



Public-Private Partnership to Strengthen Families and Improve Outcomes for Foster Youth

September 2, 2016

Given the complexity and seriousness of challenges facing vulnerable children and families in our nation today, a few facts are abundantly clear: substance use disorders, mental health issues, and domestic violence contribute to the removal of children from their homes. While some temporary foster care placements are necessary, data suggests that the majority of removals could be prevented if child and parental challenges are identified earlier and effective, upfront services provided. We also know that children do better when raised in families, not institutions.

It is with this knowledge that the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago have joined together to commit to make specific, complementary, and ongoing efforts to support the field. We are proud to announce a new series of public-private investments designed to:

- 1) Expand access to evidence-based, prevention services where they are needed most
- 2) Reduce the need for foster and congregate care placement settings
- 3) Ensure teens and young adults in foster care have the supports they need to thrive

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) is investing in research, competitive grants, and capacity building initiatives. These efforts will include:

- **Expanded Access to Proven Prevention Services:** ACYF is launching a multi-million dollar project to increase the number and availability of evidence-based, prevention interventions. This project will include partnerships with state and county agencies to conduct rigorous evaluations. ACYF is also developing cutting-edge curricula for state and county child welfare agencies committed to incorporating evidence-based services into their practice models. The curricula will include step-by-step guides to build evidence, practical strategies for scaling such practices, and tips on how to involve accredited social work programs and state child welfare training academies.
- **Alternatives to Congregate Care for Older Youth:** ACYF will invest \$15 million over the next five years in discretionary grants to test and build best practices in developing placement alternatives to congregate care for older youth. Projects will focus on best practices in recruitment and retention of resource homes for youth with behavioral challenges.
- **Specialized Behavioral Health Training for Foster Parents:** ACYF is investing \$9.2 million over five years to create, pilot, and disseminate a state-of-the-art foster/adoptive parent training program. This will focus on parents interested in serving older youth who may have behavioral health challenges, require intensive and coordinated services, or may be at risk for more restrictive placements.
- **National Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence & Child Welfare:** ACYF is committing at least \$12.5 million dollars over the course of the next five years to operate a Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence and Child Welfare to select sites to test and rigorously evaluate interventions to better serve parents and children affected by domestic violence in 4-6 communities.

Casey Family Programs and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago commit to launching a new five year partnership to assist child welfare agencies to identify and implement:

- Evidenced-based preventive services designed to assist parents to keep their children safe at home
- Practice models that will ensure only children requiring documented needs for higher levels of care are temporarily placed in residential treatment facilities
- Best practices in data driven decision making

This partnership will provide in-depth technical assistance to states and counties in the following ways:

- Target geographic-based needs and strengths in relation to prevention services
- Use strategies to match child and family needs with appropriate services
- Scale-up and evaluate promising practices, including assistance in finding sustainable funding sources, identifying services that are ineffective, and where savings could be obtained and re-invested
- Conduct rapid, small scale, rigorous research trials of new strategies and interventions to save time and money

The Annie E. Casey Foundation will invest in new strategies to safely reduce the number of children and youth placed in congregate care unnecessarily. These strategies are:

- The adaptations of evidence-based parenting programs for kin and non-kin foster parents
- Playbooks for attorneys, judges, and CASAs to better assess residential treatment options
- Tools to better recruit and retain quality foster parents

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation will invest in the wellbeing of older foster youth by designing and implementing:

- Opportunity Passport matched savings program enhancements in 17 sites, including financial coaching, credit building and repair, and access to safe financial products
- Practical tools for young people to improve decision-making and normalcy while they are in foster care and as they prepare for adulthood. These tools will be informed by adolescent brain science.

ACYF, Casey Family Programs, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Chapin Hall commit to convening public and public partners to identify opportunities to coordinate efforts to expand research, increase the availability of evidence-based practices and services, and use data, technology, and innovation to better meet the needs of children and families upfront.

Our Call to Action: Although we outline specific actions each partner will take above, we do so knowing that our efforts alone will not be enough to justly serve all children and families in need. We make these commitments to help support states and counties in doing what works for children and families. We also extend an invitation and a call to action to all public and private sector partners that are interested in keeping our nation's children and families safe, together, and strong. Together, we will support child welfare efforts across the country and accomplish extraordinary results for children and families — the results they deserve.