

Administrations for Children, Families, and Aging

Table of Contents

Child Support

Review and Adjustment of Child Support Orders.....	1
Revocation of Federal Licenses.....	1
Undistributed Child Support Collections	1
Direct Interstate Income Withholding	1
States' Use of Work Requirements for Noncustodial Parents.....	2
Investigations Under the Child Support Enforcement Task Force Model	2

Child Welfare

State Investigations of Abuse and Neglect.....	2
Background Checks on Foster Families and Adoptive Parents.....	3
Kinship Placements in One State.....	3
Tracking Children While in Foster Care	3
Foster Care Level-of-Care Classification.....	3
Foster Care Administrative Costs.....	4
Adoption Assistance Subsidy Payments.....	4
Adoption Assistance Cost Allocations	4
Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems	4
Costs for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System	5

Head Start/Child Care

Health and Safety Standards at Child Care Facilities.....	5
Head Start Programs' Use of Quality Improvement Funds.....	5
Head Start Enrollment	5
Head Start Compensation Practices.....	6
Head Start Grantee Oversight.....	6
Head Start Facilities Procurement and Construction Practices	6

Administration on Aging

Impact of Cost Sharing on Older Americans Act Participation by Low-Income Elderly	6
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Child Support

Review and Adjustment of Child Support Orders

At the request of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), we will assess the timeliness of State reviews and modifications of child support orders in response to changes in custodial or noncustodial parents' situations. For example, based on periodic reports on wage data, States should assess whether wage increases or decreases might warrant court order modification. We will determine what data are available to States and whether they take appropriate action. States must have in place and use a process to review and adjust child support orders, including challenges to any changes.

(OAS; W-00-05-23001; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Revocation of Federal Licenses

This review, requested by ACF, will determine whether delinquent noncustodial parents hold pilot, truckers, disc jockey, or other licenses issued by Federal agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and the Federal Communications Commission. Federal law permits States to suspend or revoke State-issued licenses to enforce collection of child support payments. The possibility of revocation has resulted in increased collections. Applying this tool to holders of federally issued licenses could enhance the Federal/State partnership and provide an additional means of increasing child support collections and minimizing the need for public assistance to some families. We will determine the feasibility of implementing such a requirement and the amount of child support payments that could potentially be collected, based on the noncustodial parents' ability to pay.

(OAS; W-00-05-23002; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Undistributed Child Support Collections

This review will examine undistributed child support collections and determine whether the Federal Government received its share of any program income earned in interest-bearing accounts or for undistributed balances written off by States. Historically, States have had difficulty in distributing sizeable amounts of support payments because certain identifiers, such as custodial parents' addresses, were not current or the case numbers were omitted from collection receipts.

(OAS; W-00-03-23080; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Direct Interstate Income Withholding

We will evaluate the extent to which States use direct income withholding to increase interstate child support collections. Direct interstate income withholding, required since 1998, is intended to increase interstate collections by allowing State child support enforcement agencies to order employers to withhold wages of noncustodial parents located in other States. An

estimated 25 percent of custodial and noncustodial parents live in different States. This inspection will complement and expand upon work being done by the Office of Child Support Enforcement on this issue.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

States' Use of Work Requirements for Noncustodial Parents

This study will evaluate how effectively child support agencies and courts use work requirements when dealing with noncustodial parents and the impact of these requirements on child support collections. Child support agencies often refer low-income, underemployed, or unemployed noncustodial parents to job service programs to help them meet their child support responsibilities. The agencies are eligible for Federal funds for referral, followup, and tracking services offered to noncustodial parents who have been ordered by the courts or required administratively by the child support agency to participate in an employment service program.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Investigations Under the Child Support Enforcement Task Force Model

In 1998, the Office of Investigation (OI) and the Office of Child Support Enforcement developed a task force model to create a coordinated effort to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal nonsupport cases. This model began as a pilot program in three States. By 2002, the program now known as Project Save Our Children had grown to 10 task forces covering all 50 States and the District of Columbia. These task forces join OI, the U.S. Marshals, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, State and local law enforcement, local prosecutors, State child support agencies, and other interested parties in working to enforce Federal and State criminal child support statutes. For FY 2005, we plan to continue our efforts in this area, particularly in States that have not pursued prosecutions of individuals who failed to meet their child support obligations.

