



NATIONAL ADVOCACY SUMMIT

*Investing in What It Takes:
A Full Continuum of Care*



★ April 18–20, 2016 ★ Hilton Garden Inn Washington, DC / U.S. Capitol ★

HOT TOPIC

Help Families Needing Drug Treatment

ACTION

- **Reauthorize and expand funding to \$60 million** for Regional Partnership Grants (RPGs) as part of a reauthorization of *Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)* this year!
- **Expand access to intervention services** through Title IV-E as proposed in draft legislation, *Families First Act* or similar legislation.
- **Reauthorize the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and increase funding** to assist states in implementing Safe Care Plans.

INFORMATION

The Congress has held a number of hearings in regard to substance use. The intense focus has been on the use of prescription medications which in many instances leads to later heroine use and addiction. Regardless of the drug of choice, substance use including alcohol plays a significant role in child welfare placements.

The latest data from the Children's Bureau for federal fiscal year 2014 tells us that over 415,000 children were in out-of-home (foster care), an increase of 15,000 from the previous year. This is the second straight year of increases in foster care placements and the most since 2009 when there were 418,000 children in foster care. The latest data shows that between 2013 and 2014, the rate of infants entering child welfare systems rose from 10.8 per 1000 children to 11.4 per 1000 children. Recent research estimates that 61 percent of infants and 41 percent of older children

in out-of-home care are from families with active substance use issues.

There are several legislative proposals being considered in Congress. Here are three key legislative actions:

Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) and Regional Partnership Grants

Promoting Safe and Stable Families or PSSF (Title IV-B Part 2), is an important fund for child welfare prevention and intervention services. A separate part of it includes a fund to promote Regional Partnership Grants (RPGs) to help families in need of substance use treatment. All of it must be reauthorized this year, FY 2016, or risk losing funding.

PSSF is a combination of appropriated and mandatory dollars that addresses four services: family preservation, family support, and family reunification and adoption services. In addition, a portion of PSSF funding (\$30 million) is designated for court improvement programs. Another \$20 million is set aside for workforce development and caseworker visits and \$20 million is designated for competitive grants to address substance use through Regional Partnership Grants (RPGs).

To reauthorize funding, Congress is required to find funding to maintain the court improvement efforts. In addition the Administration has proposed and CWLA supports an increase to \$60 million for the RPGs to extend substance use family-based services nationwide.

Families First Act and Intervention-Prevention Services

In the fall of 2015, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee respectively, introduced a draft bill, the Families First Act. This bill has been in

negotiations since that time but as drafted it would allow Title IV-E funding on a limited basis for substance use, mental health and in-home parent support programs for up to 12 months of services. This access would be limited to cases where a child is considered a candidate for foster care. In addition, the bill would create new definitions of foster care and institutional care. Foster care would be defined as a home of six or fewer children with exceptions for siblings, children with disabilities and other categories. Title IV-E funding would be allowed for qualified residential treatment programs that meet certain conditions including eventual accreditation. There would also be new oversight and care planning requirements for children in such facilities after a placement of two weeks.

By allowing up to 12 months of access to mental health, substance use treatment and in-home services for children (and their families) we would take an important step to prevent foster care placements through front end intervention. Services could extend to children who have been reunified and would extend to kinship and adoptive families.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and Safe Care Plans

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is due for reauthorization. The original 1974 enactment was historic in leading the nation to recognize the need to address child abuse in all its forms.

In FY 2016 funding for CAPTA state grants provides only 32 cents per child per year. All intended to prevent and treat child abuse. This is 32 cents to investigate child abuse complaints, refer and access child abuse treatment services, screen families and to support families that come to the attention of the child protective services, and to address new requirements mandated by Congress as national priorities.

As part of the reauthorization in 2010 CAPTA requires states to have a plan of safe care for infants born and identified as being affected by illegal substance use or withdrawal or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. There has been limited guidance and no new funding to states in the implementation of these provisions and the recent increases of heroin and opioids exposure as well as on-going fetal alcohol exposure tells us that now is the time for Congress to act.

Congress needs to restore the recent cuts to CAPTA grants which are now at a tiny \$25 million for all the states. Congress needs to help states implement the requirements under CAPTA and help states fund prevention requirements including the need for a plan of safe care.

There are two new bills before Congress, H.R. 4843, the Improving Safe Care for Prevention of Infant Abuse and Neglect Act, and S. 2687, the Plan of Safe Care Improvement Act, both direct HHS to do more in oversight and, in the Senate bill, delineate greater specificity in defining safe care plans. These are good steps but Congress must back up their legislation with an actual appropriation to make these changes real for infants.

CONCLUSION

Congress is paying increased attention to the drug use issues. We know that substance use plays a significant role in child welfare and the number of children in foster care. We also know that we aren't providing enough treatment and services for these same families. If Congress acts we can, at least in some cases, help families to stay together. We also know we can take steps to successfully reunify other families. If we act early enough we can also prevent some forms of child abuse. This is about children and families in every state. This is about investing in what it takes: a full continuum of care.



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