



Financing Child Welfare Services

ACTION

- Support legislation to extend federal financial support, through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, to provide services to children and families involved with the child welfare system. The legislation would permit states to use Title IV-E funds for preventive, crisis, permanency, and post-permanency services to keep children safe and in permanent, nurturing families.

HISTORY

The current federal funding system for child welfare services provides open-ended entitlement support for out-of-home care (Title IV-E Foster Care Program). Funding, however, to prevent child and abuse and neglect, to keep children safely with their families, or to support timely family reunification in cases in which temporary removal is necessary is provided through discretionary funding and has not kept pace. The current system of federal support has emphasized the removal of children from their homes and placement in out-of-home care, without sufficiently assisting states to provide services that prevent unnecessary placement and facilitate safe reunification or other permanency outcomes.

The current federal focus on placement, without sufficient services for children and families, also fails to provide the states with the necessary supports for accomplishing the goals of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The ability to provide appropriate services is key to assisting families in meeting the requirements of ASFA and ensuring the goals of safety and permanence for children are realized. Child welfare workers frequently are unable to access appropriate services for the children and families they serve. As a result, children are placed unnecessarily in foster care, remain too long in care, or are separated permanently from families who have not received the services they need to safely resume parenting.

Many advocates, legislators, and administrators agree it is time for a modification in the partnership between the federal government and the state and local child welfare agencies that provide the services. Many possible approaches exist for restructuring the current federal supports to better serve children and families. During 2000, discussions and hearings were held, and legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives, that continued the debate about how to restructure federal financing so states can provide children and families in the child welfare system with the assistance they need. That debate will continue this year.

NEW LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

CWLA, along with the Children's Defense Fund and other national child welfare organizations, is crafting a proposal that would provide additional federal funding for preventive, crisis, permanency, and post-permanency services for children and parents or other caregivers when they first come to the attention of the child welfare system, when children enter foster care, and when children leave care to be united with their families, adopted, or placed permanently with grandparents or other relatives. The proposal also expands eligibility for services, foster care, and adoption assistance, and adds funding for children in kinship guardianship arrangements.

We anticipate this initiative will be reflected in legislation that Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) will introduce in Congress in April. It will be part of a comprehensive measure that addresses the needs of children.

The initiative

- expands the scope of federal financing to support the full range of services necessary to assist families in the child welfare system provide safe, nurturing care for their children, or, when necessary, to develop and implement an alternative permanency option for their children;

- establishes the opportunity for states to receive federal reimbursement for preventive, crisis, permanency and post-permanency services deemed necessary for a specific family, as specified in an agency case plan;
- recognizes the importance and value of kinship guardianship, establishing ongoing monthly support for the guardian, and providing services as needed for the child and relative guardian;
- extends federal support for training reimbursement for private agency staff, courts, and attorneys who have key relationships with children and families involved in the child welfare system;
- eliminates current financial eligibility requirements that are tied to Aid to Families with Dependent Children standards, thereby making all children eligible to receive federal foster care and adoption assistance reimbursement;
- provides optional Title IV-E federal funding to tribal entities;
- standardizes the IV-E federal reimbursement for room and board, administrative costs, training, and services to match the state's federal medical assistance percentage reimbursement, used by the Medicaid program; and
- sets new accountability measures for states, including a provision to report to the federal government and state stakeholders every two years.

CWLA CONTACT

Liz Meitner
202/942-0257
emeitner@cwla.org
www.cwla.org/advocacy



Child Welfare League of America

HEADQUARTERS
440 First Street, NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2085
202/638-2952 • Fax 202/638-4004 • www.cwla.org