**Number of Children in Foster Care Increases for Third Consecutive Year**

Targeted News Service. (Oct. 29, 2016):

Copyright: COPYRIGHT 2016 Athena Information Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

http://targetednews.com/

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 -- The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children & Families issued the following news release:

Newly released data show the number of children in foster care nationally has increased for the third year in a row.

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data released by the Children's Bureau, within HHS' Administration for Children and Families, show a continued increase in the numbers of children in foster care.

Nearly three quarters (71 percent) of states reported an increase in the numbers of children entering foster care from 2014 to 2015. The five states with the largest increases were Florida, Indiana, Georgia, Arizona, and Minnesota; these five states were also among the states with the largest increases between 2013 and 2014.

Although there is variation in how states report factors that contribute to foster care cases, it appears that parental substance use may have contributed to the growth in the child welfare population. From 2012 to 2015, the percentage of removals where parental substance use was cited as a contributing factor increased 13 percent (from 28.5 percent in 2012 to 32.2 percent in 2015)--the largest percent increase compared to any other circumstance around removal. Though ACF's efforts to improve state reporting have likely contributed to the overall rise in cases, the greater prevalence of parental substance use among cases may also explain some of this increase. In addition, neglect as a circumstance around removal also increased from 56.4 percent to 60.7 percent over the same time period.

Officials at the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) interviewed child welfare directors in states experiencing the highest increase in foster care numbers, and state officials informed ACYF what the data suggest: a rise in parental substance use is likely a major factor driving up the number of children in foster homes. Citing opioid and methamphetamine use as the most debilitating and prevalent substances used, some state officials expressed concern that the problem of substance use is straining their child welfare agencies.

State child welfare directors also emphasized that recent trends in substance abuse are sometimes affecting entire families and neighborhoods, making a child's placement with relatives an unviable option. Increased collaboration across service providers and community leaders will be necessary to address this rising challenge.

One such approach is the Children's Bureau's regional partnership grants program, which specifically focuses on improving the safety, permanency and well-being of children who have been removed from the home as a result of parent or caregiver substance use. The President's FY 2017 budget request includes an expansion of the regional partnership grants from $20 million to $60 million annually to improve the well-being of children and families affected by substance abuse. Families who participated in previous regional partnership grants projects experienced enhanced outcomes, including successful recovery, increased number of children remaining at home, increased reunification rates, decreased recidivism, and dramatic differences in the rate of children who returned to out-of-home care as compared to families who did not participate in the regional partnership grants projects.

Because too many Americans with substance use disorders do not get the treatment and care they need, the President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget request calls for $1.1 billion in new funding to help make sure everyone who seeks treatment can get it.

The Fiscal Year 2015 AFCARS report, including a table showing reasons for removal from home, is now available. Trends since 2006 in foster care and children adopted with child welfare agency involvement are now available.

Quick Facts

\* After declining more than 20 percent between Fiscal Years 2006 and 2012 to a low of 397,000, the number of children in foster care increased to 428,000 in Fiscal Year 2015.

\* This represents a 3.4 percent increase from Fiscal Year 2014, when states reported 414,000 children in foster care.

Quotes

"The national number of children in foster care is still far below where it was ten years ago, but any increase is cause for concern, and we've now seen increases for the past three years."

-- Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

"The increases we are seeing in the foster care population, and the rise of parental substance use as a contributing factor, is not limited to one or two states-- this is a concern across the country." "Investing in prevention, treatment and innovative approaches is critical to keeping children safe and families together and strong. We can, and must, do better."

-- Rafael Lopez, Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families

"ACYF and SAMHSA's partnership through the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare is focused on helping the child welfare and behavioral health systems work together to create coordinated, multi-system approaches to care that can prevent the need for children to enter the foster care system."

-- Kana Enomoto, Principal Deputy, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA)

"With an emphasis on recovery for pregnant and parenting women and their families, we're supporting the development of policies and guidelines to address the full spectrum of intervention opportunities--from pre-pregnancy, prenatal and postpartum treatment, and continuing throughout a child's development."

-- Kana Enomoto, Principal Deputy, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA)

**Source Citation (MLA 8th Edition)**

"Number of Children in Foster Care Increases for Third Consecutive Year." Targeted News Service, 29 Oct. 2016. Infotrac Newsstand, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=STND&sw=w&u=pioneer&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA468353820&it=r. Accessed 2 Nov. 2016.

Gale Document Number: GALE|A468353820

Copyright and Terms of Use:

http://www.gale.com/epcopyright