



The Adoption Opportunities Program

ACTION

- Reauthorize and increase funding to \$50 million in FY 2002 for the Adoption Opportunities Program.

HISTORY

Congress will reauthorize the Adoption Opportunities Program (Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Act) this year. This program is the only federal program created specifically for promoting the adoption of U.S. children in foster care who are awaiting adoption. The program provides grants for demonstration projects that eliminate barriers to adoption and provide permanent loving homes for children who would benefit from adoption, particularly children with special needs. Available to all 50 states through a competitive process, Adoption Opportunities funds are used for innovative demonstration projects that can be replicated after successful outcomes.

Through the Adoption Opportunities Program, a number of resources and supports have been created to assist the adoption of children. Among these resources is the National Adoption Exchange, which recruits homes for U.S. children waiting to be adopted. In 2000, 52,000 families received information from the Adoption Exchange on how to proceed with adoption. Currently, 5,500 children waiting to be adopted are listed with the exchange.

The Adoption Opportunities Program has funded the establishment of a National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption, which provides technical assistance and training on current issues in special needs adoption—such as compliance with federal laws and regulations, permanency planning, and cultural competence—to state, tribal, and other child welfare organizations. Nearly 65,000 people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam have received special-needs adoption training through the center.

Adoption Opportunities funds have also supported the establishment of the National Adoption Assistance Training Resource and Information Network. The network's services include a hotline that provides free information on adoption subsidies to parents interested in adopting children with special needs, and the development and dissemination of a profile booklet on adoption assistance programs available in each state.

Adoption Opportunities Program funding has also led to the establishment of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC), a comprehensive information center on adoption. NAIC responded to 10,603 requests for information on adoption in 1999 and disseminated more than 127,000 materials to the public.

Adoption Opportunities funds are also currently used to provide support services to kinship caregiving families who have adopted the adolescent children for whom they are caring.

KEY FACTS *

- Of the 568,000 children in foster care in 1999, 106,000 had a goal of adoption.
- Of the children waiting to be adopted from foster care in 1999, 50% were black non-Hispanic, 32% were white non-Hispanic, and 11% were Hispanic.
- In 1999, the average age of children waiting to be adopted from foster care was 8. Two percent of the children in foster care waiting to be adopted were less than 1 year old, 34% were ages 1–5, 37% were ages 6–10, 24% were ages 11–15, and 3% were ages 16–18.
- The number of children adopted from foster care has increased in recent years: 28,000 in 1996, 31,000 in 1997, 36,000 in 1998, and 46,000 in 1999.

- Of the children adopted from foster care in 1999, 2% were under the age of 1; 45% were ages 1–5; 36% were ages 6–10; 15% were ages 11–15; and 2% were ages 16–18.
- Of the children adopted from foster care in 1999, 64% were adopted by their foster parents, 20% were adopted by a nonrelative, and 16% were adopted by a relative.
- Of the children adopted from foster care in 1999, 48% waited more than one year from the time they became legally free for adoption until they were placed in an adoptive home.

* Source: *The AFCARS Report. (2000)*. Available online at www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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