



A View from Washington

Child Welfare Policy Update

Child Welfare Symposium
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30 Years of Progress

- Engagement of youth & attention to youth aging out of foster care
- More focus on workforce
 - 25 years of more targeted funds to schools of social work to education social workers for child welfare careers using IV-B and IV-E funding
- Development and testing of evidence-based interventions
- More data available to inform practice
- Child welfare has not yet been block granted

30 Years of Concerns

- High rates of poverty
- Opioid epidemic today – Crack in the 1980s; Meth in the 2000s
- Lack of attention to prevention
- Gaps in consistency in definitions driving the data – nationally and across states
- Cyclical attention/inattention to supporting and strengthening families; and focus on resilience
- Continued concerns about the workload, quality and competency of staff
- Continued concerns about support for foster families and the quality and competency of foster families
- Inaction to address institutional racism

Challenged Environment in DC

- Leading via tweets
- Concerns about DACA & Immigration
- War on opioids without understanding the absence of systems and structures to deal with them
- Trying any which way to undermine the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- No reauthorization yet for Children's Health Insurance Program and MCHIEHV
- Concerns that deals may contain poison pills
- Will there be a government shutdown come December 8?

New Reports

- Senate Report - results of a 2 year report on private foster care (over 600 pages!)
 - Recommendations - <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Recomendations.pdf>
 - Summary - <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Executive%20Summary.pdf>

- GAO Report – Federal Action Needed to Address Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome –
 - <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-32>

- Not so new Child Fatality Commission report, *Within Our Reach* –
 - https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cecanf_final_report.pdf

Child Welfare Oversight and Accountability Act

- Hatch (R-Utah) and Wyden (D-Oregon)
- S. 1964
- <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/S.%201964%20CW%20Oversight%20and%20Accountability%20Act.pdf>
- Introduced Tuesday, October 17, 2017
- Also released – results of a 2 year report on private foster care (over 600 pages!)
 - Recommendations - <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Recomendations.pdf>
 - Summary - <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Overview of S. 1964

➤ **Creates more accountability for foster care providers:**

- Requires states to maintain a public website containing all agreements and contracts with private foster care providers including whether the providers are for-profit or non-profit.
- Requires states to assess and publicly report to the Department of Health and Human Services individual foster care providers' performance outcomes on measures such as child fatalities, maltreatment rates and average number of placements.

➤ **Enhances federal oversight of state child welfare systems:**

- Establishes a new penalty process for states that are out of compliance with federal child welfare program benchmarks and requires reinvestment of penalty dollars into the areas most in need of improvement.
- Specifies that children in foster care, or formerly in foster care, have an explicit right to seek appropriate relief (i.e., file a civil suit in court) if a state fails to meet the case plan and case review requirements established under federal law.

S. 1964 Overview

➤ **Promotes family placements:**

- Eliminates an outdated funding formula so that states may receive federal support on behalf of all children in eligible kinship guardianship placements, not just those removed from very poor families.
- Provides new flexibility so that relative guardians do not need to go through the same licensing process as non-relative foster families.

➤ **Increases understanding of child fatalities to improve prevention:**

- Requires each state to conduct an annual review of all child maltreatment fatalities and develop related recommendations so that child outcomes and fatalities can be better monitored, studied, and prevented.
- Requires the creation of a unified definition of a “child maltreatment fatality” so that states are reporting consistent and comparable data for the purposes of the annual reviews and recommendations.

S. 1964 Overview

- **Improves caseworker training, support and workload standards:**
 - Simplifies the process for states to claim federal support for new caseworker training costs and expands the types of caseworker training that are eligible for federal support.
 - Requires states to create guidelines for the maximum size of child welfare caseloads and caseworker to supervisor ratios.

Challenges

- Is Hatch harmed by the Opioid epidemic and his part in legislation to weaken enforcement?
- Can anything get done when there is little investment in consensus?
- Is there a companion bill in the House?
- Is child welfare anyone's priority?

A Few Highlights

- Kinship care
 - Expands IV-E eligibility
 - Lightens licensing standards
- Strengthens implementing improvement plans
- Expands funds for training by de-linking
- Calls for workload standards by 2020

All Politics is Local

- Maximizing Social Work's Policy Impact in a Changing Political Landscape –
 - Policy Practice Summit – report; resources; action brief; and videos are coming soon to socialworkpolicy.org.
 - Report also found at <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data>.

All Politics is Local

- Participate in ongoing attention to child welfare in your state
 - Be on the front-lines
 - Provide data and research
 - Engage with elected and appointed officials
 - Make your university a resource
 - Track your students and their career trajectories

Disseminate Your Work

- Call for Proposals is now open for the NASW 2018 Conference in Washington, DC
- <https://www.socialworkers.org/Events/Conferences/2018-NASW-National-Conference>

Thank You

- John Sciamanna, Vice President, CWLA
- Roxana Torrico Meruvia, Senior Practice Associate, NASW

Subscribe

- Sign up for the NASW Advocacy Listserv –
 - <http://cqrcengage.com/socialworkers/app/register?2&m=16505>
- Get alerts and information from the Child Welfare/Mental Health Coalition led by the Children's Defense Fund
 - Contact Stefanie Sprow –
ssprow@childrensdefense.org

Resources

➤ **Senate Bill S. 1964 Summary**

➤ <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/S.%201964%20CW%20Oversight%20and%20Accountability%20Act%20Summary.pdf>

➤ **New Senate Foster Care Report**

➤ <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/An%20Examination%20of%20Foster%20Care%20in%20the%20United%20States%20and%20the%20Use%20of%20Privatization.pdf>

➤ **Maximizing Social Work's Impact in a Changing Political Landscape**

➤ <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data/Social-Work-Policy-Research>

➤ **Child Welfare reports on Supervision, University-agency Partnerships, Use of Title IV-E Training Entitlement and more – www.SocialWorkPolicy.org**