

February 4, 2008

Congress has returned to Washington and has spent a significant amount of time on crafting a fiscal stimulus package. At this stage, there are no provisions targeting directly low-income individuals and families, such as an extension of unemployment benefits, a boost in food stamp benefits or a temporary increase in the federal match for Medicaid.

Today is also the day that the Administration released its federal fiscal year (FFY) 2009 budget. While the budget process is just starting and Congress will reject many of the president's proposals, his budget does serve as a starting point in the process. A brief summary of those proposals will be posted in another e-Alert later this week.

If you haven't done so, please pay your NACHSA dues for 2008 by [accessing the form here](#).

Information on the upcoming National Association of Counties' Legislative Conference [may be found here](#). NACHSA will meet on Saturday, March 1.

Here are updates on a few legislative measures and human services reports and resources that have crossed my screen over the past month.

FEDERAL UPDATE

Targeted Case Management: NACHSA has joined with other national groups in signing a letter to Senator Coleman (R-MN) and Representative Ellison (D-MN) expressing support for their recently-introduced bills (S.2578;H.R. 5173) placing a moratorium until April 2009 on the implementation of the Targeted Case Management rule, which would become effective March 3. At least 38 states use this Medicaid option to coordinate care for at-risk populations, including children in foster care.

Sign-on Letter/Kinship Caregiver Support Act: The Alliance for Children and Families, Center for Law and Social Policy, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United are still accepting sign ons to a [letter to Congress](#) it to a broad group of organizations committed to the well-being of children. NACHSA and a number of counties and county-based groups have signed it. The letter endorses the [Kinship Caregiver Support Act](#) (H.R. 2188, S. 661), legislation now before Congress that would provide assistance to relatives, who become the legal guardians of children in foster care. To sign on, please email your name, organization (as it should be listed), address, phone, and email address to Varina Winder at vwinder@alliance1.org.

Child Support Restoration: Efforts continue to repeal the child support performance incentive cut by garnering support for the Child Support Protection Act (H.R. 1386; S. 803). Co-sponsorship is growing, with 75 Representatives and 29 Senators on the respective bills. Late last year, Rep. Reichert (R-WA) sent a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to his fellow Republicans urging their support. A number of child support professionals were in Washington last week to lobby their members. It is not too late to have your Representative or Senators to co-sponsor. [Click here](#) for the latest state-by state list of Congressional supporters.

Recently Introduced Legislation

Partnership for Children and Families Act (H.R. 4207): Introduced by Representative Shelley Berkley (D-NV), the bipartisan [Partnership for Children and Families Act](#) strengthens the federal/state partnership for both adoption assistance and foster care maintenance by eliminating prospectively the outdated income eligibility restriction for IV-E that prevent all abused and neglected children from being eligible for federal foster care support. The bill also makes improvements to ensure that all

children with special needs in foster care are eligible for adoption assistance. In addition, the bill would allow states to reinvest savings related to safely reducing the days children spend in foster care in other child welfare services, such as those that help children and families prevent the need for foster care in the first place.

Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act: Senators Kerry (D-MA) and Murray (D-WA) have introduced the Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act (S. 2560), to give more support to foster families, foster children, and young adults transitioning from the foster care system into adulthood. Right now, one-fifth of foster children wind up being homeless adults. The bill provides solutions for child welfare, temporary family assistance, and work opportunity credits. Rep. Berkley (D-NV) introduced the House companion bill late last year (H.R. 4208). [Click here](#) for a summary of the legislation.

AFCARS Regulation Published

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System Comments Requested: The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The NPRM proposes numerous improvements to AFCARS data, including changes to the reporting populations, data structure, elements, compliance determination and penalty provisions. Public comments on these proposals will be accepted through **March 11, 2008**. The NPRM is available in the January 11, 2008, Federal Register, and online by [clicking here](#).

HUMAN SERVICES RESOURCES

Child Welfare/Foster Care

Foster Care Studies: Last week the Pew Trusts' Kids Are Waiting project and Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) released two reports highlighting the lack of federal funds allocated toward child abuse and neglect prevention services.

[Time for Reform: Investing in Prevention, Keeping Children Safe At Home](#) by Kids Are Waiting, finds that the current federal child welfare financing structure does not adequately support services and supports that could help keep more children safely with their families. Of the \$7.2 billion federal funds dedicated for child welfare in 2007, approximately 90 percent supported children in foster care placements (\$4.5 billion) and children adopted from foster care (\$2.0 billion). States can use about 10 percent of federal dedicated child welfare funds flexibly for family services and supports, including prevention or reunification services. There are state-by-state charts in the appendix beginning on page 31 comparing differences between states on their foster care caseloads and systems. The 44 page report may be [accessed here](#).

[Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States](#) by PCAA estimates that the total costs of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. were nearly \$104 billion last year. This five page economic analysis identifies direct costs including foster care services, hospitalization, mental health treatment, and law enforcement that total more than \$33 billion per year. Indirect costs of over \$70 billion include loss of productivity as well as expenditures related to chronic health problems, special education, and the criminal justice system. [Click here](#) to access the study.

Foster Care Entry and Exit Patterns: A new [Chapin Hall report](#) provides a general overview of what happens when children are placed in foster care, based on a sample of nearly 350,000 children admitted to foster care for the first time between 2000 and 2005. The report includes changes in the number of children in care, chances of entering care, placement type, movement, and exit rates.

State Child Welfare Legislation 2006: The National Conference of State Legislatures has released a compilation of significant child welfare-related laws enacted by states in 2006. The report can be found online by [clicking here](#).

[Home Visiting: Strengthening Families by Promoting Parenting Success:](#) Released in November 2007, this [policy brief](#) is from the National Human Services Assembly and provides information on effective home visiting program models. Home visiting is a family-strengthening strategy that can support not only parents and caregivers, but also can influence the lives of young children. Studies have shown that home visits can increase positive outcomes for children in at-risk families.

Homelessness

U.S. Conference of Mayors Report: The mayors conference recently released a [survey of 23 major cities](#) which estimates for each city the demand for emergency food assistance, emergency shelter and transitional housing; the capacity to meet that demand; the causes of hunger and homelessness; efforts underway in each city to combat these problems; the economic or social conditions that exacerbate these problems; and the outlook for 2008.

Data, Data, Data

New features and measures added to KIDS COUNT online: The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT online database has a whole new look and feel. Now featuring child well-being measures for the [50 largest U.S. cities](#), this powerful tool also contains more than 100 indicators, including the most recent data available on education, employment and income, poverty, health, and youth risk factors for the United States as a whole, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Visit the new [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) to create your own maps, charts and graphs by topic or geographic area.

Census Data Released on Income and Poverty Estimates: The U.S. Census bureau recently released county-level poverty data. That information may be found by [clicking here](#). The press release describing the information may be found [here](#).

Job Opening

Alameda County, CA is searching for a individual to head their Social Services Agency. [Click here](#) to view the announcement and other jobs posted by NACHSA members.