

Community Action in A Home for Every Child



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The Community Action network is well poised to support recent efforts by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to address shortages in available foster care homes around the country. ACF calls its initiative “A Home for Every Child,” and while details on specific plans are pending, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) can begin exploring opportunities to collaborate and potentially expand existing efforts that reinforce these priorities. Understanding what ACF aims to achieve within a broader federal focus on foster care will help CAAs navigate their role as key players in this new initiative. This article explores how CAA programs can, and already do, complement these federal efforts by providing services focused on housing, energy assistance, early childhood education, childcare, jobs training, and more.

Federal Foster Care Focus

In November 2025, ACF announced its “A Home for Every Child” initiative to achieve a foster home-to-child ratio of 1:1 in every state.¹ To accomplish this goal, ACF plans to leverage \$11.4 billion in foster care and child welfare funding to increase the number of foster homes available by recruiting new foster caregivers and retaining existing ones, prioritizing kin as caregiver options, and bolstering prevention efforts to keep more families intact and reduce the number of children entering foster care.

ACF has yet to announce specifics on how it will implement “A Home for Every Child,” but it has taken a first step at the state level and proposed to integrate goals from the initiative into its reviews and program improvement plans (PIPs) with state welfare systems. In December 2025, ACF issued [Child and Family Services Review \(CFSR\) Technical Bulletin #14](#), which provides state welfare agencies the option to develop a pilot PIP based on “A Home for Every Child” priorities as part of their federal review process. Under these PIPs, states can focus on achieving a foster home-to-child ratio of 1:1 and they have the flexibility to innovate measures to build foster care capacity and improve systems and outcomes.

“A Home for Every Child” is part of a larger federal effort focused on improving foster care and the circumstances that could lead to it. On November 13, 2025, the president issued Executive Order 14359, [Fostering the Future for American Children and Families](#), announcing several new administrative priorities around the foster care system. The EO directed HHS to modernize the child welfare system, including state child welfare systems, by improving child welfare data collection processes, promoting use of AI-informed predictive analysis and tools to recruit and retain caregivers, and publishing an annual scorecard to measure state foster care outcomes and metrics. It also instructed HHS to increase partnerships with faith-based organizations.

The EO further directed HHS, relevant federal agencies, and the First Lady to collaborate and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with nonprofit organizations, to increase educational and employment opportunities for individuals in foster care. It also directed them to allow existing education and training vouchers to be used more flexibly for those transitioning out of foster care, help states expand access to certain educational scholarship programs to children in foster care, and work to launch an online platform to assist in these efforts.



A Fostering the Future [website](#) is now available. While more details are to come, the site includes a pledge for potential partners to commit to supporting Fostering the Future efforts.

Complementary CAA Initiatives

As federal agencies, including ACF, develop and detail their plans for foster care, CAAs' ongoing work in many support areas and their community connections make them natural contributors to efforts that help stabilize low-income families and prevent circumstances that may result in a child's placement in foster care.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding received by each CAA is focused on reducing poverty, revitalizing low-income communities, and empowering low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient. CAAs have discretion to use CSBG funding in different ways, provided those uses further the purposes of the federal CSBG Act, assist income-eligible individuals and families, and meet needs identified in a CAA's community needs assessment.² The needs assessment conducted by each CAA informs the community action plan it submits to the state and guides how the CAA spends its CSBG funding.³ CAAs may identify needs that align with the new federal foster care initiatives, directly or indirectly, and use CSBG funding for those efforts. This may include providing new standalone services to individuals and families, as well as enhancing, coordinating, and strengthening existing programs and services.⁴ For example, CAAs could use CSBG to coordinate wraparound services for clients that more comprehensively support families or to fund better organizational infrastructure to connect clients to multiple CAA programs and supports that provide greater stability to families.

The federal CSBG Act explicitly contemplates uses of CSBG in ways that strengthen families and ultimately prevent children from entering foster care. Under the federal CSBG Act, as part of developing the state plan, CAAs provide the state with information about how they will deliver services to communities, create linkages to fill service gaps, provide referrals and case management to clients, and support innovative efforts related to the purposes of CSBG.⁵ The CSBG Act adds that these innovative efforts may include fatherhood initiatives and other initiatives "with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting."⁶ CAAs also coordinate with the state on the provision of employment and training activities by working with entities providing these activities through statewide and local workforce development systems under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).⁷

Under the federal CSBG Act, CAAs also have a required role to play related to clients and child support. CAAs must inform custodial parents in single-parent families that participate in CSBG-funded programs, activities, or services about the availability of child support services, and refer eligible parents to the child support offices of state and local governments.⁸ Through these types of efforts, CAAs already have existing relationships with state agencies engaged in child welfare and services. For additional information on these CSBG Act requirements, see [CAPLAW's Q&A on Child Support Referral](#).

CAAs provide programs and services with other sources of funding that mitigate and often alleviate conditions that cause children to enter foster care. One component of "A Home for Every Child" is to decrease the number of children who require foster care. Many programs run by CAAs align with this goal because they help individuals and families stay in healthy homes, obtain education and job training to support their families, access quality childcare so they can work, and more. These programs include:



- Housing programs that help families access safe, affordable housing (e.g., Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 and Public Housing)
- Weatherization and energy assistance programs that help families afford essential costs necessary for efficient, safe, and healthy housing (e.g., Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program)
- Job training programs that prepare individuals for employment and connect them to potential employers (e.g., Job Corps and WIOA workforce programs; any CAA that carries out employment and training activities using CSBG funds is a required WIOA partner)⁹
- Early childhood education and childcare programs that improve educational outcomes and provide essential childcare for working families (e.g., Head Start, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) programs)

CAPLAW will continue to monitor initiatives related to “A Home for Every Child” and Fostering the Future and share updates as they become available.

END NOTES

¹ Press Release: ACF Unveils New Initiative to Strengthen American Families – A Home for Every Child

² 42 U.S.C. § 9901; 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(11)

³ 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(11)

⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(1)(C)

⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(3)

⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(3)(D)

⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 9908(b)(5)

⁸ 42 U.S.C. § 9919(b)

⁹ 29 U.S.C. § 3151(b)(1)(B)(ix)

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