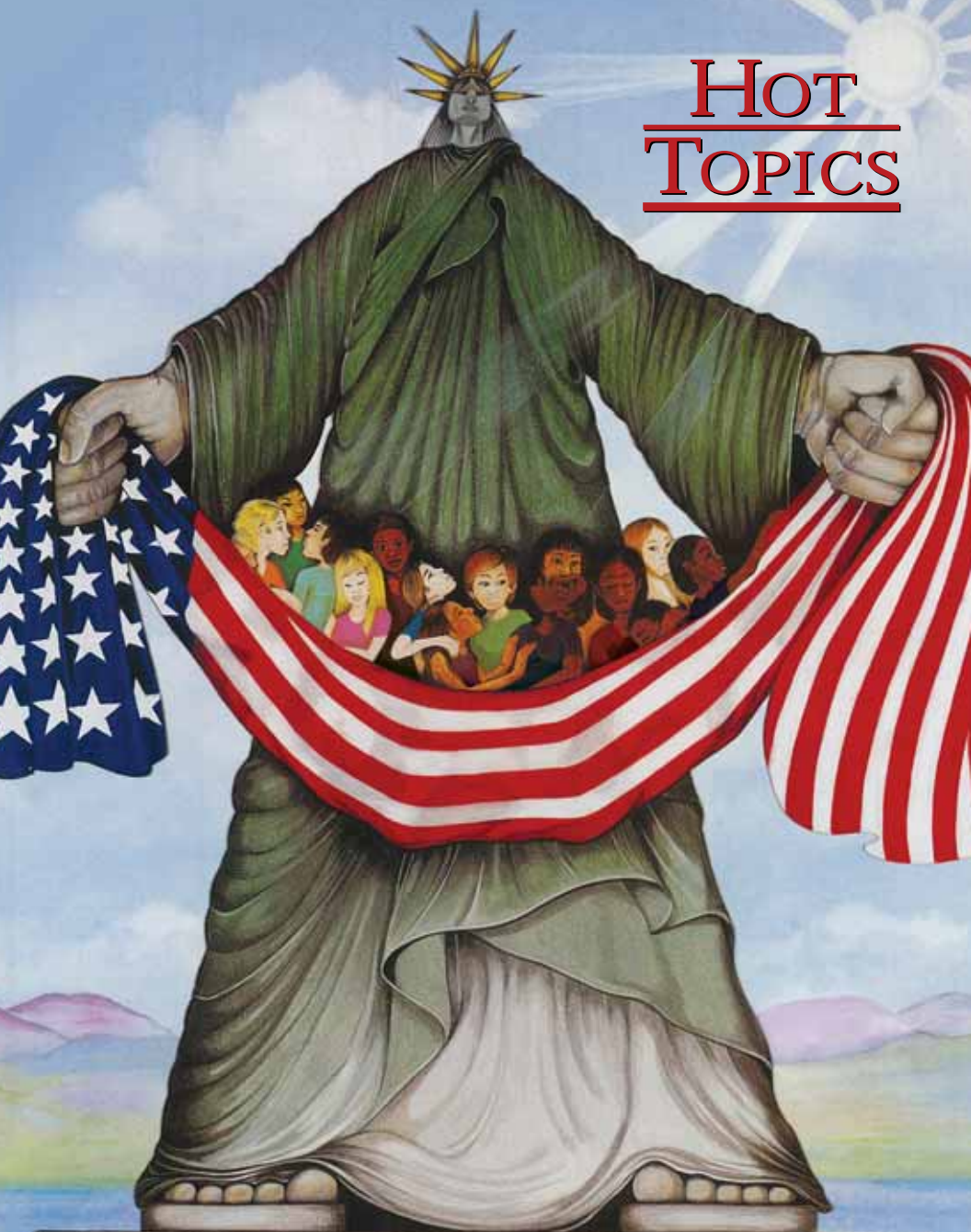


2008 CHILDREN'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

HOT
TOPICS



- ★ White House Conference on Children and Youth
- ★ Kinship Care and Guardianship Assistance

*The cover art is "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Controls the Nation," ©2001
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WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

ACTION

Reestablish the White House Conference on Children and Youth by sponsoring and passing legislation to once again hold this decennial event.

BACKGROUND

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced that would reestablish the oldest White House Conference—the White House Conference on Children and Youth—to be held in 2010. President Theodore Roosevelt first called this Conference in 1909 and it was held every 10 years through 1970. Similar to recent White House Conferences on aging, such an event begins with hundreds of state and local gatherings, meetings, and conversations over the course of a year, culminating in a national conference called by the President.

