



National Association of Public  
Child Welfare Administrators

an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association

## **Legislative Summary**

### **Foster Care Mentoring Act (S. 986)**

Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), co-chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, introduced the Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2009 (S. 986) in May in honor of Foster Care Awareness Month. S. 986 has Democratic support with no Republicans serving co-sponsors. There is no equivalent legislation introduced in the House; it is expected, however, that Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-N.Y.) will introduce similar legislation in the near future.

The bill amends Title IV-B, subpart 2 to establish or expand mentoring programs through grants to states, and localities that serve large foster care populations. S. 986 would also create a national information hotline or web site for people interested in becoming mentors. Finally, the bill would provide loan forgiveness for those who serve as mentors for children in foster care.

#### **Definition of a Mentoring Program**

Under S. 986, mentoring programs for foster children are structured and managed where children are appropriately matched with screened and trained adult volunteers on a one-on-one basis. The foster youth and mentor meet regularly and the adult serves as a positive role model and helps meet the needs of the child.

#### **Grant Process**

States and localities must submit a description of the proposed program and a list of public and private organizations that will participate. Additionally, the proposal must also include:

- Qualifications and description of the participating mentoring programs
- Numbers of annual matches that the program hopes to obtain
- Information required by the HHS secretary, and may include methods on recruitment, screening, supporting and overseeing mentors

#### **Award Considerations**

The HHS secretary shall take into account the following when considering grant applications:

- Overall capacity and qualifications
- Level of training provided to mentors
- Coordination with social services and education programs
- Supervision and support for mentors and youth
- Consultation with colleges and universities
- Number of children in foster care

#### **Assurances**

States and localities awarded grants must ensure that all mentors in the program will receive intensive and ongoing training in the following areas:

- Child development and the importance of bonding

- Family dynamics and the effects of domestic violence
- The foster care system
- Child abuse and neglect reporting
- Confidentiality requirements for foster children
- Coordination with public schools

States and localities must also ensure that all mentors are appropriately screened by conducting a criminal background check. All mentors should also be selected based on their ability to serve on a long term and consistent basis.

States and localities must ensure that all academic mentors have a high school diploma and completed at least one year of post-secondary education. Additionally, states and localities must ensure that they will collaborate with families; federal, state and local corrections; job skills training programs; and substance abuse and mental health departments.

States and localities must ensure that public and private organizations, including religious and tribal organizations, will be eligible to participate in mentoring programs on an equal basis.

Finally, states and localities must ensure that they report and cooperate with reviews, evaluations and audits that the HHS secretary deems necessary for proper oversight.

### **Match Requirements**

The federal share for each grant year will be 75 percent. States and localities may use cash or in-kind contributions for their share. Not less than 50 percent of the total awarded grant must be used for training and ongoing educational support for mentors. Only 10 percent of the total awarded grant may be used for administrative purposes. Each grant award should not exceed \$600,000.

### **Funding and Report to Congress**

For each federal fiscal year 2010 and 2011, there will be \$15 million and such sums thereafter. Moreover, the HHS secretary will report to Congress on the progress of the programs on an annual basis.

### **National Hotline or Web Site**

S. 986 provides \$4 million for 2010 and 2011 for a national hotline or web site that will provide information to individuals who are interested in becoming mentors for foster youth.

### **Loan Forgiveness**

Mentors that serve for at least 200 hours per calendar year are eligible for \$2,000 forgiveness for their loans for each 200 hours served, not to exceed \$20,000. There are no new funds appropriated for this section.

### **NAPCWA's Position**

The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators has not taken a position on the legislation.

### **Contact Information**

For more information or if you have any questions or comments, please contact Courteney Holden, senior legislative associate, at (202) 682-0100 x249 or at [Courteney.Holden@aphsa.org](mailto:Courteney.Holden@aphsa.org). You may also contact Rashida Brown, legislative associate, at (202) 682-0100 x225 or [Rashida.Brown@aphsa.org](mailto:Rashida.Brown@aphsa.org).