



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

Position Profile
President
Voices for Illinois Children
Chicago, Illinois

Voices for Illinois Children is seeking a visionary, energetic leader with keen political instincts to lead this premier child advocacy organization and deliver on a bold promise to Illinois children.

The Organization

The mission of Voices for Illinois Children is to champion the full development of every child in Illinois. Voices works with families, communities and policymakers on issues to help children grow up healthy, happy, safe, loved and well educated.

Founded in 1987 and based in Chicago, Voices is a nonpartisan organization that bridges professional and ideological boundaries to mobilize individuals, groups and communities to make informed policy choices, promote proven quality programs, and motivate positive changes in the lives of all Illinois children and their families. To this end, Voices' work falls into five action areas:

- Initiating public policy solutions and fostering cultural changes that support Illinois children and their families.
- Conducting policy research and analysis.
- Building coalitions and engaging and empowering communities.
- Communicating and deliberating with legislators and policymakers.
- Building the public awareness – and public will – that is necessary to create culture change.

Values

Voices is committed to the well-being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. Voices believes children do well when they grow up in strong, supportive families, and that families do well in supportive communities. Voices believes in focusing on preventing problems by employing comprehensive, well-researched strategies to improve children's education and healthcare, and by strengthening their families' economic security and the social services on which they depend.

Notable Accomplishments

Voices has amassed a rich record of accomplishments over its 22 year history. Some of the notable accomplishments include:

- Giving Children a Great Start – Voices has succeeded in making high-quality early learning opportunities a reality for more than 140,000 young children in our state every year. We helped make Illinois the first state in the nation with a policy of voluntary, high-quality preschool for every young child.
- Supporting Working Parents – Voices led the successful campaign to create the Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit, which has helped make it a little easier for more than 700,000 working families to make ends meet and provide for their children.
- Helping Children Stay Healthy – Voices’ policy analysis and advocacy paved the way for the All Kids health insurance program, which extended coverage to over 250,000 uninsured children and now guarantees that every child in Illinois has access to the healthcare they need and deserve.

Partner and Community Engagement

Partner engagement and collaboration are hallmarks of Voices’ approach to affecting change for children. Its allies include a wide range of organizations and individual activists who share Voices’ commitment to improving the lives of children and their families. Expanded community engagement will be an important part of Voices’ future. A key engagement strategy will be the expansion of Voices Leadership Committees (VLC), which are community-based networks formally affiliated with Voices. Currently there are 12 VLCs, and the plan over the next five years is to expand the VLCs to cover at least half of Illinois’ state senate districts.

Voices is involved in a number of national networks and initiatives, including The Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN), Foster Kids Are Our Kids Campaign Agencies, Healthy Families America, Kids Count Network, State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, and Voices for America's Children. Voices is the designated Kids Count agency for Illinois. Each year Voices publishes a Kids Count data book that provides a detailed view of the status of children in Illinois, and supplies vital information for prioritizing changes to improve the lives of children and their families.

Targeted Outcomes

Voices recently completed its 2009-2013 strategic plan, which builds on its solid record of policy accomplishments and envisions an expanded level of citizen engagement in policy and cultural change to improve the lives of children in Illinois. Overall long-term goals and targeted outcomes include:

- Build a sense of public purpose and shared responsibility for and public commitment to all children that is reflected in better funded policies and quality programs at the federal, state and community levels.
- Promote and facilitate the engagement of individuals, organizations and businesses as agents of positive change in the lives of children and their families across the state.

- Strengthen the capacity of communities to meet the needs of children and their families.

Voices is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is governed by a 32-member board of directors. The current budget is \$2.3 million and current staffing includes 14 positions. More information about Voices may be found at: www.voices4kids.org.

The Position

The incoming president will succeed Jerome (Jerry) Stermer who led the organization from its inception until February 2009 when he was appointed Chief of Staff for Illinois Governor Patrick Quinn. Jerry's successor will inherit an organization with a sterling reputation, a highly skilled staff, a prestigious, connected and engaged board, and a solid financial footing.

The new president will assume the top staff leadership role at an opportune time. Over the past several months, the board and staff have engaged in a strategic planning process that has re-envisioned Voices' core functions: policy and culture change, community engagement, resource development, and communications. While the strategic plan charts new directions, particularly in the area of community engagement, the board sees the strategic plan as a living document that serves as a guide rather than a mandate for the incoming president. The new president will be expected to bring a new vision and voice to address the challenges faced by Illinois children and their families.

Priorities for the first 12-18 months for the new president's tenure include:

- Establish a solid profile within the foundation and corporate funding communities and form sound relationships with Voices' current and prospective funders.
- Secure the core budget for 2010 and beyond.
- Secure additional funding for and implement the capacity building initiatives outlined the strategic plan.
- Establish positive working relationships with staff and board.
- Develop relationships with partners, collaborators and key legislators.
- Embrace the strategic plan and guide the organization's strategic direction.

Key Responsibilities

Reporting to the board of directors, specific responsibilities include:

- Provide visionary and strategic leadership to the organization and translate that vision into strategies and concrete actions that advance the mission.
- Lead the internal operations and programs to ensure that Voices maintains its status as a well-managed, highly-respected organization.
- Communicate the mission and policy positions of Voices to various audiences and develop and maintain sound relationships with strategically important people and the media; serve as a spokesperson for the organization.
- Provide leadership and involvement in the resource development functions, foster positive relations with funders and donors and develop new funding relationships.

- Provide effective management and direction to existing and new staff to further develop and build their skills, experience and performance.
- Maintain a continuous understanding of the organization's financial position and outlook, and ensure fiscal responsibility and security.
- Support the board of trustees in its governance role, foster its ongoing development, and keep it informed about internal conditions and important external developments.

Experience and Attributes

The ideal candidate for this position will possess or exhibit the following characteristics:

- A commitment to children and families and the ability to commit to Voices' mission.
- Policy leadership experience, including:
 - A solid understanding of the process and dynamics involved in how public policy is developed, enacted and implemented.
 - Skills and experience in leading successful policy change efforts.
- Senior level organizational management and leadership experience.
- The ability to think strategically and critically, and synthesize.
- Keen political instincts.
- A record of building and managing relationships.
- Commitment to and skill at community engagement, shared leadership and collaboration.
- Strong communication skills and comfort interacting with the media.
- A results orientation with a track record of mobilizing teams to accomplish big agendas.

Salary will be competitive and commensurate with experience.

Application Process

To apply, email resume, cover letter and salary requirements to: vic@transitionguides.com.

Other inquiries may be addressed to:

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AA/EOE. Resume reviews begin immediately.