



Social Services Block Grant

ACTION

- Support efforts to restore funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG, Title XX of the Social Security Act) to \$2.8 billion. SSBG funding has been cut severely in recent years, jeopardizing these vital services to vulnerable children, youth, and families.

HISTORY

SSBG is a major source of federal funding to address the needs of vulnerable children and youth. SSBG frequently serves as a link between government funding and private and charitable sources. SSBG funds supplement local and charitable efforts by providing federal dollars to fill a gap that local efforts cannot meet.

In 1981, SSBG was converted from a matching entitlement fund to a capped federal block grant to states. States were free to decide whom to serve and what services to provide. As a capped entitlement, SSBG funding was intended to bypass the annual appropriations process and be automatically provided at the level set in the statute—\$2.4 billion. Congress, has set funding for SSBG below the authorized capped level for the past several years. Funding for SSBG was lowered to \$1.9 billion in FY 1999 and \$1.7 billion in FY 2002.

While SSBG funds can be used for an array of social services, states chose to spend these funds on child welfare services more than any other service area, such as child care or services for the aging. In federal fiscal year 2000, child protection and child foster care services each accounted for 11% of SSBG expenditures. Forty-one states used SSBG funds to address child protection services; 34 states used SSBG to fund foster care.

In 2002, Congress considered several proposals to increase SSBG funding. This year, SSBG funding may be part of the reauthorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a state relief or economic stimulus package, an initiative to promote the use of faith-based programs, or as a free-standing bill. Efforts to restore SSBG funding may also include proposals that would both increase SSBG while creating a new set-aside for tribal governments.

KEY FACTS

States can use SSBG to fund 29 different services to prevent or remedy neglect or abuse of children or adults, achieve or maintain economic self-support, reduce unnecessary institutionalization, achieve or maintain independence, and secure referral and screening for appropriate institutional care.

In FY 2000, more than \$816 million in SSBG funds were spent on services to children and youth, including adoption, foster care, child protection, independent living, and residential services. In state fiscal year 2000, 17% of all federal funds that state child welfare agencies spent on child welfare services came from SSBG.¹

Adoption

- In 2000, 27 states used \$39 million in SSBG funds to assist in the adoption of children. Of the 556,000 children in foster care on September 30, 2000, 131,600 had a goal of adoption; 51,000 children were adopted from foster care in 2000.²
- Adoption services are designed to facilitate timely placements of children with adoptive families. Services include counseling for biological parents, recruitment of adoptive homes, and pre- and post-placement training and counseling.

Foster Care

- In 2000, 34 states used nearly \$297 million in SSBG funds for foster care services to more than 338,001 children. That year, 556,000 children were in out-of-home care.³
- States use SSBG to pay foster care costs for the board and care of children not eligible for federal Title IV-E foster care assistance. Foster care services are designed to secure living arrangements for children or youth who have been abused and neglected and cannot live at home. These children and youth may live with foster care families, including relatives; in group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, or preadoptive homes; or in supervised independent-living arrangements. Services include needs assessments, case planning, case management, medical care, child counseling, parent or foster parent counseling, and recruitment of foster families.

Child Protection

- In FY 2000, 41 states used more than \$301 million in SSBG funds to protect children from abuse and neglect. In 2000, state and local child protective service agencies received an estimated 2,796,000 reports of child abuse and neglect.⁴
- Child protective services are designed to prevent or remedy abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children who may have experienced physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, and negligent treatment or maltreatment. Services include investigation, medical care, emergency shelter, case planning, child counseling, family counseling, legal assistance, and placement in foster care.

Independent Living

- In FY 2000, 12 states used \$16 million in SSBG funds to provide independent and transitional living services to more than 11,000 youth and 47,000 adults. Supervised independent and post-foster care services for youth are designed to help older youth in foster care or homeless youth make the transition to independence. Services include educational assistance, employment training, training in daily life skills, and housing assistance.⁵

Residential Treatment

- In FY 2000, \$76 million in SSBG funds supported residential treatment to more than 27,084 youth and 10,757 adults in 21 states. Residential treatment services provide short-term residential care and comprehensive treatment for children who cannot be cared for at home or in foster care and who need specialized services. Services include psychological evaluations, alcohol and drug treatment, family counseling, individual counseling, remedial education, vocational training, case management, and supervised recreation.⁶

Special Services for Youth at Risk

- Twenty states used \$86 million in SSBG funds in FY 2000 to help more than 100,000 juveniles involved in the justice system. Support for youth at risk is often fragmented between the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare systems. SSBG allows states to cut across different systems and provide youth the help they need. Services are targeted at youth who are, or who may become, involved with the juvenile justice system, and their families. Designed to enhance family functioning and increase positive youth development, services include counseling, residential services, and medical care.⁷

SOURCES

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