

# The American Legion

## Department of Florida

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# Children & Youth

## Chair Manual

### 2023-2024

# 2023-2024 Children and Youth Commission

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# FOREWORD

***Children and Youth program includes:*** Local Children and Youth Programs, Activities, Events; Generous Donations for the Florida Children and Youth Fund; American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.; Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA); Child Safety; Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Suicide, School Safety, Missing and Abducted Children, Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms), and Substance Abuse; Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night; Family Support Network; and a few other key organizations that meet and fulfill the American Legion's Fourth Pillar.

Please refer to the *Post Administrative Manual* and seek out the *Ordering Form* for those program materials needed to supplement your local C&Y programs as soon as possible. Some materials are limited. You can also print your own by downloading them from the National or Department website.

***Monthly Reporting of Post C&Y Program activities*** is necessary to the Department as this reflects the levels of activity that Legionnaires are displaying around the State of Florida. Our goal every term is *100% reporting by all every month, all year*, and meeting the various milestones required by promoting your C&Y Program. Getting into the habit of reporting monthly will earn potential recognition at the Post, District, Area and Department levels if everyone will do their part and report all C&Y activity at the end of each month throughout 2023-2024.

**WELCOME!** As the *Children and Youth Chair*, I have inherited a proud tradition of service to our nation's youth. In 1925, The American Legion National Child Welfare Division was established and adopted the "*Whole Child*" plan. This plan provides that "the child of every veteran should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." The foundation of this plan was based on three principles:

- *Strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society. The Legion recognizes the most normal environment for children is the home with their own parents. Our efforts have always been directed toward keeping the family together.*
- *Extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth. Always acting in a supplementary capacity, rather than duplicating the efforts of existing agencies.*
- *Maintain a well-rounded program that meets the needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the elasticity to address all matters of child health and welfare. This single statement, more than any other thing, confirms the Legion's commitment to all children.*

While these principles are the heart of the "*Whole Child*" plan, the muscle depends on these *four methods* working together – *Education, Legislation, Material Aid, and Prevention.*

Our investment over the years has educated our Legionnaire family and those in our local areas. Our consistent efforts have been heard in the halls of local, state, and all higher levels of government through resolutions created that promote legislative changes. We have created and updated various materials available to parents, children, youth, and organizations that target our concerns that are ever mindful throughout the year. With a full-embodied approach we have set a stage of prevention that we can all monitor through the efforts of the principals and methods of The American Legion Children and Youth Program.

The development of new and improved public programs, designed to provide economic security for children, has made it possible for the organization to turn its attention to other problem areas affecting our nation's young people. There exists no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion.

At present, there is no way of knowing what problems will face our youth tomorrow, but all of us know that their survival may well depend on the quality of care, education, and training which we as parents and citizens provide for all children.

The American Legion is proud of the Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of the American Legion, and partners of the Eight and Forty, and their achievements on behalf of our country's youth. Their efforts in child welfare is a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

# Planning Process

Setting measurable objectives will let you know what you have accomplished at year's end. In developing your goals remember:

- **Be Realistic.**
- **Make Them Measurable** - If it is not measurable then how will you know when it is accomplished? You must have a time limit in which to accomplish your goal and your goal must be written down.
- **Listen** - To concerns and ideas.
- **Formulate a Plan of Action** - This plan will be the basis of your coming year. Look at them carefully in terms of the resources you have available (manpower, time and money). Break your actions down into bite size pieces. This makes them more manageable. By taking these small steps and building on their successes, you are maintaining interest, reducing potential frustration, and climbing ever closer to your overall objective.

**Promote a Special Project** - Your main project could cover any area affecting Children and Youth that you feel is important. Maybe your Post, District, or Area will want to promote individual projects. Give it all the support you can. The important point to remember is it is better to concentrate on one or two yearly projects and be successful, than to run off in many different directions and accomplish nothing.

## Characteristics of a Great Chair

**Be Practical** - It is imperative to keep things in proper perspective. One person can only do so much. Take a reality check. That is STOP, EVALUATE, PRIORITIZE, and DELEGATE. Delegation to others on your committee will enable you to concentrate on the overall program and provide you with more time to guide and advise others. Remember... *a job well done always deserves a word of thanks.*

**Be Available** - When you accepted the position as a Children and Youth Chair, you said, "I will make myself available." Make yourself available to answer questions. Be prepared to talk with people before, during, and after meetings. If you are out when someone calls, always make the effort to return their call. From time to time, you will encounter questions that you cannot answer. Be wise enough to say, "I do not know," then find the answer, and get back with the person who asked the original question. You will find if you make it a point to be there when you are needed, either in person or by delegation, you will like yourself a lot better and others will too!!

