the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book* and watch Alabama continue to improve national in preventing child deaths.

OUTCOME:

The statewide review process was put in place in January 1998. During 1998 and 1999, the number of cases that met criteria for ACDRS review was approximately 500 per year. In 2000, after the child death review system had been in place for two years reviewing unexpected or unexplained child deaths, issuing recommendations for preventing future deaths, and offering and supporting community education programs to prevent such deaths, the number of deaths qualifying for review had dropped to 386. This number represented a 23% reduction in child deaths.

The 2002 National *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reflected that Alabama had improved from its position as 49th in the country in child death to 39th.



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