

The Family Stability & Kinship Care Act

Introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden

Summary

The purpose of this bill is to give states and tribes the flexibility to make modest front-end investments in family services and kinship placement in order to reduce costly and traumatic stays in foster care. Under current law, title IV-E of the Social Security Act, the nation's largest child welfare funding stream, provides states and tribes with a federal funding match for children only after they are placed in foster care. In contrast, state and tribal innovations implemented through title IV-E waivers suggest that permitting spending for preventive family services can reduce the prevalence and length of foster care placements while maintaining or improving safety and permanency outcomes for children. Further, state experiences with subsidized guardianship demonstrate that when children cannot remain with their parents, they do best when placed with kin.

This bill enhances federal funding available under parts B and E of Title IV of the Social Security Act for prevention and family services to help keep children safe and supported at home with their parents or other family members, gives states and tribes the flexibility to adapt evidence-based family services to the specific needs of each family, and ensures that states and tribes are held accountable for allocating services in ways that maximize safety, permanency, and well-being for children, while minimizing the prevalence of lengthy foster care placements.

Key Components of the Bill:

- Allows title IV-E reimbursement for time-limited (up to 12-months) family services (such as family skills training, family counseling, and concrete goods and services to stabilize a family in crisis) when those services are needed to prevent entry into foster care or allow children to safely exit foster care to family placements.
- Defines eligible population as children identified as candidates for foster care (at imminent risk of entry into foster care) or who are in foster care, as well as to these children's family members. Provides reimbursement for these services without regard to the income of the child's biological parents.
- After a 3-year implementation phase, establishes national performance measures and outcomes-based reimbursement rates to target federal dollars to cost-effective services.
- Increases funding (by \$470 million per year) for community-based prevention and intervention services through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program in title IV-B.
- Requires research and technical assistance to ensure appropriate service delivery and prioritization of evidence-based prevention and post-permanency interventions.