



# Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program

## ACTION

- Reauthorize and increase funding to \$505 million for FY 2002 for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (Title IV-B, Subpart 2, of the Social Security Act).
- Increase the earmark for the State Court Improvement Program to \$15 million for FY 2002 and FY 2003 and \$20 million for FY 2004 to FY 2006.

## HISTORY

Congress will be reauthorizing the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program in 2001. The program, formerly the Family Preservation and Support Services Program, is an important federal source of funding for an array of support services for families with children, and one of the few sources of federal funds for services to prevent and remedy the difficulties that bring families to the attention of the child welfare system.

The program is also central to meeting the goals of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). It helps build capacity in states so services to children and families will be forthcoming. The program also includes a set-aside for the State Court Improvement Program, which is instrumental in helping courts implement reforms necessary to comply with ASFA decisionmaking timelines.

The 2001 reauthorization offers an opportunity to review states' experiences in implementing this program, including changes made in 1997 that require funds to also be used for time-limited reunification services and adoption promotion and support services.

The program was created in 1993 and reauthorized in 1997 under ASFA. The program provides capped entitlement funding for states to provide services for children and families, including extended and adoptive families, who are at risk or in crisis. Funding for this program has grown from \$60 million in FY 1994 to \$305 million in FY 2001.

Prior to the 1997 reauthorization, at least 90% of the funds had to be used for family preservation and community-based family support services. The 1997 reauthorization added two additional categories of service: time-limited reunification services and adoption promotion and support services. The statute does not specify a percentage or minimum amount of funds that must be used for any single category of service; however, program guidance to states issued from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) stated the allocation of less than 20% to either type of service would require a strong rationale.

Funds are allocated to states according to their relative shares of children receiving food stamps, subject to a 25% nonfederal match. Of funds appropriated each year, \$6 million is reserved for evaluation by HHS, and \$10 million is reserved for grants to state courts to improve their child welfare procedures. Another 1% is reserved for grants to tribal entities. States may use up to 10% of funds for administrative costs.

Family preservation services are designed to help children and families in crisis, including extended and adoptive families. Services include programs to help reunite children with their birthfamilies, if appropriate, or place children in adoptive settings or another permanent arrangements; programs to prevent placement in foster care, including intensive family services; programs to provide follow-up services to families after a child has been returned from foster care; and services to improve parenting skills.

Family support services include a broad spectrum of community-based activities that promote the safety and well-being of children and families. Intended to assist families not yet in crisis, these services include structured activities involving parents and children, respite care services for parents and caregivers, parenting skills training, and information and referral services. Programs may also include services outside the traditional scope of child welfare, such as health care, education, and employment.

Time-limited reunification services as funded under the 1997 act are intended to address the needs of children and families who are involved in the foster care system. Services are provided within 15 months of when the child entered foster care. Reunification services for the child and family include counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, assistance to address domestic violence issues, temporary child care, and transportation services.

Adoption services were also added in 1997. Aimed at encouraging an increase in the adoption of children in foster care, these services can be used to help children and families prepare for adoption and address their post-adoptive needs.

## KEY FACTS

- In 1998, an estimated 2,898,000 children were reported and referred for investigation to state and local child protection service agencies because family members, professionals, or other citizens were concerned about their safety and well-being. After follow-up assessments, officials were able to substantiate 903,000 of these cases.<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 409,000 child victims received post-investigative services; an estimated additional 211,000 children who were subjects of unsubstantiated reports also received post-investigative services.<sup>2</sup>
- Of the 568,000 children in foster care in 1999, 106,000 had a goal of adoption. 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.<sup>3</sup>

## SOURCES

1. Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Child maltreatment 1998: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
2. Ibid.
3. *The AFCARS Report*. (2000). Available online at [www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb). Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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