



CWLA 2003 CHILDREN'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

MARCH 2003

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is the nation's oldest and largest membership child welfare organization, with more than 1,160 public and private nonprofit voluntary agencies dedicated to serving children, youth, and families who are at-risk in every state. We advocate on behalf of America's most vulnerable children and their families—more than 3 million abused and neglected children—to ensure that the safety and well-being of all America's children is a national priority.

Our nation, much like our families, our cities, and our states, is facing ever greater challenges with more limited resources. Difficult choices confront the President and Congress. Homeland and economic security continue to be vital objectives, but we know our homeland will never truly be secure if our children are not safe from abuse and neglect and if they are not adequately clothed, fed, housed, and educated.

Recent newspaper headlines report incidents of how we as a country can do a better job to protect our children from abuse and neglect. The child welfare system is the "first responder" in the nation's battle to protect our children, yet it does not have the necessary tools to support this vital work.

New investments would help improve the lives of all children, including low-income children and children of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial communities. For children of color, who are disproportionately represented in our child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice systems, new resources are essential. CWLA and our member agencies are committed to building cultural responsiveness in our service systems and eliminating factors that contribute to the disparities of children of color in these systems, and we have taken assertive action to do so. It is crucial that federal investments both sustain current efforts and strengthen those comprehensive community-based systems of support needed to secure the safety of all children, especially children of color who have been abused and neglected.

CWLA's 2003 Children's Legislative Agenda includes federal investments that can help states and communities do a better job of protecting our children. Throughout the year, CWLA will continue to examine all legislative avenues to ensure the needs of our nation's children, youth, and families are addressed. CWLA's 2003 legislative priorities include

- the Act to Leave No Child Behind;
- the Child Protection/Alcohol and Drug Partnership Act;
- the Younger Americans Act;
- Child Care;
- Head Start;
- Social Services Block Grant (Title XX);
- Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment program;
- the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program;
- the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act;
- Independent Living Training Vouchers;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families;
- Child Welfare Workforce and Training;
- the Adoption Opportunities Program;
- Health Care Services and Teen Pregnancy Prevention; and
- Runaway and Homeless Youth

CWLA looks forward to working with you to address the urgent needs of children, youth, and families and to ensure that children are indeed a national priority. For more information, contact Liz Meitner, Vice President of Government Affairs, at 202/942-0257 or emeitner@cwla.org, or visit CWLA's advocacy website at www.cwla.org/advocacy.



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