

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Communications Office  
(850) 245-4111

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DIRECTS ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SERVICES FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN**

**TALLAHASSEE** — Today the Florida Department of Health highlighted its commitment to serving families across the state through the structural enhancement of programs in the Division of Children's Medical Services (CMS). Department officials, including State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong, appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and provided an overview of the important work performed by CMS and its partners.

"Children's Medical Services touches more than 4 million children in Florida and plays a vital role for so many families," said Dr. Armstrong. "By shifting dollars from overhead to direct services for children, the Department is helping children at-risk for developmental delay to reach their full abilities."

Today's presentation highlighted specific CMS programs that are focused on direct services for children with special abilities and developmental needs. Process improvements in quality assurance, budget controls and contract management are securing these services now and into the future. The programs offered through Children's Medical Services emphasize public-private collaboration and remain high priorities for the Florida Department of Health.

Senator Rene Garcia, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, said, "I appreciate the energy that is going into ensuring that services are provided to children at risk for developmental delays or with special health care needs."

Representative Matt Hudson, Speaker Pro Tempore and Chair of the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee, said, "Any time an agency's plan for moving forward includes reducing administrative costs to redirect funding and provide services for Florida's vulnerable populations, I am supportive."

Terri Fisk, President of Florida Coalition Spoken Language Options and mother of a child with special health care needs, said, "The programs overseen by Children's Medical Services are very important to our family and especially my son who has benefitted greatly from the services provided by CMS. I appreciate the Department of Health making children with special health care needs such a high priority and

**Florida Department of Health**

Office of Communications  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1705  
PHONE: 850/245-4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

**www.FloridaHealth.gov**

TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
YOUTUBE: fldoh  
FLICKR: HealthyFla  
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can attest to the fact that no delays in services have occurred because of the transition taking place.”

Dr. Bucciarelli, CMS Medical Director, Gainesville, said, “Children's Medical Services has a long-standing tradition of being a champion for Florida's children. I was pleased today to hear the Surgeon General's public commitment to the success of CMS.”

Amy Wetherby, Director of Florida State University Autism Institute, said, “Florida’s Early Steps is one of the most important programs in our state that has the potential to not only reduce the cost of education at school age for children with autism, but also dramatically improve outcomes of children and families. Providing early intervention, made possible through Children’s Medical Service’s Early Steps Program, during the time when a child’s brain is developing the most rapidly and is the most responsive to environmental influence, should be considered the most important path to improving academic outcomes and school success for Florida’s children.”

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The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. The department is recognizing 125 years of public health in Florida with educational opportunities and events. Please visit [www.FLHealth125.gov](http://www.FLHealth125.gov) for more information.

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