

## Sample Communications

# Sample Editorials

These short opinion pieces apply the recommended frame elements to newspaper editorials, social media status updates, and program descriptions. They can be adapted to local contexts (by adding local references or site-specific information) or restructured for different formats.

## Sample Editorial: *Living Up to Our Duty to the Next Generation*

The lively, city-wide discussion around [issue in the news] reminds us how deeply Jacksonville residents value children. Our city recognizes that we have a shared responsibility for children.

This extended appeal to *Civic Responsibility* sets up a frame that worked well in Jacksonville for issues related to the rights of the child.

Unfortunately, there are many ways that we are failing in our duty to ensure that all our children can grow, learn, and thrive. On the bright side, there are also many ways we can do a better job of meeting our obligations.

Learning to deal with the minor stresses of everyday life is part of developing coping skills, but then there's another level of adverse experience that can derail children's development. Harmful stressors can be severe, like witnessing violence in the community, or chronic, like living with a family member with an untreated mental illness. Strong, stable relationships can buffer children from the harmful effects of this toxic type of stress. But our city's policies can dramatically reduce the sources of these stresses and prevent them from occurring in the first place. We can take steps to make communities safer and stronger, for instance. We can provide greater access to timely, affordable, and effective mental health care.

Here, the rights to mobility and leisure are talked about in plain language. Explaining the rights of the child one-by-one is an effective strategy for building understanding and support of these rights. In contrast, making blanket statements about children's rights invites pushback and zero-sum thinking about threats to "adults' rights."

In addition to reducing some predictable sources of childhood adversity, there are also ways we can increase the participation of our children and youth in positive experiences. Our public transit system, our recreation services, and our afterschool opportunities come to mind here. Let's do what we can to support young people in being able to get around our large city and in having positive and healthy places to go.

Jacksonville has a strong sense of what's right and how to do right by others. When we live up to our principles—like our belief in our shared obligation to children—then we will all reap the benefits of doing the right thing.

Lead with values—and close with them, too.

## Jacksonville is Getting Kids on Track to Good Health and Wellbeing

This week is National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, and we are calling on our community to join us in our collective effort improve the mental health of children in our city. Jacksonville, in particular, needs this support—we have the worst child health outcomes of any large city in Florida. But why are Jacksonville's children and families faring so poorly, and what can we do about it?

First, health care is expensive, and many families can't afford it. This is especially true for behavioral and mental health care services, which are often not covered by health insurance programs.

Second, Jacksonville is Florida's largest city—both in the size of its population and in the geographic area it covers. Health care facilities are spread out across the city and can be difficult to access. Appointments are often only available during traditional work hours, making them hard to access for people whose work schedules are inflexible, or for those working extra shifts to make ends meet. Additionally, because our city's public transportation infrastructure is weak and unreliable, getting to an appointment can take hours on a weekday. And multiple appointments can take an entire day, which many of our families simply cannot afford.

Communication and coordination present a third challenge. Doctors, counselors, school administrators, and parents often don't have good ways to communicate with and among each other. That means that parents may not know that teachers recommend counseling; counselors may not know what medicines children might be taking; and doctors may not know what kind of therapy children are receiving.

Together, these cost, transportation, and communication challenges mean that many of Jacksonville's children are not thriving. We can and must change that. Our children, and our city, depend on it.

Jacksonville is currently building a connected system of supports that can help all children and families get the care they need. This system is like a network of interconnected train tracks that gets kids and families to their ultimate destination: health and wellbeing. Railway tracks have many component parts that must be coordinated to function well. Jacksonville's System of Care Initiative works in the same way. It is building a network that has all the strong component parts it needs to function well: components that relate to health care, child care, foster care, education, housing, justice, and others. All of these pieces come together to get children and families where they need to go.

In Jacksonville's System of Care *Initiative*, case managers make sure that parents and caregivers can make and keep appointments. Counselors screen children for social and emotional development problems, and refer them to treatment. And transportation specialists to help kids access the treatment they need.

Looking around our city, we see that there is a great deal of work currently being done to help Jacksonville become a central hub for children's positive development. But there is much more that we can do. We all need to support the city as it expands and connects the tracks that help its children learn and develop. This is the way forward. This is how Jacksonville will become a central hub for children's positive development.

We can do more when we all get on board in supporting our city. Let's move forward together!