

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS IN SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

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## ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Significant Items in Senate Appropriations Committees Report

#### **FY 2014 Senate Appropriations Committee Report Language (S. Rpt.113-171)**

##### Item

***Social Services*** - The Committee continues to strongly encourage ORR to explore the use of existing discretionary funds for case management services and emergency housing assistance for particularly vulnerable refugee populations.

##### Action taken or to be taken

We appreciate the Committees' interests in the social services provided to refugees and other eligible arrivals to the United States. We will take the Committees' suggestions into consideration as meeting the current critical needs of our incoming populations is a high priority.

##### Item

***Unaccompanied Alien Children*** - There has been a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied alien children arriving in the United States in recent years, from approximately 7,100 in fiscal year 2011 to an estimated 23,500 in fiscal year 2013. Many of the children placed into HHS's care are fleeing dangerous situations in their home country and are victims of severe forms of abuse, neglect, or trafficking. The Committee expects HHS to continue to provide it periodic updates on this situation. In addition, the Committee continues to be concerned about the impact of this dramatic increase in the number of children on the availability of support services, including access to pro bono legal representation, child advocates, social workers, physicians, and psychologists. Accordingly, within the total for the UAC program, the Committee recommendation includes \$13,000,000, an approximately \$3,327,000 increase over the fiscal year 2013 level, for the pro bono legal services initiative. This funding supports legal representation for both released and detained children. Given that the vast majority of children are released to a family member or sponsor pending resolution of their immigration status, the Committee directs ACF to allocate a significant portion of this increase to improve the availability of legal representation for released children. In addition, the Committee recommendation includes \$1,000,000 for the child advocate program. This program helps protect the interests and rights of the most vulnerable children while awaiting adjudication of their immigration status.

##### Action taken or to be taken

We appreciate the Committees' interest in the significant growth in the number of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) arriving the United States in recent years. We agree that this program helps protect the interests and rights of very vulnerable children as they wait for adjudication hearings. ACF will continue to support efforts that provide pro bono legal representation and child advocates for UAC and will also consider the needs of both released and detained children.

##### Item

In awarding **Early Head Start** expansion funds, the Committee urges HHS to prioritize organizations that seek to develop a unified birth-to-school-entry continuum through alignment with maternal and infant health home visiting programs, State funded pre-K programs, and other federally, State, or locally funded early childhood care and education programs. Moreover, HHS should prioritize organizations that seek to work with child care providers across settings, including center and home-based programs. The Committee also urges HHS to encourage a wide-range of organizations to apply, including States, and new and existing Early Head Start providers. Early Head Start expansion funds, including funding for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, should be allocated to States proportionally based on the

number of young children from families whose income is below the poverty line. Further, the Secretary shall reserve no less than 3 percent for Indian Head Start programs and no less than 4.5 percent for migrant and seasonal Head Start programs, to expand services for children and their families from before birth through age 3 in those programs. . . . In addition, the Committee continues to encourage HHS to consider the unique challenges faced by Head Start providers in remote and frontier areas when reviewing grantees as part of the DRS.

Action taken or to be taken

Consistent with the Committee's recommendation, ACF will target funds to applicants that propose a strong alignment with MIECHV, State preschool programs, and other federally, State, or locally funded early childhood care and education programs to create a birth to five trajectory for the neediest children, as well as applicants that partner with child care providers across settings, including center- and home-based care.

In addition to current Head Start and Early Head Start programs, including Indian Head Start programs and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs, the Head Start Act allows a wide-range of organizations to be eligible for Early Head Start funds. These include public entities, such as States, and nonprofit or for-profit entities, including community-based and faith-based organizations. All eligible entities will be encouraged to apply.

Consistent with the Committee report, we will allocate funds to States with consideration given to the number of young children from families whose income is below the poverty line and with the set-asides for Indian Head Start programs and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs specified.

