

Social Services Block Grant

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ACTION

- Support efforts to restore funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG, Title XX of the Social Security Act) to \$2.8 billion. SSBG funding has been cut severely in recent years, jeopardizing vital services to vulnerable children, youth, and families.

Child Welfare
League of America
202/638-2952
Fax 202/638-4004
www.cwla.org

HISTORY

SSBG is a major source of federal funding to address the needs of vulnerable children and youth. SSBG frequently serves as a link between government funding and private and charitable sources. SSBG funds supplement local and charitable efforts by providing federal dollars to fill a gap that local efforts cannot meet.

In 1981, SSBG was converted from a matching entitlement fund to a capped federal block grant to states. States were free to decide whom to serve and what services to provide. As a capped entitlement, SSBG funding was intended to bypass the annual appropriations process and be automatically provided at the level set in the statute—\$2.4 billion. Congress, however, has set funding for SSBG below the authorized capped level for the past several years. Funding for SSBG was lowered to \$1.9 billion in FY 1999 and \$1.7 billion in FY 2002.

Several legislative vehicles currently before Congress could restore funding for SSBG. Funding could be restored in the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant this year. SSBG funding is also part of a bipartisan bill (S.1924) designed to expand charitable giving and to support local non-profit organizations. S.1924 would increase SSBG funding to \$1.975 billion in FY 2003 and \$2.8 billion in FY 2004. SSBG could also be addressed in the FY 2003 appropriations bill that provides funding for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

KEY FACTS

States can use SSBG to fund 29 different services to prevent or remedy neglect or abuse of children or adults, achieve or maintain economic self-support, reduce unnecessary institutionalization, achieve or maintain independence, and secure referral and screening for appropriate institutional care. In FY 1999, more than \$802 million in SSBG funds were spent on services to children and youth, including adoption, foster care, child protection, independent living, and residential services.

Adoption

- Twenty-nine states used \$21.4 million in SSBG funds in 1999 to assist in the adoption of children. Of the more than 581,000 children in foster care on September 30, 1999, 107,600 had a goal of adoption; 46,000 children were adopted from foster care in 1999.¹
- Adoption services are designed to facilitate timely placements of children with adoptive families. Services include counseling for biological parents, recruitment of adoptive homes, and pre- and post-placement training and counseling.

Foster Care

- In 1999, 37 states used nearly \$322.9 million SSBG dollars for foster care services to more than 288,292 children. That year, 581,000 children were in out-of-home care.²
- States use SSBG to pay foster care costs for the board and care of children not eligible for federal Title IV-E foster care assistance. Foster care services are designed to secure living arrangements for children or youth who have been abused and neglected and cannot live at home. These children and youth may live with foster care families, including relatives; in group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, or preadoptive homes; or in supervised independent-living arrangements. Services include needs assessments, case planning, case management, medical care, child counseling, parent or foster parent counseling, and recruitment of foster families.

Child Protection

- Forty-two states used more than \$269 million SSBG dollars in FY 1999 to protect children from abuse and neglect. In 1999, state and local child protective service agencies received an estimated 2,974,000 reports of child abuse and neglect.³
- Child protective services are designed to prevent or remedy abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children who may be harmed through physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, and negligent treatment or maltreatment. Services include investigation, medical care, emergency shelter, case planning, child counseling, family counseling, legal assistance, and placement in foster care.

Independent Living

- In FY 1999, 16 states used \$20.6 million in SSBG funds to provide independent and transitional living services to more than 22,000 youth and 36,000 adults. Supervised independent and post-foster care services for youth are designed to help older youth in foster care or homeless youth make the transition to independence. Services include educational assistance, employment training, training in daily life skills, and housing assistance.⁴

Residential Treatment

- In FY 1999, \$83.4 million in SSBG funds supported residential treatment to more than 24,100 youth and 10,000 adults in 21 states. Residential treatment services provide short-term residential care and comprehensive treatment for children who cannot be cared for at home or in foster care and who need specialized services. Services include psychological evaluations, alcohol and drug treatment, family counseling, individual counseling, remedial education, vocational training, case management, and supervised recreation.⁵

Special Services for Youth at Risk

- Eighteen states used \$78.7 million in SSBG funds in FY 1999 to help more than 100,000 juveniles involved in the justice system. Support for youth at risk is often fragmented between the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare systems. SSBG allows states to cut across different systems and provide youth the help they need. Services are targeted at youth who are, or who may become, involved with the juvenile justice system, and their families. Designed to enhance family functioning and increase positive youth development, services include counseling, residential services, and medical care.⁶

SOURCES

1. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Social Services Block Grant program: Annual report on expenditures and recipients, 1999. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office: U.S. Children's Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). The AFCARS report. Available online at www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families.
2. Social Services Block Grant program.
3. Ibid.; U.S. Children's Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Child maltreatment 1999: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
4. Social Services Block Grant program.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

CWLA CONTACT

John Sciamanna
202/639-4919
jsciamanna@cwla.org



CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Headquarters

440 First Street NW, Third Floor
Washington DC 20001-2085

202/638-2952 • Fax 202/638-4004 • www.cwla.org