



## 2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

*Advancing Excellence in Practice & Policy:*

### Meeting the Challenge of the Family First Prevention Services Act

## HOT TOPIC

### Increase Funding to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to Prevent Child Abuse

#### ACTION

- Increase funding to Title I CAPTA state grants to \$500 million and Title II Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention to \$500 million, driving efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect before it happens.

CAPTA is the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. It directs and helps to fund state child protective services (CPS)—both the investigation and protection and any treatment services. At \$85 million a year, CAPTA is seriously underfunded to effectively address these services. Title II of CAPTA is referred to as the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention program, or CB-CAP. It supports community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, and coordinate programs and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect. It, too, is seriously underfunded at \$39 million a year.

In 2017, there were over 4 million child abuse referrals, involving over 7 million children, resulting in CPS responses in 2.4 million cases. According to the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), child abuse and neglect has a total lifetime economic cost of over \$124 billion each year.

Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner, HHS Children's Bureau, has advocated a rethinking of our approach on child welfare and child maltreatment and has called for investing in prevention rather than systems that react after a problem has already occurred. In his words, "We need to change the focus on child welfare to primary prevention of maltreatment and unnecessary removal of children from their families. We can only break the cycle

of family disruption and maltreatment by addressing the root causes of those situations."

Increasing appropriations for CAPTA offers Congress the crucial and much-needed opportunity to do just that.

#### Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Grants

CAPTA is the historic 1974 law that provided the first federal recognition that child abuse and neglect is a national concern. The law requires that states follow several requirements, including CPS systems, a system for mandatory reporters of child abuse, court appointed special advocates (CASAs) or guardian ad litem, and in more recent years plans of safe care. CAPTA includes several other state plan actions.

CAPTA state grants had been less than \$26 million a year and have been reduced in the past ten years due to across-the-board cuts and sequestration actions. In 2018, Congress increased funding by \$60 million to \$85 million in an effort to develop and implement plans of safe care for infants born exposed to substances, including infants born addicted to opioids. That funding is a good start, but it is not enough.

The National Child Abuse Coalition, in support of CAPTA reauthorization, is calling for a strong public health approach to child maltreatment prevention, as recommended by the CDC and HHS. According to the National Child Abuse Coalition, of which CWLA is a member, "That approach cannot be achieved using the current funding provided. More money is critical to ensure that states can carry out the mandates currently required in CAPTA while also moving towards a new vision of child welfare that supports families and prevents child abuse and neglect. Any new requirements must include significant funding increases. By driving prevention efforts toward building community-level frameworks to create the context for healthy children and strong families, CAPTA could both be a catalyst for, and a partner to, other policy areas that come at the wellbeing of children and families from different angles (e.g., early childhood development, youth development, broad parenting support)."

### ***Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)***

For states to receive CBCAP funds, a state's Governor must designate a lead agency to receive the funds and implement the program. Core features of the program include:

- Federal, state, and private funds are blended and provided to community agencies for child abuse and neglect prevention and family support programs.
- Federal funds help to leverage, state, local and private funding.
- An emphasis on promoting parent leadership and participation assists in the planning, implementation and evaluation of prevention programs.
- Collaborations with public and private agencies create and support a child abuse prevention network that provides greater coordination of resources.

Among the services supported and/or coordinated are home visiting programs, parenting programs, family resource centers, respite and crisis care, parent mutual support, and other family support programs. Funds are

used to encourage the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices that reflect the unique cultural characteristics and needs of the community. The funds also must be used to support an evaluation of the programs and services funded by the grant.

A small set-aside is provided to tribal and migrant communities. An increase to \$500 million a year will expand primary prevention efforts driven by community needs that strengthen families. This can reduce child abuse and decrease foster care placements.

### **Conclusion**

To effectively provide a child welfare continuum of services, we need to fully fund that continuum. This continuum includes preventing child maltreatment, preventing the placement of children into foster care, assisting children and their families in foster care, finding new families for children, and supporting families, children and youth who are post-placement. The front-end of services and prevention services are dramatically underfunded. That is why Congress needs to provide funding with an increase to CAPTA at \$500 million and \$500 million to CBCAP.



### **CWLA Advocacy Team**

**John Sciamanna** ▪ 410-533-5857 ▪ [jsciamanna@cwla.org](mailto:jsciamanna@cwla.org)

**Shaquita Ogletree** ▪ 202-878-9350 ▪ [sogletree@cwla.org](mailto:sogletree@cwla.org)