


GAO
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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-956](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2001, states determined that over 900,000 children were the victims of abuse or neglect. In fiscal year 2003, subparts 1 and 2 of Title IV-B of the Social Security Act provided \$697 million in federal funding for services to help families address problems that lead to child abuse and neglect. This report describes (1) the services provided and populations served under subparts 1 and 2; (2) federal oversight of subpart 1; and (3) existing research on the effectiveness of services unique to subpart 1—that is, when states used subpart 1, but not subpart 2, to fund programs in a particular service category. The report focuses primarily on subpart 1 because little research exists on this subpart, while studies have been conducted on subpart 2.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (1) provide guidance to ensure that HHS regional offices provide appropriate oversight of subpart 1; (2) consider the feasibility of collecting data on states' use of these funds to facilitate program oversight; and (3) use the information gained through enhanced oversight of subpart 1 in designing its proposed child welfare option, which would allow states to use other federal child welfare funds for services allowed under Title IV-B. HHS generally agreed with GAO's findings, but did not fully concur with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-956.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-8403 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

CHILD WELFARE

Enhanced Federal Oversight of Title IV-B Could Provide States Additional Information to Improve Services

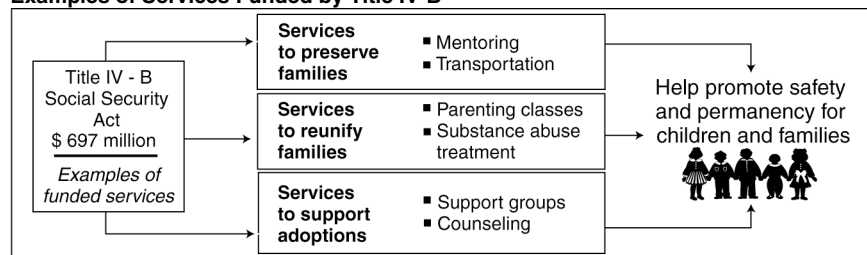
What GAO Found

On a national level, GAO's survey showed that the primary emphases of subparts 1 and 2 vary somewhat, but the range of services offered and the types of families served overlap significantly. No single category of service was funded solely by either subpart. In fiscal year 2002, states used subpart 1 funds most frequently for the salaries of child welfare agency staff, administrative and managerial expenses, child protective services, and foster care maintenance payments. Subpart 2 primarily funded family support, family preservation, family reunification, and adoption support services. Programs funded by the two subparts served similar types of populations—predominantly children at risk of being abused or neglected and their parents, as well as children in foster care and their parents.

HHS's oversight focuses primarily on states' overall child welfare systems and outcomes, but the agency provides relatively little oversight specific to subpart 1. For example, HHS works with states to establish goals to improve the safety and well-being of children and measure progress toward those goals. However, HHS has limited knowledge about how states spend subpart 1 funds. States submit an annual estimate about how they plan to use their subpart 1 funds in the upcoming year, but provide no data on actual expenditures. HHS reports that it reviews these estimates for relatively limited purposes. We also found that HHS regional offices pay little attention to statutory limits on the use of subpart 1 funds for foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments. For example, 9 of the 10 HHS regional offices do not monitor states' compliance with these limits. As a result, HHS approved projected 2002 spending plans for 15 states that reported estimated spending amounts that exceeded the limits by over \$30 million in total.

While GAO's survey data revealed no unique service categories funded by subpart 1 on a national level, 37 states reported unique subpart 1 service categories within their state. Little research is available on the effectiveness of the services in these categories, such as hotlines to report child abuse and emergency shelter services. No states conducted rigorous evaluations of these services, although several states provided some information on outcomes.

Examples of Services Funded by Title IV-B



Source: GAO.