



2017 Policy Agenda

Approved by the Board of Directors, September 7, 2016

Mission

SCAN's mission is to promote the well-being of children, improve parent-child relations and prevent child abuse and neglect by:

- *Educating* the community about the scope, nature and consequences of child abuse and neglect and the importance of positive, nurturing parenting;
- *Providing* direct parent education; and
- *Advocating* for children in the community, the legislature and the court.

Our vision is for every child in Northern Virginia to grow up in a safe, stable, nurturing family, with the supports they need to contribute to strong communities today and as adults tomorrow. As an organization, SCAN serves as a voice on behalf of parents, providers and others in the Northern Virginia area whose daily actions make critical contributions to the well-being of children. Every member of the community plays a role in helping to realize this vision, and we believe it is important that policymakers at all levels – local, state and federal – work as partners in this effort.

Our Policy Priorities

As advocates for children, we believe that every child has a right to grow up in a safe, permanent home. Children deserve love and nurturing as they learn and develop from the very beginning, and they need positive guidance as they grow and mature. To this end, we will advocate for:

1. *Policies that support and nurture strong parents.* We know parents often feel isolated in the difficult job of parenting, and many parents need information, skills and support to become positive, nurturing influences in their children's lives. Policymakers should advocate and support community-based, proven programs that focus on developing and encouraging strong parenting skills through information and education. Additionally, policymaker support should facilitate parents' access to employment and training opportunities, physical and mental health programs, and opportunities to obtain quality child care.
2. *Policies that protect and support the healthy development of children.* Every child deserves hope and love at every stage of his or her life. Policymakers should advocate and support programs that educate and raise awareness on how child abuse and neglect can be prevented, and how each and every individual can make a difference in a child's life. Policymakers should also advocate for and ensure that every child has a permanent connection and network of support, preventing any child from ever feeling as though they have been forgotten or lost in a system. A focus on education at all levels – the early years, elementary, as well as post-secondary support – should be a priority. Finally, promoting the social and emotional well-being of children is vital to their success so ensuring access to quality physical and mental health services is critical to a child's healthy development.
3. *Policies that align with family-centered principles.* Research illustrates that children do best when raised in safe, stable and nurturing families. These attributes establish a foundation for preventing child maltreatment. Family-centered, community-based principles must be at the heart of child welfare practices. Policymakers should support programs and community networks that focus on strengthening and supporting families, recognizing that what defines a family often varies for each individual child.