



On July 30th, 2024, the White House Convening on Child Welfare Transformation was hosted by the Domestic Policy Council. In her welcoming comments, Jennifer Klein, Assistant to the President and Director of the Gender Policy Council indicated that approximately 100 state leaders were present. The group included 90 state legislators from 41 states. In addition, there were 2 Governors and 1 Lt. Governor.

On the day of the Convening, folks with an interest, could log into the proceedings, but did not have an opportunity to submit questions. The event is now available to view at <http://www.youtube.com/@WhiteHouse>

Reportedly, the focus of the convening was to underscore the accomplishments of the Biden Harris administration related to child welfare – prevention, kinship care, and foster care – and highlight new policy opportunities, innovations and best practices designed to improve the lives of families who may have be at risk of involvement from child welfare systems.

Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent summarized the convening this way: “The White House announced a series of new policies today aimed at preventing family separation and creating opportunities for families and youth during a convening that brought together policymakers from federal, state, local, and tribal governments, along with leaders from philanthropy, child welfare, and family support organizations, and individuals with personal experiences in the child welfare system.

The event focused on encouraging innovation, building partnerships, and sharing best practices.

“One central area of focus is the distinction between poverty and neglect. The Biden-Harris administration demanded that children should not be separated from their families solely due to financial hardship. States like Kentucky, Indiana, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Kansas have already clarified that poverty should not be a reason for child removal. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced new policy guidance encouraging states to update their definitions of maltreatment under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to exclude situations where families are unable to provide adequate housing, childcare, and other material needs due to financial constraints. Additionally, HHS officials asserted that the agency remains committed to developing training guidance for mandated reporters to help them connect economically fragile families to support services and recognize these new definitions of neglect.

“Further, the administration plans to expand how states and tribes can use federal funding for prevention activities, including offering more flexibility to tribal governments to use accepted prevention services in collaboration with state child welfare agencies. Officials said the policies also permit federal administrative funding to help families engage with prevention programs through services such as case management, peer navigation, and transportation. In a fact sheet, the White House said future guidance will detail how to integrate the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to prevent involvement in the child welfare system.

Officials said the administration also prioritizes the needs of children and youth. Recognizing that children with relatives and other kin have better outcomes, the new policies incentivize jurisdictions to ensure children can live with kin when they cannot be with their parents. This includes allowing child welfare agencies to use federal funds for background checks to expedite the licensing process for kin caregivers, creating a new website to spotlight states and tribes that have adopted kinship licensing rules, and publishing a resource guide for grandparents and kin caregivers. Additionally, the administration promised to conduct listening sessions to identify federal flexibilities for states and tribes to adopt kinship-first approaches.

“HHS announced several projects to develop actionable research on the intersection between prevention, family support, and child well-being outcomes. The projects plan to highlight innovative prevention approaches that rely on service integration and agency collaboration to prevent homelessness among youth aging out of foster care and to build family resilience. They will also enable researchers to study linked Medicaid and child welfare data to understand better the health needs of children and parents involved in the child welfare system and examine the characteristics and experiences of families who relinquished or voluntarily placed their children in child welfare custody.

“Officials insisted that the Biden-Harris administration has a strong track record on child welfare. Since taking office, they have accelerated the Title IV-E Prevention Program uptake, approved 38 prevention plans, and expanded evidence-based services. They have also respected tribal sovereignty by increasing the scope of Public Law 102-477 plans and celebrated the Supreme Court’s decision in *Haaland v. Brackeen*, which upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act. Additionally, the administration has doubled funding for home visiting programs, increased support for kinship care, and provided significant housing relief for families. They have also taken steps to protect parents and children with disabilities from discrimination, cut child poverty nearly in half by expanding the Child Tax Credit, and secured almost a 50% increase in childcare funding.

“The President and Vice President believe every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and grow up in a safe and loving home with their families,” administration officials stated: “Over four million families are referred to child protective services each year, and around 200,000 children enter foster care. Child welfare systems are prepared to step in when a child’s safety is at risk, but they are frequently tasked with intervening when families are simply impoverished and could best be helped in the long run by meeting their economic and service needs.”

<https://seattlemedium.com/white-house-unveils-new-policies-to-transform-child-welfare/>

A Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administrative Actions to Keep Children and Families Safely Together and Supported can be found at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/07/30/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-actions-to-keep-children-and-families-safely-together-and-supported/>

Although not mentioned specifically in the fact sheet, in January 2024, the Administration for Children and Family Services released its annual child maltreatment report. The report reflects a reduction in the number of children for whom maltreatment was identified. Of the 3,096,101 children who were the subject of a child protective services response in fiscal year 2022, 558,899 children were determined to be victims of maltreatment, the lowest number of children identified as victims of maltreatment in the last five years.

Conversely, the number of child deaths is increasing. In 2022, an estimated number of 1,990 children died from abuse/neglect. In the preceding year, the death count was at 1,930. In 2022, it was found that Boys have a higher child fatality rate at 3.26 per 100,000 compared to girls at 2.25. African-American child fatalities (6.37 per 100,000) is over three times greater than that of white children (1.99), and nearly four times greater than Hispanic children (1.68).

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2022.pdf>

The theme for the 2024 National CORE Conference is “Thirty Years of Excellence”

Plan to join with us on October 6-9, 2024 at the Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, Hi. Registration is available on the CORE website: www.CORE-DC.Org



Legislative Update

H.R. 3852 - Creating Accountable Respectful Environments (CARE) for Children Act - The Act is still in committee with 17 Cosponsors. There has been no activity since our last report.

H.R. 2955 Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act

Three cosponsors were added in July 2024. There are currently 111 Cosponsors.

S. 1353 Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act

There are currently 23 cosponsors. No new cosponsors have been added since February 2024.

H.R. 755 Protecting Sibling Relationships in Foster Care Act

There are currently 8 cosponsors. There has been no activity since May 2024.

S. 102 Foster Care Stabilization Act of 2023

There is only one cosponsor for the legislation. There has been no activity since January 2023.

H.R. 756 Foster Care Stabilization Act of 2023

There are currently 9 cosponsors. There has been no activity since February 2023.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The CORE Board of Directors is meeting on August 12 & 13th to dedicate time to look carefully at strategic planning. You can expect a report from CORE in the Executive Director’s Report for August 2024