The conference would focus on issues of child welfare, and examine a cross section of critical topics that affect the well-being of America's most vulnerable children and families, including permanency, health and mental health care, education, substance abuse, housing, juvenile justice, workforce issues, tribal access and services, and strategies to help families while also preventing abuse. This conference will focus on federal policy and state and local commitment.

The Two-Year Process

Similar to previous White House conferences on children and youth and previous conferences on aging, Congress first passes authorizing legislation that sets the goals and establishes a policy committee that oversees a two-year process. The policy committee is bipartisan, with the President and the majority and minority leadership of both the House and Senate selecting members.

In the first year, state and local meetings and conferences are held, with some meetings under the oversight of the policy committee. Local agencies, advocates, and policymakers wanting to contribute their ideas, solutions, and goals for this dialogue and conference would organize other state and local



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gatherings. The dialogue focuses not only on legislation, but also on how communities can come together to address the issues raised by the child welfare system.

Delegates from the states are selected to attend the White House Conference by each member of Congress, by every state governor, and by members of the policy committee.

History of Past Conferences

Starting in 1909 through 1970, a White House Conference took place every 10 years. These conferences made significant contributions to national, state, and local policy. In 1909, the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children addressed the effects of the institutionalization of dependent and neglected children. The delegates emphasized the importance of family and home life and advocated for better foster care services and the creation of a Children's Bureau within the Interior Department. They also called for regular inspection of foster care homes and education and medical care for foster children. At the 1919 Conference on Standards of Child Welfare, committees were formed to determine minimum standards in the areas of child labor, health care for children and mothers, and aid for special needs children.

Other conferences were held in 1930, 1939, 1950, 1960, and 1970. In 1950, the conference became the White House Conference on Children and Youth and this name was kept through the succeeding conferences. The results from these conferences included a Children's Charter offering 19 proposals on the requirements for a child's education, health, welfare, and protection (1930), the creation of the Emergency, Maternity, and Infant Care Program, the largest medical care program instituted by the United States up to that time (1940), the elevation of the Children's Bureau in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1960), and the creation of a new Subcommittee on Children and Youth, chaired by Senator Walter Mondale (1970). In addition, the Nixon Administration followed-up with a \$300,000 budget request to help carry out recommendations at the state level as a result of the Conference in 1970. In 1980 and 1990, authorizing legislation allowed for conferences but they were never followed by actual White House convenings.



WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Need

Many White House events, meetings, and conferences take place, but few focus on children and families. This White House Conference is a way for citizens nationwide to become engaged in determining and recommending to the national government and to their communities the best ways to improve the well-being of America's children. Imagine a gathering in your congressional district or state that brought together not just state and local policymakers and agencies, but also communities of experts and, perhaps most importantly, families, children, and youth.

State and local events would include experts on health, education, mental health, and other vital community resources. The events would bring together tribal governments and leaders, local advocates and judges, as well as the people most affected—families, children, and youth. They all would participate in a national dialogue, develop recommendations, and commit to improving the lives of our most vulnerable children and families.

K E Y F A C T S

Child Abuse and Neglect

- During FFY 2005, an estimated 899,000 children in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were determined to be victims of abuse or neglect. Sixty-two percent were neglected, 16.6% were physically abused, and 9.3% were sexually abused.
- Of the children substantiated as abused and neglected, only 60.4% received follow-up services.

Adoption

- Of the 504,000 children in foster care in 2005, approximately 122,000 were waiting to be adopted.

Health and Mental Health Care

- In 2004, 935,225 children were enrolled in Medicaid on the basis of being in foster care, representing approximately 3.4% of all children enrolled in Medicaid.



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- Although children in foster care represent a very small percentage of Medicaid enrollees, they account for 25% to 41% of Medicaid mental health expenditures.
- Forty-four percent of former foster youth in one state study reported difficulty accessing health and mental health services.
- More than 40% of children entering the child welfare system do not receive initial screening for mental health or developmental delays.
- Despite the disproportionate need, some estimate only about 25% of children in foster care are receiving mental health services at any given time.

Education

- In a national study of 1,087 foster care alumni, youth who had one fewer placement changes per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.
- In a study of a city public school youth, 15-year-old students in out-of-home care were half as likely as other students to have graduated five years later, with significantly higher percentages of students in care having dropped out (55%) or been incarcerated (10%).
- A national study indicates that only 15% of youth in foster care are likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes, versus 32% of students not in foster care.

Grandparents

- In 2006, approximately 2.4 million grandparents across the country had primary responsibility caring for their grandchildren.

