

From Hearth Connection's Legislative News and Advocacy Letter: *Passage of the Visible Child Work Group Act Accomplished!*

The Hearth Connection team is also happy to report that the Visible Child Work Group Act was passed by the State Legislature and signed by Governor Dayton last Monday. This **Act** creates a working task force to assess and respond to the unmet developmental needs of young children (infants and toddlers) who are homeless.

The Minnesota Visible Child **Work Group** is established to identify and recommend issues that should be addressed in a statewide, comprehensive plan to improve the well-being of children who are homeless or have experienced homelessness. The Work Group will include Legislators, State Agency representatives, business leaders, homeless service providers, and consumers. The Work Group is tasked to report back to the Legislature by December 15, 2012 on the following matters:

1. Recommend goals and objectives for a comprehensive, statewide plan to improve the well-being of children who are homeless or who have experienced homelessness;
2. Recommend a definition of "child well-being;"
3. Identify evidence-based interventions and best practices improving the well-being of young children;
4. Plan implementation timelines and ways to measure progress, including measures of child well-being from birth through adolescence;
5. Identify ways to address issues of collaboration and coordination across systems, including education, health, human services, and housing;
6. Recommend the type of data and information necessary to develop, effectively implement, and monitor a strategic plan;
7. Examine and make recommendations regarding funding to implement an effective plan; and
8. Provide recommendations for ongoing reports on the well-being of children, monitoring progress in implementing the statewide comprehensive plan, and any other issues determined to be relevant to achieving the goals of the Act.

The Visible Child Act was supported by a broad coalition of organizations including: the **Children's Defense Fund, Hearth Connection, the Family Housing Fund, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Legal Services Advocacy Project, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Heading Home Minnesota, and Simpson Housing Services.**