

TIP SHEET FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD-CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP:

Policies and programs that promote educational access, stability, and success for vulnerable children and families

Research on early childhood has clearly demonstrated that infants and young children who are at greatest risk for abuse or neglect or who have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma, or toxic stress are a particularly vulnerable population that need special attention, with an emphasis on continuous quality care experiences. Promoting children's optimal development by ensuring high-quality early care, as well as early detection and early intervention services can result in better safety, permanency, and well-being

outcomes for infants and young children being served by both child welfare and early childhood systems.

Several Federal policies and programs are in place to promote access to high-quality, stable early care and education for children in the child welfare system, and numerous opportunities exist for further strengthening collaborations between early childhood and child welfare systems.

EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Head Start Eligibility

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are free for all enrolled children and families. Provided children meet age eligibility requirements, children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start, regardless of family or foster family income (45 CFR 1305.2(l)). In communities where there are more eligible children than program enrollment slots, programs organize wait lists based on a set of selection criteria and make determinations about how vulnerable children (including foster children) will be prioritized for enrollment. Child welfare caseworkers can find Head Start and Early Head Start programs located in States, Tribes or Territories utilizing the directories available online at the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC).

Child Care Subsidy

Children who are in need of "protective services," as defined by the State or Territory, are categorically eligible for Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy receipt at the discretion of the State or Territory (45 CFR 98.20(a)(3)(ii)). CCDF Lead Agencies may prioritize child care subsidies for children in protective services, and indeed have initiated innovative partnerships to meet the needs of this population.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

On December 20, 2010, President Obama signed into Public Law 111-320, a new 5-year reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention Act (CAPTA). The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-36) encourages Federal support of child protective services linkages with developmental, mental health, early intervention, and health services related to the evaluation and treatment of maltreated children. As a result, CAPTA State grant eligibility is now tied to several State practices intended to promote access to services for at-risk children. Specifically, CAPTA requires Child Protective Services to refer all cases involving substantiated victims of child maltreatment under the age of 3 to Part C of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to be evaluated for the receipt of early intervention services such as speech, language, and physical therapy; family counseling and home visits; medical care; nursing; and nutrition services.

Use of Title IV-E Funds

Title IV-E agencies may claim reimbursement for daily supervision and allowable licensed child care costs for children in foster care, provided either to the foster parent or the child care provider (CWPM, §8.3B, QA #3). Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments may also be used to cover costs of foster parent activities that extend beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties, such as attending a court hearing (CWPM, §8.3B.1, QA #3)

OPPORTUNITIES

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act

2008's Fostering Connections legislation includes provisions requiring States to ensure that children taken into foster care or experiencing placement changes experience minimal disruption to their education. Unless it is in the best interest of the child to do otherwise, States are required to keep children in their schools of origin when bringing a child into custody or moving a child to a new foster care placement. While the legislation does not specifically address young children in early care and education settings, ACF believes that stability is just as important for these children. States are encouraged to keep young children in their early care and education programs when removing them from their homes, placing them, and reuniting them with their parents, regardless of when enrollment took place.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

The *Affordable Care Act* (ACA) authorized the creation of a home visiting program for young children and their families in targeted, at-risk communities. Administered by the Administration on Children and Families (ACF) and the Health Resources Service Administration (HRSA), the program is designed to strengthen and improve home visiting programs, improve early childhood service coordination and delivery for families in at-risk communities, and identify and provide comprehensive evidence-based home visiting services to serve these

children and families effectively. Among the populations prioritized by the legislation are "eligible families that have a history of child abuse or neglect or have had interactions with child welfare services" (Section 511(d)(4)(D) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the ACA). This program will be an integral part of any State's early childhood system and will have a valuable contribution to make to any multi-system efforts to promote well-being for young children in or at risk of entering the child welfare system. Home visitors may also serve as connectors to services and liaisons between early care and education providers and child welfare caseworkers.

State Advisory Councils

The *Improving Head Start Act of 2007* established collaboration grants for States to develop a State Advisory Council (SAC) on Early Childhood Education and Care to develop or enhance comprehensive early childhood systems, including and extending beyond Head Start. With broad membership that can span early childhood, family support, mental health, and child welfare, SACs are meant to coordinate the many systems serving young children and their families and create alignment among them. Ensuring enrollment in high quality early care and education programs and promoting program stability for children in or at risk of entering the child welfare system are appropriate areas of focus for SACs.

RESOURCES

- *Information Memorandum: Head Start and Child Welfare Partnerships: Partnering with Families Involved in the Child Welfare System.* ACF-IM-HS-10-04
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/policy/im2010/acfimhs_10_04.html
- *Information Memorandum: Child Welfare and Head Start Partnerships: Partnering with Families Involved in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.*
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2011/im1101.htm
- *Information Memorandum: Child Care and Child Welfare Partnerships [FORTHCOMING]*
- *Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2011/im1102.pdf
- *Information Memoranda and Program Instruction for Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008: PI-10-11, IM-09-02, IM-08-03*
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/index.htm#policy
- *Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center – State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care*
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Head%20Start%20Program/State%20collaboration/HSSCO/StateAdvisoryCouncil.htm>
- *Affordable Care Act – Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program*
<http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/manage/homevisiting/>
- *Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood*
<http://www.qic-ec.org/>