Child Welfare

State Investigations of Abuse and Neglect

We will determine how States investigate allegations of abuse and neglect of Title IV-E foster care children and whether they take appropriate action to prevent further harm. Our primary focus will be on the timeliness and thoroughness of the investigation, including such factors as the previous history of the alleged abuser, whether a background check was performed on members of the foster care household, and how well caseworkers monitored the child/family. We will be looking for root causes that have contributed to any identified weaknesses.

(OAS; W-00-05-24004; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Background Checks on Foster Families and Adoptive Parents

This review will examine State background checks on foster families and potential adoptive parents. We will determine compliance with Federal and State laws on background checks and the reliability of methods used to determine an individual's qualifications. States have flexibility in designing their own requirements. In one State, background checks did not routinely include records on Federal crimes or crimes in other States, including child abuse. Also, according to two foster care providers, State record checks on some potential employees and foster families returned negative, but further checking found Federal or out-of-State crimes and child abuse which would disqualify these individuals.

(OAS; W-00-05-24001; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Kinship Placements in One State

This review will determine (1) whether a State used different standards for approving placements with relatives versus nonrelatives and (2) whether it used Federal funds for approving foster homes that did not meet the Federal standards. ACF requested an audit of the process the State used for approving placement in homes where a relative serves as the foster parent. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 requires that the same standards be used in the approval process for placement in foster homes of relatives and licensed foster homes of nonrelatives.

(OAS; W-00-04-24005; A-09-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Tracking Children While in Foster Care

We will determine whether States have met tracking and placement requirements to ensure the safety of children in foster care. In 2004, it is estimated that 233,000 children will be in foster care each month; ACF expects to spend an estimated \$4.9 billion on the program. The Social Security Act requires States to develop and implement standards to ensure that foster care children receive quality services that protect their safety and health. We will evaluate the ability of States to track children and provide insight into any underlying problems that States have encountered with Federal and State tracking requirements.

(OEI; 04-03-00350; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Foster Care Level-of-Care Classification

This review will determine whether the level-of-care needs of foster care children are periodically reassessed and appropriate reclassifications made and whether children are receiving the required services. If the level-of-care needs are not periodically reassessed, States may be providing and paying for more or less than a child requires, resulting in an improper payment. Also, children not receiving the needed services may not be making the progress expected. Prior reviews have indicated that foster children who are in prolonged placement

through child placement agencies are not reclassified in accordance with their level-of-care needs.

(OAS; W-00-05-24006; A-00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Foster Care Administrative Costs

We will determine whether claims for training and other administrative costs relating to the foster care program are allowable, reasonable, and supported in accordance with laws and regulations. Training and other administrative costs have risen dramatically in relation to maintenance payments in recent years. Reviews in some States found that unallowable costs were claimed, costs were improperly allocated, and/or costs were otherwise unsupported.

(OAS; W-00-03-20008; various reviews; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Adoption Assistance Subsidy Payments

This review will determine whether claims for Federal reimbursement of adoption subsidies complied with eligibility requirements. A Federal subsidy is provided to families to ensure that they have the necessary services and financial resources to meet the special needs of some adopted children. A preliminary sample of adoption subsidies in one State identified payments to families that did not meet eligibility requirements.

(OAS; W-00-04-24003; A-01-04-02503; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Adoption Assistance Cost Allocations

This review will determine the appropriateness of the adoption assistance allocation rates that States use to calculate training and maintenance payments claimed for Federal reimbursement. ACF reviews in FY 2003 showed that some States' foster care allocations were overstated. Because adoption assistance criteria are more complex than foster care criteria, we believe the adoption assistance allocations could also be overstated. Our preliminary information indicates that certain States did not adjust their adoption assistance allocations when ACF reduced their foster care rates.

