



OKLAHOMA

Helping Every Life and Parent **H.E.L.P. Task Force**

- **Governor Appointees**
- **The Oklahoma Attorney General**
- **The President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate**
- **The Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives**
- **The Secretary of Health and Mental Health**
- **The Secretary of Human Services**
- **The Commissioner of Health**

OCTOBER 28, 2022



Helping Every Life and Parent H.E.L.P. Task Force

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Commissioner of Health, Keith Reed

The Honorable Governor J. Kevin Stitt, President Pro Tempore Treat and Speaker McCall:

We would like to thank each of you for the opportunity to serve as members on the Helping Every Life and Parent – H.E.L.P. Task Force. As a working task force with diverse backgrounds and qualifications, we have accepted our duties and responsibilities loyally and moved very quickly to study, evaluate and make recommendations regarding policies, programs and proposed legislation.

In our brief time together, the H.E.L.P. Task Force has worked diligently to examine what it would entail to support life, mothers, parents and the public in the State of Oklahoma. The governor's executive order was signed July 8, 2022, with the appointment of the chair on Sept. 2, 2022. The initial meeting of the task force was formally called and held on Sept. 18, 2022. Our cohesive team of task force members has established relationships with legislators, community leaders, state agencies, non-profits, public and private organizations, medical providers, health systems and the press. Our work has been precise, collaborative and expedient.

The task force took into consideration all public comments, legislative, legal, program and agency availability and task force experience brought to the table. These final recommendations were reviewed at the Oct. 18, 2022, meeting before the final vote to approve, disapprove or modify final recommendations on Oct. 25, 2022. It is the hope that our study, discussion, evaluation and votes, based on facts, experience and findings as well as input from public comment and health care facilities, help in assisting each of you and the Legislature in making imperative decisions moving forward.

While many of these recommendations are multi-layered and cross over within both the public and private sectors, we are confident in the synergy to be gained. There is more work to be done to support these recommendations which will take additional time to implement.

Enclosed is the task force submission of recommendations. Immediately following this letter and recommendations are the Appendix of Reports and research taken into consideration and held for discussion within our team.

Pursuant to the power and authority vested in the Honorable Kevin Stitt, Governor of the State of Oklahoma, President Pro Tempore and Speaker named in Executive Order 2022-14, we humbly submit our recommendations.

Respectfully,

Juli D. Merciez, Chair

MPC, BSN, RN

The Helping Every Life and Parent Task Force



OKLAHOMA

Educating Oklahoma on the Reality of Life and Resources Available



Branding and Marketing

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to create an Oklahoma life and parenting brand with a landing page from an Oklahoma website that compiles life and parenting resources, initiatives, programs, assistance and educational information to fulfill task force objectives, with the request for funding from Legislature if needed.

- a. Create a marketing campaign to promote the Oklahoma life and parenting brand and website that could include advertising through billboards, social media and television ads.**
- b. Add the Oklahoma life and parenting website to attorney general's SAFELINE cards.**

(Attorney general – see Appendix A – website modeled after State of South Dakota)



OKLAHOMA

Abortion Pill Reversal

It is the recommendation of the Task Force to establish a statewide cooperative network and process for the availability of the Abortion Pill Reversal, in conjunction with Heartbeat International, Saint Francis Health System and other health systems, clinics, pregnancy centers and providers.

(St. Francis Health System and Heartbeat International program – see Appendix B)



OKLAHOMA

Supporting Pregnancy Centers in Oklahoma

SUPPORTING PREGNANCY CENTERS IN OKLAHOMA



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Tax Credit

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to create an Oklahoma life and parenting brand with a landing page from a Oklahoma website that compiles life and parenting resources initiative program assistance and education or the Legislature to study the Missouri Tax Credit for contributions to pregnancy help centers and consider a similar proposal for residents in the State of Oklahoma.

(Representative Danny Williams – see Appendix C)



OKLAHOMA

Continue Funding

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force for the Oklahoma State Department of Health and Legislature to identify all opportunities to provide and expand available funding through the Choosing Childbirth Act and how it is allocated throughout the state.