The Office of Head Start appreciates the Committee's concern about the unique challenges Head Start grantees in remote and frontier areas encounter. Based on our most recent Head Start monitoring data to date, grantees in remote or frontier areas are no more likely than other grantees to have a deficiency or an area of noncompliance in health and dental screenings, and therefore no more likely to be designated for competition on the basis of these areas as part of the DRS. That said, the Office of Head Start will be mindful of the challenges of these particular grantees and will periodically review our monitoring data to ensure grantees in remote and frontier locations are not disproportionately affected by these compliance standards due to their geographic locations.

Item

***Child Welfare Research, Training, and Demonstration*** -The Committee continues to encourage ACF to work with ACL and other HHS agencies to evaluate intergenerational approaches for improving outcomes for at-risk youth and families. The Committee strongly encourages HHS to use existing discretionary resources for such initiatives.

Action taken or to be taken

ACF has funded projects of an intergenerational nature, such as kinship navigator, under the Family Connections Grant program in the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program. Funds under Child Welfare Research, Training, and Demonstration are currently committed to demonstration projects addressing permanency for children in foster care and in projects that enhance the child welfare workforce.

Item

***Adoption Opportunities*** - Within the total, the Committee recommendation includes \$7,500,000 for discretionary grants to test intensive and exhaustive child-focused adoptive parent recruitment strategies for children in foster care. Such intensive recruitment strategies have been shown to move foster youth into permanent families at a much higher rate than traditional recruitment approaches. These programs

should focus on children that are hardest to place because of age, disability, or sibling group membership. In addition, the Committee encourages HHS to provide guidance to State child welfare agencies on the use of title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance training funds for the implementation of intensive child-focused recruitment strategies and other evidence-based models that have been shown to increase the rate of placement of children in foster care, particularly older children, into adoptive families.

#### Action taken or to be taken

The Children's Bureau has established two programs that address intensive and exhaustive adoptive parent recruitment for children in foster care: Diligent Recruitment Grants and AdoptUSKids. Diligent Recruitment Grants are awarded to state, county and tribal child welfare agencies. They support projects that design and implement models of diligent recruitment for kinship, foster, and adoptive families to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care. Building on the approach first funded in 2008 (8 awards), cooperative agreements have been awarded to clusters of grantees in 2010 (7 awards) and 2013 (7 awards) for the implementation of five-year comprehensive diligent recruitment programs as required in the Child and Family Services Plan.

Effective models are multi-faceted, multidimensional and include general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment efforts. Options for permanency include the early and continued exploration of kin, including both paternal and maternal family members, foster and adoptive families who can provide for children's concurrent planning placements, as well as thorough exploration of the youth's existing and past relationships.

AdoptUSKids is a multi-faceted national project designed to assist States and tribes in the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents for children in public foster care. AdoptUSKids includes the following:

1. Operate the National Adoption Internet Photolisting site (currently operating as [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org));
2. Support the annual National Adoption Recruitment Campaign by assisting states and tribes to carry out fulfillment activities in response to a national multi-media adoptive parent recruitment campaign;
3. Establish the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR) to provide training and technical assistance (T/TA), information, and consultation to state and tribal child welfare systems related to the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families and the implementation of diligent recruitment plans as required in the State Child and Family Service Plan;
4. Operate a National Adoption and Foster Care Information Exchange System to assist states and tribes in the recruitment of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents for children in public foster care; and
5. Develop and disseminate information, strategies, and effective or evidence-based models for the implementation of adoptive and foster family support activities for States and tribes.

#### Item

**Adoption Opportunities** - The Committee remains concerned about the availability of **post-adoption services** for children and their adoptive families and strongly encourages ACF to increase funding within this program explicitly available for such activities. The Committee also directs ACF to submit a report by July 31, 2014, on how ACF has used, and plans to use, Adoption Opportunities funding to strengthen post-adoption services.