(OAS; W-00-03-24003; A-01-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems

This study will assess the usefulness of Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 provided Federal funds at an enhanced 75-percent matching rate for States to design, develop, and install the systems. Once the systems are implemented, the Federal matching rate drops to 50 percent to cover operating costs. We will evaluate the outcome of Federal funding for the development and implementation of statewide systems.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Costs for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System

At ACF's request, we will examine one State's escalating costs for operating its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. The review will determine whether (1) prior Federal approval was obtained for acquisition of products and services and (2) costs claimed were allowable and allocable to the system. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 provided Federal funds at a 50-percent matching rate to operate statewide systems. The systems are intended to improve information exchange among child welfare staff and other social services programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Support Enforcement, and Medicaid.

(OAS; W-00-04-24050; A-09-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress)

Head Start/Child Care

Health and Safety Standards at Child Care Facilities

This review will determine compliance with health and safety standards at selected child care and Head Start facilities. A 1994 audit identified numerous instances in which child care facilities did not comply with the States' health and safety standards. It also showed the need for greater Federal oversight to improve the health and safety conditions of the Nation's child care programs.

(OAS; W-00-05-25005; A-04-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Head Start Programs' Use of Quality Improvement Funds

We will evaluate the use of quality improvement funds for Head Start programs. The amended Head Start Act required that at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers in center-based programs nationwide have an associate, a baccalaureate, or an advanced degree in early childhood education or a related field, and experience teaching preschool children. A key priority, linked to improving staff qualifications and retaining experienced staff, is to enhance staff salaries. To assist Head Start programs, the Congress increased the authorization for quality improvement funds. We will determine whether Head Start grantees have complied with the Head Start Act in their use of quality improvement funds.

(OEI; 00-00-00000; expected issue date: FY 2005; new start)

Head Start Enrollment

We will examine the extent to which persistent underenrollment in Head Start programs has been identified and determine whether timely corrective action has been taken to adjust for such underenrollment. Our previous reviews and discussions with program officials indicated that some grantees did not maintain their funded enrollment levels for extended periods. More timely action may be needed to adjust funding levels consistent with the actual number of

children being served or to better recruit eligible children to fill empty slots.
(OAS; W-00-05-25002; A-05-00-00000; *expected issue date: FY 2005; new start*)

Head Start Compensation Practices

At ACF's request, we will examine the compensation practices of Head Start grantees. For key management officials and other selected grantee staff, we will determine (1) the composition of compensation packages, (2) the funding sources, (3) the approval process for compensation packages, and (4) the basis of any wage comparability study performed to justify the compensation. Several news articles and congressional inquiries have raised concern about apparently excessive executive compensation at some Head Start agencies. In addition, we will review the ACF Regional Offices' oversight of grantee compensation.

(OAS; W-00-04-25004; A-00-00-00000; *expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress*)

Head Start Grantee Oversight

This review will examine the effectiveness of Head Start program oversight at the Federal and grantee levels and determine actions needed to avoid recurring audit findings. In past years, most grantees terminated from the program were removed after long periods of noncompliance with fiscal and program requirements.

(OAS; W-00-05-25001; A-02-05-00000; *expected issue date: FY 2005; new start*)

Head Start Facilities Procurement and Construction Practices

Our review will determine whether Head Start agencies are complying with Federal requirements when purchasing facilities in which to operate. In addition, we will ensure that Federal interest in these facilities has been legally protected. During a prior audit, there were some concerns about the reasonableness of facility purchases, whether competitive bidding was used, and whether the Federal interest in these facilities was documented and protected.

(OAS; W-00-05-25006; A-06-00-00000; *expected issue date: FY 2005; new start*)

Administration on Aging

Impact of Cost Sharing on Older Americans Act Participation by Low-Income Elderly

At the request of the Administration on Aging, we will determine the impact of cost sharing on the participation of the low-income elderly in services authorized by Title III of the Older Americans Act. This review will follow up on our 1996 study, which was conducted in anticipation of legislation allowing States to charge older citizens for some Title III services. Such legislation was enacted in 2000. Our earlier study found that some States were better prepared to implement the cost sharing provisions of Title III.

(OEI; 02-04-00290; *expected issue date: FY 2005; work in progress*)