Workforce

- A 2003 General Accounting Office (GAO) report documented that staff shortages, high caseloads, high worker turnover, and low salaries impinge on the delivery of services to achieve safety, permanence, and well-being for children.



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- The 2003 GAO report cited that the average caseload for a child welfare/ foster care caseworker was 24 to 31 and that these high caseloads contributed to high worker turnover rates and to insufficient services being provided to children and families.

Teen Pregnancy

- Females who have been in foster care are 2.5 times more likely than those who have not been in foster care to become pregnant by age 19.
- Females who have been in foster care have higher birth rates than their non-foster care counterparts (31.6% versus 12.2%) and higher subsequent pregnancy rates (46% versus 29%).

Homelessness

- Three in 10 of the nation's homeless adults report foster care history.

Substance Abuse

- In a survey by the National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, 85% of states reported substance abuse was one of the two major problems exhibited by families in which maltreatment was suspected.
- Data indicate that abused and neglected children from substance abusing families are more likely to be placed in foster care and more likely to remain there longer than maltreated children from non-substance abusing families.

Vulnerable Youth

- In 2005, 24,211 children aged-out of out-of-home care, meaning they left foster care only because they reached their 18th birthday.
- A study of young adults who had spent a year or more in foster care between age 14 and 18 found that 25% had experienced post-traumatic stress, compared to 4% of the general adult population.



WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Where You Can Learn More

For more information on the White House Conference on Children and Youth, including a history and a list of supporting organizations, visit <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconf10.htm>.

Sources for statistical information are provided in the online version of this fact sheet. See www.cwla.org/2008legagenda.htm

C W L A C O N T A C T

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KINSHIP CARE & GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE

ACTION

Cosponsor and support the Kinship Caregiver Support Act (S. 661 and H.R. 2188) in the U.S Senate and the U.S House of Representatives. These bills will assist millions of children being raised by relatives and other non-relative legal guardians because their parents cannot care for them.

The Importance of Kinship Care and Guardianship

Kinship care is a situation when an adult family member, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other relative, provides a home for a child who cannot live with his or her parents. Kinship placements for children in child welfare keep families united during a crisis, and provide emotional and cultural benefits to children who cannot return safely to their parents, or for whom adoption is not an option. Given these benefits and many others documented by research, it is important kinship care continue. It is also important to remember that, due to the financial burden, many relatives cannot provide kinship care without relying heavily on assistance.

Subsidized guardianships are relatively new. Massachusetts established the first program in 1983. By 2004, 35 states and the District of Columbia had subsidized guardianship programs. Congress enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997, recognizing a child's placement with a relative or a legal guardian as a permanency option for children in foster care. Currently, the federal government does not make funds available on a continuing basis to support those placements.

States use many approaches to fund kinship arrangements and subsidized guardianship placements. A limited number of states can use Title IV-E Foster Care funds through a waiver from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Other states rely on other federal sources, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). Both TANF and SSBG, however, are used to fund other vital human services and are already under budget pressure.



KINSHIP CARE AND GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE

Legislation Supporting Grandparents, Relatives, and Legal Guardians Caring for Abused and Neglected Children

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act is bipartisan legislation introduced in both the Senate and House. This bill affirms the importance of non-parental caregivers in the lives of abused and neglected children. Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Thad Cochran (R-MS) sponsored the Senate bill (S. 661), and Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and Timothy Johnson (R-IL) sponsored the House bill (H.R. 2188). These bills would help the millions of children being raised by relatives and other caregivers because their parents are not able to care for them. Both bills would allow states to use federal Title IV-E foster care funds for subsidized guardianship assistance payments. These bills would also establish kinship navigator programs to help grandparents and other relatives obtain information and referral services. The legislation also requires states notify relatives within 60 days of a child's removal from custody and entrance into foster care.

KEY FACTS

- According to the 2000 Census, 6 million children live with relatives—4.5 million of whom live with grandparents, a 30% increase between 1990 and 2000. Most of these families are not part of the formal child welfare system.
- Almost 20% of grandparents with responsibility for their grandchildren live in poverty. Overall population statistics in 1997 indicated that 27% of children living in grandparent-maintained homes lived below the poverty level, compared with 19% in households maintained by parents.
- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them; 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. Thirty-four percent of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present; 71% are under the age of 60.

Sources for statistical information are provided in the online version of this fact sheet. See www.cwla.org/2008legagenda.htm

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We are the
Child Welfare League of America.

We will lead the nation in building public will
to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being for children,
youth and families by advocating for the advancement
of public policy, setting and promoting standards
for best practice and delivering superior
membership services.



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