**Be Cooperative** - There is always room for change and improvement. As our society today is so complex, it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of every child. Therefore, it is imperative for us to cooperate with other organizations and agencies concerned about our nation's children and youth. We do this to avoid duplication, and to reach as many young people as we can. Internal cooperation is also extremely important, as The American Legion works closely with the members and partners of The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Remember, there is but one Children and Youth program for The American Legion Family, and it is through such cooperative ventures, that our program can be most effective.

**Be Knowledgeable** - You must be knowledgeable about the total program, always keeping in mind its purposes, principles and methods of operation. The Chair should know the key Legion officials at the Department, Area and District levels. In addition, the Chair should know the key people of the Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion. Lastly, it is important to be able to identify those youth and health-serving agencies at the state, county and local levels, and their top personnel.

**Be Energetic** - You must demonstrate to others that you possess the capacity to do the job. This will become evident as you proceed with the challenges ahead and witnessed in both your ability to delegate responsibilities and to motivate others.

**Be Dedicated** - Your dedication gives you the strength to carry on providing the conviction to do what is needed. Dedication is a key ingredient to a successful Children and Youth Program.

## Post, District and Area Meetings

Meetings are an excellent way to communicate internally. You must constantly remind your members of your program. How many Post, District, or Area meetings do you attend each year? At these meetings, do you or your designated representative have a spot on the agenda? Remember ... You know your program is the greatest, give others the opportunity to learn and share in your enthusiasm. If you do not get this program "out front" and "out front often," interest will be lost and the importance you have originally given this program will suffer.

## Promote

Your internal lines of communication are important, but don't stop there. You need to get the word out. Promote your programs to the general membership and the public. There is an old saying, "Publish or Perish!" While a bit on the dramatic side, it holds true. Does your Post, District, or Area have a Public Relations Committee? How can they assist you in spreading the news? What are you planning and who needs to know? Do you know that many Posts and Districts in the Department carry a monthly or bi-monthly flyer or publication about their specific activities and future plans? If you have no Post, District or Area publication, how will you inform others about your program? Newspapers, suburban weeklies and even public service announcements on local television or radio are excellent ways to get the word out.

## Local Efforts

Within each community, there is a great deal of local legislative action that deserves continued attention. They include:

- School budgets
- Child abuse and neglect statutes
- City ordinances affecting children and youth
- Immunization
- Traffic regulations
- Juvenile justice (courts, probation, correction)
- Local public welfare departments
- Matters relating to the health and welfare of children
- Playgrounds

If the Children and Youth Chair or any member of the Post, District, or Area believes there is some action that The American Legion should take regarding local government, the proper procedure is to present the recommended action in the form of a resolution. If the resolution is adopted, then the appropriate level Commander or other American Legion Officers have the proper authority to inform the local government of the position that the local American Legion organization supports on a particular issue or matter.

There are times when the Post, District, or Area Children and Youth Chair determines changes are necessary at the state or federal levels of government in laws pertaining to children and youth. The proper procedure is to submit a resolution to the level it was initiated at and if adopted, forward it through the proper channels, as determined by your Department Constitution and By-Laws.

## Budget

It is very important for you to know the financial boundaries placed on the operation of your Children and Youth program. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- How much is budgeted for the Children and Youth program in your Post?
- What is the accepted procedure for submitting a proposal to your Post Finance Committee?
- How often does your Post Finance Committee meet?
- What percentage of your budget is earmarked for printing pamphlets and other periodicals, for special Children and Youth meetings, for special projects or other areas not mentioned?

Most Posts have time-tested methods of preparing budgets for their various programs. However, as chair, you must be alert and knowledgeable about this important facet. If inequities exist, seek to correct them. After all, you are the organization's C&Y Chair of a major program, and this is very important! Not only is it important to you...but is also very important to the communities, volunteers and the children who will be reached by your local program.

## Publications

Any successful program must not only have a definite plan, but the materials necessary to accomplish its objectives. The Children and Youth publications are available to help you carry out the total Children and Youth program. **Most of the brochures are no longer free...but you can download and print the brochures from the American Legion website at <https://www.legion.org/publications>.**

# National Consolidated Post Report and Department CPR Addendum

One of the most time-consuming, frustrating and yet possibly the most important job you will have this year is record keeping. Motivating your Posts, Districts, and Area to keep complete records will be a tough, but a rewarding job. Each year around the first of April, Department Headquarters mails a Consolidated Post Report form and Department Consolidated Post Report Addendum form to each Post in the Department.

