



CWLA 2020 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

**Sharing Ideas that Strengthen Families
and Engage Communities to
Promote Child Well-Being**



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 \$270 million and increase Title II Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention to \$270 million to drive 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), including investigation and protection as well as limited prevention services. Although we have made progress in recent years (including FY 2020's \$5 million increase), at \$90 million a year it 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. We are grateful to Congress for the \$15 million increase in funding in FY 2020 but at \$55 million a year we still need greater funding.

The recently enacted Family First Prevention Services Act provides critical intervention services that can safely reduce the number of children entering foster care. Now we need to strengthen efforts to fund primary prevention services that can prevent child abuse and neglect.

In 2018, there were over 4.3 million child abuse referrals, involving over 7.8 million children and resulting in child protective services responses in 2.4 million cases. According to the Centers on Disease Prevention and Control (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."

If Congress increases appropriations for CAPTA, this will help to address the crucial and much-needed priority of preventing child abuse and strengthening the very foundations that our families are built on.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Grants

The Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) is the historic 1974 law that provided the first federal recognition that child abuse and neglect is a national concern. The law is the subject of a reauthorization this year. The historic law requires the states to follow several requirements including having child protective services (CPS) systems, a system of mandatory reporters of child abuse, court appointed special advocates (CASAs) or guardian ad litem, and in more recent years plans of safe care. It includes several other state plan actions.

CAPTA state grants (Title I of CAPTA) had been less than \$26 million a year and had been reduced in much of the past decade 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. Last year, funding was increased to \$90 million.

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. “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 CB-CAP funds, the Governor must designate a lead agency to receive the funds and implement the program. CB-CAP grants (Title II of CAPTA) were increased from \$39 million to \$55 million in FY 2020. 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 in the planning, implementation and evaluation of prevention programs.

- Collaborations with public and private agencies to 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 must also 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.

Conclusion

An increase to \$270 million a year for Title I CAPTA state grants and an increase to \$270 million for Title II CB-CAP grants based on the CAPTA reauthorization (HR 2480) will expand primary prevention efforts driven by community needs that strengthen families. This can reduce child abuse and decrease foster care placements.

To effectively provide a child welfare continuum of services we need to fully fund that continuum. What is that continuum? The 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 those post-placement families, children and youth. The front end of services, prevention, is dramatically underfunded. That is why Congress needs to provide the funding with an increase to both CAPTA state grants and CB-CAP state grants.



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