



American Public Human Services Association



National Association of Public
Child Welfare Administrators

an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association

April 22, 2009

The Honorable Kent Conrad, Chairman
The Honorable Judd Gregg, Ranking Member
Committee on Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg:

On behalf of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and its affiliate the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), we urge you to include language on child welfare financing, evidence-based home visiting programs, and full funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) in the final budget compromise.

APHSA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization representing state and local human service professionals for over 76 years. NAPCWA, created as an affiliate in 1983, works to enhance and improve public policy and administration of services for children, youth, and families. As the only organization devoted solely to representing administrators of state and local public child welfare agencies, NAPCWA brings an informed view of the problems facing families today to the forefront of child welfare policy.

Child Welfare Financing Reform

NAPCWA is excited to see child welfare finance reform language in the Senate passed legislation. States and counties continue to string together a patchwork of fragmented federal funding streams to provide services and supports to children and families that come to the attention of child welfare. Currently, there are not enough prevention funds to help children before they enter into the system in the first place. Sadly, federal financing is disproportionately directed toward out-of-home care.

Moreover, even through Title IV-E foster care, adoption and guardianship are in one funding stream, they have different rules and regulations to determine eligibility which is administratively burdensome. Therefore, public child welfare administrators strongly recommend one single eligibility determination for all three programs.

A long-standing concern is the lack of flexibility in federal funding for child welfare services. States and counties know how to best spend resources that meet the needs of their at-risk populations. Yet, current funding mechanisms do not allow them the flexibility to effectively develop and support the array of services needed to improve outcomes for children and families. As the House and Senate reconcile the differences, please ensure that the Senate child welfare financing reform language is included.

Home Visiting

NAPCWA is also excited to see that both the House and Senate followed President Obama's lead by including a reserve fund for a new home visiting program. Home visiting has proven to be an effective way, both in cost and practice, in preventing child abuse and neglect as well as keeping children from

entering state custody in the first place. These programs include comprehensive and holistic approaches that promote positive family functioning.

States use a wide-range of evidence- and research-based home visiting models that serve at-risk and/or low income pregnant women, mothers and fathers and other primary caregivers of children from prenatal to kindergarten. These services are delivered by trained nurses, social workers, and child development specialists.

The new program offered by the President and included in the Senate and House Budget Resolutions should continue to require that funds go to home visiting programs that are effective, research- and evidence-based, and are linked to determined outcomes. The program should also allow social workers and other trained professionals and paraprofessionals to provide services, and should not be just limited to only trained nurses. Social workers and other trained professionals have unique and in-depth understandings of family dynamics and adhere to the integrity of tested programs. Home visiting presents an opportunity to help give children a healthy start and setting them on the path for success in school, the workforce and elsewhere in life.

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)

NAPCWA is very pleased to see that the Senate includes language to fully fund the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). SSBG provides flexible funds to states and localities to help maintain and achieve economic self-sufficiency. More than 11 million individuals have been helped each year through this funding stream. Moreover, during times of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, additional SSBG funds have been provided to states to spend quickly in areas of need.

The SSBG program provides funds for a wide array of services to children, families, the elderly and disabled, such as employment training, child abuse prevention, substance abuse, emergency housing and food assistance. All these services will see a significant increase in clients due to this recession. As the House and Senate reconcile the differences, please ensure that the Senate language regarding full funding is included.

We are thrilled to see that leaders in both the House and the Senate recognize the importance of improving the lives of at-risk children and families. Again, we hope that the final budget package will include child welfare financing reform, an evidence-based home visiting program, and full funding for the Social Services Block Grant.

Sincerely,



Jerry Friedman, Executive Director
American Public Human Services Association



Erin Sullivan Sutton, President
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators