



Issue Brief

Child Welfare

March 2005

In 2003, there were close to one million cases known to Child Protective Services nation-wide of children abused and/or neglected or at-risk for abuse and/or neglect. Throughout the country that same year, there were 1,300 child fatalities resulting from maltreatment. At any given time in the United States, there are approximately a half million children in the foster care system and almost half of these children have a plan for reunification with their parents. One out of five children in the foster care system have a plan of adoption. In addition to the foster care system, kinship care plays a significant role in the care of children whose biological parents are unable to do so. Nearly 2.5 million children live in a grandparent or other relative-headed household where there is no parent present.

Since the early part of the 1900's Congress has taken a role in improving the child welfare system by creating programs that prevent child abuse and protect children. The largest federal child welfare programs are Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The intent of Title IV-B is to provide supportive services that will prevent out-of-home placements. One of the most well known programs in Title IV-B is the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act, which is a capped entitlement program that primarily funds family preservation services and community-based family support services. However, a small percentage of Title IV-B funding may be used by states for day care, foster care maintenance payments and adoption assistance payments. Title IV-B authorizes 75 percent Federal matching grants to states to provide a variety of child welfare services. This is an entitlement program and there is no income eligibility requirement.

Title IV-E is an entitlement program that matches state funding dollar for dollar for the costs of maintaining certain children in foster care, and associated administrative, child placement and training costs. In order for the state to qualify for federal reimbursement, the child must have been removed from his or her family and would have been qualified for AFDC under pre-1996 income requirements. Children who qualify for Title IV-E are also eligible for Medicaid. The state may also receive federal reimbursement if the child is placed in a state licensed group home or institution. Title IV-E also includes the Adoption Assistance Program. The Adoption Assistance program funds three activities: 1) assistance payments for qualified children who are adopted; 2) administrative payments for expenses associated with placing children in adoption; and 3) training of professional staff and parents involved in adoptions. Finally, Title IV-E also includes the Foster Care Independence Program. This program is designed to assist children who are about to turn 18 years of age and leave the foster care system. This includes extending Medicaid coverage to children through the age of 21.

The Administration's Proposals for Fiscal Year 2006

It is expected that the Administration will again introduce legislation this year that would change the structure for entitlement funding for child welfare programs. The legislation would likely provide for increased state flexibility for foster care, child abuse and prevention services, and other child welfare programs under a capped funding stream.

The Administration's budget proposed for FY 06 includes flat funding from their FY 05 funding levels. The President's request includes a \$7 million increase for Promoting Safe and Stable Families, a \$46 million increase in the Compassion Capital Fund and a \$13 million increase in Education and Training Vouchers for Youth Leaving Care.

TAKE ACTION! Contact your Senators and Representative and ask them to support funding levels for child welfare programs that meet the needs of abused and neglected children and to reject any proposals to cap funding and to reject any reduction in the federal commitment to improve the child welfare system. Explain how the needs of children in the child welfare system are increasing in numbers and complexity and that any reforms made to the child welfare system should place the needs of the children above the needs of the system. Find your Senators and Representative and their contact information at www.lutheranservices.org or call the Capital switchboard at 202-224-3121.

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act

Senators Clinton (D-NY) and Snowe (R-ME) introduced the *Kinship Caregiver Support Act* in the last Congress and they are expected to reintroduce the same bill this year in the 109th Congress. The bill would allow states to provide kinship guardianship assistance payment through Title IV-E for children who have been in the system for over 12 months. Under current law, there are many grandparents who would like to raise their grandchildren, but they are unable to afford the cost of such care. These children are often placed in the foster care system and raised by strangers. The bill also provides for information and resources to be available to grandparents and other relatives caring for children and would require extended family members to be notified within 60 days when a child is placed into foster care.

TAKE ACTION! Contact your Senators and ask them to co-sponsor this bill when it is reintroduced. Find your Senator and his/her contact information at www.lutheranservices.org or call the Capital switchboard at 202-224-3121.

The Orderly and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act

This bill was introduced in the last Congress and passed the House. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate late in the session, but was not heard. The House is expected to reintroduce *The Orderly and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act* during the 109th Congress. The Senate may reintroduce similar legislation. *The Orderly and Timely Placement of Foster Children Act* addresses the outdated policies directing the placement of children across state lines for foster care, adoption, or residential care. Key provisions include requiring home studies to be completed within 60 days after the state receives a home study request from another state; a state shall have in effect procedures for the orderly and timely interstate placement of children; and procedures shall be implemented in accordance with an interstate compact approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. While there is overall support for updating the policies surrounding interstate adoption, advocates are carefully watching the details of the policy to be sure that the rights of all involved- the children, the biological parents, the adoptive parents and the states- are all taken into account.