



March 13, 2008

NACHSA e-Alert

Greetings NACHSA Members:

NACHSA members met in Washington last week as part of the National Association of Counties' legislative conference. Attendees helped craft and adopt policies on services for youth aging of foster care and supporting a moratoria on a host of Medicaid regulations proposed by the administration. NACHSA members participated in NACo's Aging Out of Foster Care Task Force and heard updates from congressional staff on Medicaid, child welfare and child support initiatives.

This e-Alert will update you on the latest federal legislative developments, grant opportunities, human services resources and NACHSA news.

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Federal Update

Federal Budget: The House and Senate are debating their respective fiscal year 2009 budget resolutions this week. The budget resolution marks the first step in the process by providing the authorizing and appropriations committees with a non-binding blueprint of the spending and policy priorities for the year. While it serves as guidance, it does signal to the committees a number of priorities, including delaying implementation of pending Medicaid regulations, increased funds for the child support program, and rejection of the administration's proposal to cut the Social Services Block Grant by 30 percent and eliminate the Community Services Block Grant.

Child Welfare Hearing: The House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support held a hearing in late February on improving the child welfare system. Subcommittee Chairman McDermott (D-WA) indicated that he intends to act on some child welfare provisions this year. Featured at the hearing was the [Invest in KIDS Act \(HR 5466\)](#) and the [Partnership for Children and Families Act \(H.R.4207\)](#). The hearing was well attended by members of both parties and pledges were made to work together on child welfare issues. Finding funding for new initiatives or policy changes will be a significant hurdle to overcome, however.

NACHSA President Darryl Martin met with subcommittee staff the day before the NACHSA meetings to discuss the role of counties in the child welfare system and offered to lend NACHSA members' expertise and advocacy as the legislative process unfolds.

[Click here](#) for the testimony given at the hearing.

Medicaid: Moratoria on a number of proposed Medicaid regulations will expire in May and June

of this year. The regulations would shift billions of dollars in costs to states and counties and reduce services to Medicaid beneficiaries. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee last week released a survey state Medicaid directors on the impact of the cuts. [Click here](#) to view the report and individual state fact sheets.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's top health advisor Wendell Primus spoke to NACHSA members attending NACo's Health Committee last weekend. Dr. Primus told the group that a bill was being drafted to delay all the Medicaid regulations at least until next year. At issue will be finding funding to offset the federal savings assumed by the Congressional Budget Office and attaching it to a 'must-pass' bill since the administration is expected to veto a Medicaid-only bill.

Food and Nutrition Programs: Congress has adopted another 30 day extension of the farm bill through April 18 since it still continues to be unable to agree to a new reauthorization measure. Food stamps and other nutrition programs are funded through September 30, 2008, regardless of whether there is an agreement on the farm bill.

Chafee National Youth in Transition Database: On February 26, HHS issued final regulations detailing the requirements for states in collecting and reporting data on youth who are receiving independent-living services and on the outcomes of certain youth who are in foster care or who age out of foster care. The final rule implements the data collection requirements of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169). That law required HHS to develop and implement a data collection system to track the independent-living services states provided to youth and to develop outcome measures that may be used to assess state performance in operating their independent-living programs. [Download the final regulation in PDF format.](#)

Grant Opportunities

Domestic Violence: For those administrators collaborating with 501 (c)(3) organizations working with children who are exposed to, or who have been victims of domestic violence, the [Avon Foundation](#) is seeking proposals from nonprofit organizations to develop or expand a collaborative model that links with government agencies to provide therapeutic services to children and offers services to children and the non-offending adult caregiver, including family support and parent education.

Grant amounts range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 each, depending on the size and scope of the program proposed. Grants are non-renewable. However, an organization may submit a new proposal the following year for continued funding. To be considered for funding, applicants must submit a proposal before April 1, 2008. Here is a [link to the RFP](#).

