**ACF awards $28 million to improve well-being for children in child welfare**

HHS’ Administration for Children and Families announced today the award of $28 million in grants to improve the social and emotional well-being of children involved with the child welfare system. This funding reflects the commitment of the Administration for Children and Families to facilitate healing and recovery for children who have experienced maltreatment, exposure to violence or trauma.

“We need to invest in strategies that we know help children heal,” said George Sheldon, acting assistant secretary for children and families. “These grants support strategies that give our most vulnerable children the best possible chance of future success.”

The grants are designed to support effective interventions to build skills that contribute to the healthy, positive, and productive functioning of children and youth into adulthood.

The investment includes five efforts:

* ***Improving Service Delivery to Youth in the Child Welfare System*** - $1.4 million in funding will go to four organizations that will help youth at risk of aging out of foster care. The grants will be used to help youth develop skills to strengthen relationships with family members and other adults in their lives, and productively manage relationship difficulties so that they can succeed at home, in school, at work and in the community.
* ***Integrating Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Focused Practice in Child Protective Service Delivery*** - $3.2 million in funding will go to five organizations to support the implementation and evaluation of trauma-focused treatment models in child welfare systems. An important component of promoting social and emotional well-being includes understanding and addressing the impact of trauma on children.These grantsare to develop trauma-informed systems that promote safety, permanency and well-being.
* ***Child Welfare – Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children with Child Welfare Involvement & Child Welfare – Education System Collaborations to Increase Educational Stability*** *-* $4.3 million in funding will go to 18 organizations to build state or local infrastructure to support collaborative initiatives between child welfare and education systems. Eight of these will focus on enrollment of foster infants and young children into comprehensive, high-quality early care and education programs; and 10 will focus on improving educational stability and permanency outcomes for youth between the ages of 10 to 17 years old in the child welfare system.
* ***Family Connection Grants: Using Family Group Decision-making to Build Protective Factors for Children and Families*** - $3.4 million in funding will go to seven organizations to use family group decision making to help families meet their children's needs by strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors for child maltreatment. Research has shown that the presence of specific factors (such as social connections, concrete support in times of need, involvement in after-school activities), and characteristics (such as self-esteem, resilience and relationship skills) can moderate the impacts of negative experiences.
* ***Permanency Innovations Initiative Year 2*** - An additional $15.3 million will go to the first year of implementation for six organizations’ efforts to reduce long-term foster care for children who stay in foster care the longest. Last year ACF funded $9.5 million in planning grants, and this year’s funding builds on those efforts. The goal is to prepare children for permanency and increase the likelihood of permanency.

Children and youth grow physically and psychosocially along a predictable course, encountering normal challenges and establishing competencies as they pass from one developmental stage to another.  However, child abuse and neglect have a marked effect on normal development, delaying the growth of certain capacities, and, in many cases, accelerating others.  The intervention strategies supported by these grants take these developmental impacts into consideration, and help ensure that children and youth develop along a healthy trajectory. These interventions also support families as they work to provide safe and healthy environments for their children.

“These investments begin to provide a path for child welfare to follow to become more successful at targeting the specific needs of some of the most vulnerable children and families in this country,” said Bryan Samuels, commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families at HHS.

For more information about the grantees visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/discretionary/2011.htm>