

Social Services Block Grant (Title XX)

ACTION

- Support efforts to restore full funding of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG, Title XX of the Social Security Act).

HISTORY

SSBG is a major source of federal funding that addresses the needs of vulnerable children and youth. SSBG represented 12% of federal funding for child welfare services in state fiscal year 2002. 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 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 automatically receive the level set in the statute—\$2.8 billion. Congress, however, 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 to \$1.7 billion in FY 2000, where funding was frozen. In 2005, SSBG was used as a major funding source for hurricane relief, with Congress allocating an additional \$550 million in SSBG solely for hurricane relief. This one-time increase brought SSBG to \$2.2 billion in 2005.

Although states can use SSBG funds for an array of social services, such as child care or services for the aging, child welfare services receive these funds more than any

other service area. In federal FY 2003, child protection and child foster care services each accounted for 22% of SSBG expenditures. Thirty-nine states used SSBG funds to address child protection services; 35 used SSBG to provide foster care.

2006 DEBATE

In both 2003 and 2004, Congress considered several proposals to increase SSBG funding. The Senate adopted the CARE Act in 2004, which, in addition to changing tax law to encourage charitable giving, would have restored SSBG funding to \$2.8 billion and would have restored states' ability to transfer 10% of their block grant funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to SSBG. The House-passed version of the CARE Act did not include increased SSBG funding. The differences between the House and Senate versions of the CARE Act were never resolved, so the legislation was never finalized.

In 2005, Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) introduced new CARE Act legislation (S. 1780) that expands the deductibility of certain charitable contributions and restores SSBG to \$2.8 billion. The Senate never acted on the bill in 2005, but is expected to consider it in 2006.

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.

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In FY 2003, states spent nearly \$700 million in SSBG funds on services to children and youth, including adoption, foster care, child protection, independent living, and residential services.

Adoption

- In 2003, 28 states used \$32 million in SSBG funds to assist in the adoption of children.
- Adoption services are designed to facilitate timely placements of children with adoptive families. Services include counseling for birthparents, recruitment of adoptive homes, and pre- and postplacement training and counseling.
- Of the 523,085 children in foster care in 2003, 124,665 waited to be adopted and 49,000 were adopted from foster care.

Foster Care

- In 2003, 35 states used nearly \$332 million in SSBG funds for foster care services to more than 377,000 children. That year, 523,085 children were in foster care.
- 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. They may also live in group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, 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 foster family recruitment.

Child Protection

- In FY 2003, 39 states used more than \$216 million in SSBG funds to protect children from abuse and neglect. In 2003, state and local child protective service agencies received an estimated 2.9 million reports of child abuse and neglect.
- Child protective services are designed to prevent or remedy the further 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 2003, 18 states used \$15 million in SSBG funds to provide independent and transitional living services to more than 8,000 youth. 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.

Residential Treatment

- In FY 2003, \$85 million in SSBG funds supported residential treatment to more than 26,000 youth in 22 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.

Special Services for Youth at Risk

- In FY 2003, 17 states used \$14.9 million in SSBG funds to help more than 141,000 youth at risk. 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 the help youth need. Services are targeted at youth who are, or 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.

Sources for statistical information are provided in the online version of this fact sheet. See www.cwla.org/advocacy/2006legagenda.htm.

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