Since these forms were adopted, we have never had a more complete picture of all Post activities. As a Post, District, and/or Area Children and Youth Chair, we know you must have a great deal of pride in what is accomplished for young people. This accomplishment may only be a few hours of volunteer time or a few dollars to a worthy cause. However insignificant it may seem, it should be reported!

As a national organization, The American Legion is Chartered by Congress. Because of this charter, we are required to submit an annual report of our activities and expenditures to the Congress of the United States. Therefore, the number of Posts reporting their Children and Youth activities is **very important!**

## Awards and Recognition

For a chance to win the honor of Best Post Children and Youth Program, please complete the required section on the CPRs and **submit it on time**. Provide a **one page** semi-annual and annual narrative with your Children & Youth Program Award application on your level of Children and Youth activities to the Department C&Y Program by **May 8th** so the data can be reviewed and those in compliance chosen per the criteria to be recommended for recognition at the Department Convention.

*Note: To cover the months of May and June you can report your planned activities for those months based on your C&Y Plan on the Annual Narrative Summary Report.*



# Children and Youth Annual Programs

## April is Children and Youth Month

Posts and Districts are asked to set aside time in April to conduct a special activity which places emphasis on the Children and Youth program, to inform our members and the community of the organization's accomplishments on behalf of young people.

In order to promote your selected event, design a specific plan and have the proper tools and materials readily available to put this plan in action. The following are a few suggestions that can be used:

- Secure a qualified speaker to discuss a subject of importance to the well-being of the children in your community.
- Sponsor a community project for or with children such as a hobby or talent show, a Spring Festival, a youth panel to discuss teen-age problems, or a visit to a children's hospital.
- Publicize the American Legion's interest and concern for children.

## American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.

As a separate corporation from The American Legion itself, the foundation has a broad charter to contribute to the welfare of the children through channels that were seldom available to the established American Legion program. The primary purposes of the Foundation are twofold: to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs and to contribute through the knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.



Contributions are primarily received from the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and the Eight and Forty. But it should be made known that anyone can contribute. Each year the Board of Directors review applications for grants from the monies available for disbursement. The applicants must contribute to one of the two purposes of the Foundation listed above. Any non-profit group or organization can apply for a grant. The Foundation's formal application is available to all upon request. The application has pertinent information such as the need for the proposed project, the outline for the research, what is to be done with the findings, the budget, the names of the people responsible, etc. This application also lists the policies under which grants are made.

Historically, five to eight projects are supported annually. Grants have generally averaged between \$10,000 - \$25,000 per organization. All of the grants given by the Foundation do not exceed one year. Grant applications must be received **NLT July 15<sup>th</sup>** of the current year. For additional information, go to: <http://www.cwf-inc.org/>.

# Gateway Drugs

The American Legion is concerned about young people using drugs and destroying their lives. Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered the entryway to a life of drug-dependency and delinquency. Using these gateway drugs is dangerous and can lead to drug abuse and addiction, plus more serious drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and LSD. Drugs ruin the lives of users and often the lives of their friends and families. But peer pressure can be intense. This brochure provides information that addresses the dangers of gateway drugs and how it affects our children & youth, family, and friends. A list of twenty reasons not to use these products will encourage all of us to do our best to prevent our children and youth from destroying and ending their lives.

## Family Support Network

Provides relief for military families with minor children who are struggling with the challenges of being without a deployed parent or spouse. The American Legion maintains a 24-hr nationwide toll-free number (1-800-504-4098), for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion's website at [www.legion.org/fsn](http://www.legion.org/fsn). All requests are forwarded to the appropriate American Legion Department or state. Departments will relay the request to local area Posts who will contact the service member or the family to determine what assistance is needed.

## Florida Children and Youth Fund

The Florida Children and Youth Fund provides grants of \$500.00 - \$5,000.00 to non-profit organizations in the state of Florida. Contributions to this fund must state it is for the *Florida Children and Youth Fund*. Go to the Department website for grant information. All grant applications must be received **No later than May 1<sup>st</sup>** to be considered.

## Make Halloween a Safe & Fun Night

In the eyes of children, Halloween is usually accompanied by happy thoughts; but in recent years, it has become a sad occasion in some households due to the death or injury of a child in the family. The American Legion is the only organization in the country to actively promote and sponsor a Halloween Safety program for children. Posts are urged to conduct programs designed to keep children off the street as much as possible and to let them enjoy Halloween without fear of being hit by a car, poisoned or injured by pranksters. Brochures, program guides and color slides for television use are available to Posts who are interested in conducting this program. Examples of Post programs might be parties, paint-ins, poster contests, costume contest or parades.