#### Action taken or to be taken

To address the increasing need for post-adoptive services, in FY 2013, the Children's Bureau funded six cooperative agreements to establish programs that meet the needs of children with a plan for adoption,

children in post adoption and their families. The projects implement screening and assessment protocols designed to identify mental and behavioral health needs, and match identified needs to evidence-informed interventions and treatments to promote permanency and prevent disruption.

Planned in FY 2014 is the *National Quality Improvement Center (QIC) for Adoption/Guardianship Support and Preservation* that will conduct 6-8 projects in partnership with state child welfare systems. Each of the selected sites will develop a system of evidenced-based services to improve the behavioral health outcomes of children and youth while achieving permanency and stability in adoptive/guardianship families. The QIC will complete an evaluation of each of the state projects and produce new, evidenced-based models of support that may be replicated in other communities. Projects are expected to increase resiliency and assure permanency and stability in adoptive/guardianship homes for youth placed through the child welfare system.

Also planned for FY 2014 is the *National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative* that will strengthen the capacity of child welfare staff and mental health practitioners to meet the needs of children/youth with goals of adoption/guardianship as well as those already in adoptive/guardianship homes. This initiative is intended to improve well-being outcomes for children moving to adoption/guardianship as well as provide support and appropriate therapeutic interventions to assure stable and secure post permanency experiences for these youth. The initiative will build on and complement previous adoption competency models and existing initiatives.

#### Item

**Program Administration** - The Committee urges ACF to ensure that the interests of Hispanic children and families, as well as other underserved populations, are considered throughout their grant programs and processes, including in grant announcements, review panels, and evaluation activities. The Committee directs ACF to provide a report no later than March 31, 2014, on its current and planned efforts to meet this priority.

#### Action taken or to be taken

Under its *Strategic Initiatives Plan*, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has identified important objectives and activities that constitute our short-term—and long-term—strategic direction to support underserved and/or underrepresented populations, particularly Hispanics, the largest and fastest growing minority group in the nation. In the past few years, we have strengthened outreach to Hispanic/Latino stakeholders and providers and strengthened programs and research targeting underserved/underrepresented populations. Below please find some of the action steps taken to enhance and raise the level of engagement around issues affecting Hispanics and other underserved populations.

#### Outreach & Access

- In April 2013, ACF convened at the White House the first National Hispanic Roundtable with representatives from nation-wide advocacy organizations and geographically diverse Hispanic non-profit organizations and service providers to discuss the impact of federal human services policy and programs on the Hispanic community. We have integrated the stakeholders' concerns and suggestions into our Hispanic Initiative and have continued to strengthen our efforts to better serve our underserved populations.
- ACF issues *Infórmate*, a monthly e-newsletter, which contains information regarding grants, job vacancies and other issues of interest to the Hispanic community. You can check previous issues at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/informate>.
- Earlier this year, ACF rolled out *ACF en Español*, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/informacion-sobre-los-programas-de-acf>, which includes the agency's Directory of Services and the Resource Guide for Faith-Based and Community Organizations, as well as selected sections of the agency's website translated into Spanish.

- ACF is currently developing an agency-wide language assistance plan, which will ensure meaningful access to ACF programs and activities by people with limited English language proficiency.

