



Proposed Amendments to CCDF to Assist Adults with Children with Mental Disorders

Child Care

April, 2002

- The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) should be amended to encourage expansion of specialized child care arrangements by:
 - setting aside resources for specialized child care programs that accept, on a no-object basis, children with mental and physical disabilities;
 - ensuring that such programs are provided subsidies that reflect the real costs of caring for a child with special needs;
 - increasing reimbursement rates when child care providers accept children with mental and physical disabilities into a generic child care program.
- The CCDF should be amended to encourage states to ensure that child care is available at all hours when parents must work, such as nights and on weekends.
- Increased resources for training child care providers in the special needs of children with mental and physical disabilities should be authorized, so that these children can be served in integrated programs with children without disabilities.
- Child care providers should be encouraged to pay for consultation from mental health professionals so as to improve identification of children with mental and emotional disorders and improve the child care providers' ability to serve such children.

RATIONALE:

Welfare recipients consistently report lack of child care as a major barrier to employment, and losing child care frequently leads to losing a job. For parents of children with serious mental disorders, finding child care is particularly hard. For instance:

- Specialized child care, or even access to regular child care for a child with serious mental disorders, is frequently unavailable, of poor quality and/or prohibitively expensive. 30% of TANF recipients in Utah reported they lost a job or quit because of child care issues.
- Informal child care arrangements are apparently less commonly used for children with serious mental disorders, perhaps because these children present significant challenges.
- Even when parents are able to find child care for their child with a serious mental disorder, they are frequently unable to maintain employment due to child care issues.

Addressing child care needs through appropriate amendments to the CCDF will enhance the effectiveness of TANF.

- Children are a significant proportion of the TANF population. Seventy percent of all welfare recipients are children; over one-third of these are under the age of six.
- A considerable number of children with special needs are in the TANF program. One in five parents who receives TANF benefits has at least one child with a disability and/or chronic medical condition and one in five mothers on TANF in a Michigan county reported that she had at least one child with a health, learning, or emotional problem.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- Day Care Plus is an early intervention program for the most challenged children and families in Cleveland, Ohio. A consultation and outreach program for local child care centers has been established and is aimed at reducing child care staff turnover, lowering the number of children being expelled, and improving the quality of the program. Funding comes from a number of sources including the local child care resource and referral agency, the county mental health board, and the Parent Intervention Center.
- Massachusetts funds child care for parents so they can participate in work, education, training or other job preparation activities.
- Wisconsin created new categories of assistance for childcare. The Caretaker Supplement provides cash benefits for children with a parent or parents on Social Security Income (SSI). The monthly cash grant is \$250 for the first child and \$150 for each additional child. Kinship Care gives cash assistance to children who live with caretakers who are relatives. Each child is allotted \$215 per month.
- Minnesota instituted very progressive child care subsidies in its quest to move people into employment. The state oversees three child care programs. The Minnesota Family Investment Program Child Care serves people who are on assistance. The Transitional Year Child Care provides assistance to families for a year after they are off assistance. The Basic Sliding Fee Child Care serves low-income working families.

FURTHER DETAILS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

To implement these recommendations:

- Change the federal definitions of “appropriate” or “suitable” child care to reflect the need to consider a child’s physical, developmental, emotional, behavioral and cultural needs so that parents are not required to place the child in an arrangement that may be available, but is not adequately equipped or staffed to meet the child’s needs.
- States should encourage child care providers to use TANF funds to pay for consultation from mental health professionals so as to improve identification of children with mental disorders and the child care providers’ ability to serve such children.