# **National Family Week**

The American Legion has long recognized the family as the foundation of this nation. A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children and Youth programs continues to be maintaining the integrity of the family. To demonstrate our resolute belief in the importance of strong families, The American Legion's Committee on Children and Youth, by mandate, advocates the passage of federal legislation that would establish the Thanksgiving holiday week as National Family Week. All members of The American Legion Family are encouraged to initiate and engage in local activities during National Family Week that promote, encourage and celebrate healthy families and communities. With increasing pressure by societal demands that continue to threaten the sacred integrity of the American family, promotion of family strength and integrity are encouraged.

## **Play it Safe**

Child safety is everyone's business! The Legion Family has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of the nation's youth since 1920. Child safety is defined as any external event that may present a significant danger to a child or young person. It includes but is not limited to: Motor Vehicle Accidents, Drowning, Fires/Burns, Poisoning, Suffocation/Strangulation, and Firearms.

## **Warning Signs of Youth Suicide**

The American Legion is concerned about the welfare of our nation's youth, and suicide threatens them. Among adolescents ages 15 to 24 this problem continues to be the third leading cause of death and the fourth leading cause of death for 10 to 14-years old. Over 4,600 young Americans take their own lives annually. Familiarize yourself with the warning signs, and you may be able to save a life. Every life is sacred and must be preserved. A brief list of twenty-one warning signs are expressed on the brochure.

# Temporary Financial Assistance

Since 1919, The American Legion has remained committed to the health and welfare of our nation's veterans and families. Born out of this desire to serve, the Committee on Children & Youth established a form of direct aid to veterans' children in 1925 — Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA). This landmark program continues to be unique in the field of social work today. Through TFA, an American Legion post can call upon the national organization for cash assistance to help maintain the basic needs of children of active duty servicemembers or American Legion members. Non-repayable grants are awarded to eligible families with a child in need when all other available resources have been exhausted.

Prior to the completion of an investigation and application, it must be determined if the minor child is eligible for TFA. The minor child must not be older than 17, or 20 if still enrolled in high school or is physically handicapped. The minor child must be the biological child, stepchild, or in the legal custody of a qualifying veteran. A qualifying veteran is defined as:

- A member of the United States armed forces serving on federal orders current under Title 10 of the United States Code, inclusive of all components; or
- A veteran possessing an active membership in The American Legion.

Active-duty military applicants can be considered for a TFA grant without being a member of The American Legion. A single one-time non-repayable Temporary Financial Assistance grant of up to \$1,500 will be permitted for the minor child(ren) of a qualifying veteran. Once the veteran has the application the **Department TFA Director** must be called at 407- 295-2631 ext. 225 to receive further assistance and instructions.

# Suggestions for Planning a C&Y Program Calendar

The Children & Youth Program will work if you can do the following: **Always plan two months in advance with all programs!**

## August

- Make contact with veterans in your community
- Start planning a Veterans Day event
- Make plans to go to your local schools
- Child Safety

## September

- Make plans for an Open House in your Post
- Plan a Halloween Safety Program
- TFA - Temporary Financial Assistance program
- CWF – Children Welfare Foundation
- CYF – Children and Youth Fund (Florida)
- Missing Children program
- First Monday in September is Labor Day
- Encourage local Law Enforcement Offices and firefighters to help
- Sept. 11 is Patriot Day
- Sept. 16 is The American Legion Day

## October

- Halloween Safety program
- Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night
- Support Children's Miracle Network
- Fireworks Safety program and have Firefighter to help
- Play It Safe program and have a Firefighter to help

## November

- Teen Suicide
- Gateway Drugs
- Drugs and Alcohol – Warning Signs
- Family Support Network
- Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)
- Plan to attend Dept Fall Conference
- Plan an event for Veterans Day
- Plan an even for National Family Week
- Plan a Thanksgiving event

## December

- Remember Pearl Harbor Day, Dec 7<sup>th</sup>
- Plan a Christmas Party

## January

- Plan an Open House at the Post
- Use the Family Support Network
- Operation: Military Kids
- Plan an event at a local Daycare
- Plan to attend a local Boys/Girls Scout meeting

## February

- Americanism Month plan an event
- Present a flag and flag codes to a school
- Play If Safe program and have a Firefighter to help
- 4 Chaplains ceremonies and invite the community
- Plan a President's Day and/or Valentines' Day event

## March

- Plan a Birthday Party for The American Legion (March 15-17)
- St. Patrick's Day - plan an event for children

## April

- Children & Youth Month – plan an event with the community
- Indoor/Outdoor Safety
- Child Abuse and Abduction

## May

- Plan an event for: Armed Forces Day, Mother's Day, Memorial Day

## June

- Plan to attend Department Convention
- Plan out C&Y events for upcoming year