#### Strengthening Programs and Research

- On December 16, 2013, ACF hosted presentations on recent demographic trends, immigration policy, incorporation of new generations, and health and wellbeing among low-income Hispanics in the U.S. (Last year, ACF partnered with ASPE to support a research initiative on poverty, inequality and social mobility among Hispanic populations in the U.S.)
- On March 31, 2014, ACF will convene a meeting of experts in the social and economic experiences and service needs of Hispanic populations to discuss current ACF research initiatives, the state of knowledge, and the information needs to improve social services for low-income and vulnerable Hispanic children and families. As a result of ongoing discussions with this group of experts, ACF has developed and will soon release two research briefs addressing Hispanic populations: *Enhancing Cultural Competence in Social Service Agencies: A Promising Approach to Serving Diverse Children and Families*, and *Survey Data Elements to Unpack Diversity of Hispanic Populations*.
- ACF recently established a *Center for Research on Hispanic Children and Families*, which will advance understanding of poverty and self-sufficiency, marriage and relationships, fatherhood, child care and early education among Hispanic children and families. The Center will create a collaborative training and mentoring network to support emerging scholars capable of conducting high quality research that is culturally anchored in the experiences of Hispanic children and families in the U.S. The Center will develop and maintain an innovative dissemination system to share research and information with key stakeholders including policymakers and practitioners.
- ACF recently awarded the Human Services Research Partnerships: Puerto Rico cooperative agreement to support partnerships among researchers, local governments, and community-based organizations to define and address research questions regarding the social and economic well-being of low-income children and families. The Research Partnerships are intended to improve understanding of the most promising human services approaches to improve the quality of life in the region, with particular focus on topics related to the Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs.
- During FY 2014, our Regional Offices will be coordinating capacity building workshops on Grant Writing for local Hispanic-serving organizations. We will continue to offer webinars in English and Spanish on issues such as the Affordable Care Act, Human Trafficking and others; as well as to periodically distribute the Resource Guide for Faith & Community Based Organizations and the How to Become a Grant Reviewer among Hispanic stakeholders.

#### Item

***Native American Programs*** - Within the total, the Committee recommendation includes \$12,000,000 for Native American language preservation activities, including no less than \$4,000,000 for language immersion programs authorized by section 803C(b)(7)(A)-(C) of the Native American Programs Act, as amended by the Esther Martinez Native American Language Preservation Act of 2006. The Committee strongly encourages ACF to give priority to grantees with rigorous immersion programs.

#### Action taken or to be taken

All of the projects funded under the Native American Language program including the Esther Martinez program are targeted towards increasing the number of native language speakers within a native community ensuring the continuation of this precious cultural resource. We are spending no less than \$4 million per year on immersion activities that include language nests, survival schools, and restoration programs under the Esther Martinez Initiative. The impact of learning a native community's native language extends beyond the number of language speakers; it also raises the level of self-esteem within a community knowing that their members can speak the language and reinforces a native community's confidence knowing their culture is going to survive. Such awareness of community connectedness are

culturally based protective factors that correlate positively with Native American well-being and resiliency.

Item

***Community Economic Development*** -The Administration proposed eliminating the CED program and moving CED funding for HFFI to the Department of the Treasury, which also provides funding for HFFI through the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) program. The Committee rejects this elimination and continues to allow funding for HFFI within the CED program. The Committee strongly encourages continued collaboration between HHS and Treasury but notes that HFFI projects funded under CED are distinct from those funded under CDFI.

Action taken or to be taken

The Administration continues the proposal from the FY 2014 Budget, which does not include funding for the Community Economic Development program, but increases funding by \$13 million for HFFI activities through the Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) program. With these resources, in addition to funding requested for the newly authorized HFFI program in USDA, the FY 2015 budget would increase government-wide investments that increase the availability of affordable, healthy foods in underserved urban and rural communities by 50 percent. HHS will continue to collaborate with the Departments of Treasury and Agriculture as it implements current projects and transitions future efforts.

Item

***Community Economic Development*** -Within the HFFI program, the Committee encourages ACF to promote the establishment of food hubs in local communities. Food hubs address challenges in both the distribution and retail of healthy foods by connecting local producers to the market. Specifically, food hubs aggregate locally grown products from a group of producers and distribute and market them to consumers, whether households, retailers, or wholesalers.

Action taken or to be taken

For the past several years, the HFFI carve-out of CED has stimulated innovation that supports the "Let's Move!" campaign to address the epidemic of childhood obesity. Grants have been awarded to expand access to fresh, affordable, nutritious foods to residents of low-income communities that currently lack these options by developing and equipping grocery stores, farmers markets, food hubs and other small retail businesses and by building or expanding healthy food infrastructure and food distribution networks. In order to address efficiencies across agencies, an additional \$13 million for HFFI activities is included as part of the Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) program.