(Oklahoma State Department of Health – see Appendix C)



OKLAHOMA

**Eliminate Unnecessary
Barriers to Adoption
and Help Make
Oklahoma the Most
Adoption Friendly State
in the United States**



OKLAHOMA

Adoption Code

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to amend the Oklahoma Adoption Code (10 O.S. § 7505-3.2(C)) to increase the initial amount authorized to be expended on birth mother living and transportation expenses from \$1,000 to \$3,500 without first obtaining court approval.

(Attorney General – see Appendix B)



OKLAHOMA

Annual Adoption Month Training

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to support the attorney general in hosting and facilitating an annual Adoption Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Seminar to the benefit of lawyers and judges and other applicable individuals beginning November 2023 (National Adoption Awareness Month).

(Attorney General – see Appendix C – CLE Seminar Proposal)



OKLAHOMA

**Encourage and Provide
Resources to our
Communities to
Support Unplanned
Pregnancies**



OKLAHOMA

Maternity Desert Services Needed

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to identify opportunities to expand health services to women in all areas of the state and address the social determinants of health including improved access to care and reliable transportation for women.

(Oklahoma State Department of Health – see Appendix E)



OKLAHOMA

Pregnancy Resource Navigator

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to seek support for the new Pregnancy Resource Navigator (PRN) program by the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) to expand home visiting and case management services to support and celebrate Oklahoma mothers, babies and families with request for funding if needed.

(Oklahoma State Department of Health – see Appendix E)



Expansion of SoonerCare

- a. It is the recommendation of the task force to raise the federal poverty level (FPL) for SoonerCare income eligibility for pregnancy and postpartum coverage from 138% to 205% FPL.**
- b. It is the recommendation of the task force to extend postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months continuous coverage.**



OKLAHOMA

Scope of Practice for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to recommend that Legislature adopt national best practices and allow certified nurse-midwives to practice at the top of their education and training, including removal of the overly burdensome regulations requiring physician supervision for the prescription of medication

It is the recommendation of the HELP Task Force that legislature review national best practices to allow Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to practice at the top of their education and training.

(American College of Nurse Midwives, March of Dimes Office of Government Affairs – see Appendix G)

(Oklahoma Advance Practice Nurses-see Appendix G)



OKLAHOMA

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

As long as the parent is completing the treatment plan and following their TANF Work Plan, the TANF benefits should continue. If the parent does not fulfill these requirements, they should lose the cash payment and supportive services and the TANF case should be closed.



OKLAHOMA

Positive Pregnancy Test & Deeming Dependent

It is the recommendation of the HELP Task Force for DHS to consider a woman, at the point of a positive pregnancy test, as having a dependent and therefore eligible for TANF services including case management, family stabilization classes and services, work training, educational assistance, transportation, and a small amount of income while they actively participate.



OKLAHOMA

Drug Test & Treatment

It is the recommendation of the HELP Task Force for the Legislature to consider amending state law to allow an applicant with a positive drug test to qualify for TANF as long as they agree to complete a substance abuse treatment plan, and to allow those treatment hours to count toward the 30-hour work activities requirement for TANF.

(Oklahoma Department of Human Services – see Appendix H)



OKLAHOMA

Car Equity Value

It is the recommendation of the HELP Task Force for the Legislature to consider amending state law to disregard the equity value of one automobile from the resource test for TANF eligibility.

(Oklahoma Department of Human Services – see Appendix H)



OKLAHOMA

**Empower Nonprofit
Organizations, Local
Faith Communities
and State Agencies to
Support Families and
Mothers Before,
During and After
Childbirth**



OKLAHOMA

Safe Haven Law

It is the recommendation of the task force to amend the Oklahoma Safe Haven Law (10A O.S. § 1-2-109) to increase the number of days to relinquish a child without prosecution for child abandonment or child neglect from 30 days of age or younger to 60 days of age or younger.

- a. Amend corresponding criminal law (21 O.S. § 851) consistent with the same.**

(Attorney general – see Appendix I)



OKLAHOMA

Fatherhood Program

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to support the current state fatherhood initiative for its expansion and additional funding that may be needed and collaborate with the State of Tennessee as they develop their fatherhood initiative.

(see Appendix I)



OKLAHOMA

Extension of Executive Order 2022-14

It is the recommendation of the H.E.L.P. Task Force to extend their service by either executive order or legislative process to formalize a committee with a four-year term of commitment and maintain all current task force members.