Food Stamp Participation Grants: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has requested grant applications for the Food Stamp Program (FSP) Program Participation Grants for fiscal year (FY) 2008. A total of \$5 million is available. FNS expects to award five grants this year to projects aimed at simplifying the food stamp application and eligibility determination systems or improving access to food stamp benefits by eligible households. Program Participation Grants are primarily concerned with improving the quality and efficiency of operations **within** the food stamp office. Counties are eligible to apply but must receive a letter of endorsement from the state. [Click here](#) for a copy of the Request for Applications. The completed application is due May 15, 2008.

Recruitment of Foster Care Families: This HHS cooperative agreement grant is open to county and state governments. Up to nine awards will be made, with the maximum amount for any individual award to total \$400,000 for each of five years. The closing date for applications is May 29, 2008. Funding will be available for projects to implement recruitment

programs for kinship, foster and adoptive families for children serviced by public child welfare agencies. For a complete description of the announcement, [click here](#).

Human Services Resources

Tax Benefits for Caregivers: The National Foster Parent Association has published a [resource guide](#) for the 2007 tax year. The guide is most relevant for foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers. It explains basic rules for preparing taxes. It also offers tips to help caregivers claim special deductions and credits. This year, eligible families can get as much as \$4,716 from the Earned Income Credit. Some families may also qualify for the Child Tax Credit.

Pursuit of the Dream: Cars & Jobs in America, produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, explains the importance of affordable, reliable transportation for building the economic success of low-income families. A DVD of the 22 minute documentary is free of charge and features the stories of three families who struggled with the common pitfalls that low-wage workers often face when purchasing a car, how they overcame these obstacles and tips to avoid them. The documentary is provided in both English and Spanish, and a printed discussion guide is enclosed in each DVD package. [View the documentary and learn more](#). [Order a free copy of the DVD](#) via e-mail.

Wisconsin Children's Court Initiative: The Children's Court Initiative (CCI) is a comprehensive county circuit court review process designed to strengthen court processing in child welfare and termination of parental rights cases. The project establishes safety, permanency, due process, and timeliness performance measures that are based on best practice principles outlined by the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, as well as areas evaluated in both the federal Child and Family Services Review and Title IV-E audit related to court practice. [This report](#) compiles the data, findings, and best practices from the CCI on-site reviews conducted in 30 counties.

Tips for Parents: 2008 Resource Packet: Published by the HHS Children's Bureau, this set includes [five tip sheets to help service providers](#) guide parents and caregivers on specific issues which help protect families from the risk of child abuse and neglect. Each one page fact sheet focuses on concrete steps parents can take to care more effectively for their children and strengthen their family. Titles include "Bonding With Your Baby," "Dealing With Temper Tantrums," "Setting Rules With Teens," "Finding Help When You Need It," and "Raising Your Grandchildren.

Poverty Fact Sheet: From the National Center for Children in Poverty, this [four page fact sheet](#) provides demographic information on children in the United States who are considered poor based on the national poverty threshold. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of children living in poverty increased 11 percent, for a total of 13 million children in poverty. A map with state poverty levels is included.

Youth Substance Abuse Facts: This six page fact sheet released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration provides an [average day snapshot of youth](#) involvement in smoking, and the use of alcohol and other drugs. Bar graph data are available on the number of youth in treatment and how they were referred to providers.

NACHSA Updates

NACo Youth Aging Out Best Practices Brief: NACo has [released a ten-page report](#) identifying federal programs, national studies and some county best practices for youth emancipating from the foster care system. NACHSA members have contributed to the report and are involved in NACo's task force addressing the issue. [Click here](#) to go to NACo's site devoted to

the subject.

Awards: Congratulations to the following individuals and programs that won 2008 NACHSA awards earlier this month. They included: Clark County, Ohio Director Bob Sover; County Welfare Directors Association of California Executive Director Frank Mecca; Hillsborough County, FL Commissioner Rose Ferlita; and human services programs in Morrow County, Ohio and the City and County of San Francisco, CA. Their contributions to human services may be [viewed here](#).

Jobs: A number of new jobs have been posted to the NACHSA site, including opportunities in the City and County of Denver, Colorado. [Click here](#) to view them.

Dues: For those of you who have not paid you dues for 2008, you will soon be receiving an invoice in the mail. To pay your dues today, [click here](#) for a dues form.

Tom Joseph
National Association of County Human Services Administrators

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