President’s Column

A Word from the Section’s New President

Anthony P. Mannarino, Ph.D.
Allegheny General Hospital
Pittsburgh, PA.

As someone who has dedicated almost his entire professional career to traumatic stress during childhood and specifically, child maltreatment, I am deeply honored to be the President of the Section on Child Maltreatment. Although our Section is relatively small, the importance of our work is substantial and we make a significant contribution to the American Psychological Association’s commitment to children and families. I would like to start my first column by thanking Sharon Portwood who just finished her term as President of the Section and who now serves on the Executive Committee as Past President. Sharon did an outstanding job as President and I have greatly admired her dedication in executing the responsibilities of the position.

I would like to express my appreciation as well to our other outgoing officers; namely, Jodi Quas, Treasurer, and Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, Member-at-Large, both of whom have worked tirelessly on behalf of the Section and who have kept it running smoothly. I would also like to congratulate our newly elected officers. Cindy Miller-Perrin is President-Elect and has previously done a terrific job for the Section as Treasurer and Membership Chair. Debra Hecht is our new Treasurer and and Preston Britner has been elected as a Member-at-Large. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank Susan Hall for her wonderful work as APA Program Chair and welcome Amy Shadoin into this position as well as express appreciation to Desi Vasquez for his contributions as Graduate Student Representative and welcome Samantha Miller who will be taking over for Desi. If I have forgotten anyone, please forgive me. I’d like to believe that these old neurons still work beautifully but sometimes they let me down.

One of the important priorities that I would like to pursue as President of the Section is to increase our membership. Although I don’t believe that we need to panic just yet, our membership numbers have decreased over the past several years. In 2003, our membership total was 329. This number has decreased steadily such that by the end of calendar year 2006, the Section had 252 members. This represents a 23% reduction. So, we have a big job ahead. Please inform your colleagues about the important work that our Section does and invite them to join. Also, our Section has an Affiliate Membership category for psychologists who are not members of APA or for professionals from other disciplines. They are welcome to join as well. Finally, for those of you who have contact with graduate students, interns, or...
postdoctoral students, they are our future. Please let them know that we would value their participation in our Section.

As a clinician and clinical researcher for the past 30 years, I have an enduring interest in the clinical services that are provided to maltreated children and their families. Although preventing child maltreatment is a critical long-term goal, providing high quality services and better access to these services for victimized children and their families is an important challenge that professionals face every day. In this regard, I would like to see the Section collaborate more with other organizations who have a major focus on clinical services for this population. These include the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).

During my term as the Section’s President, I will try to forge closer ties with APSAC and the NCTSN as I am confident that the mutual best interests of all three of these organizations as well as those of maltreated children and their families will be enhanced in the process.

In closing, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to be the President of the Section. I sincerely hope that I can serve our membership in a manner that sustains the respect and esteem for the Section that has been generated by our previous leadership.

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The Section on Child Maltreatment’s 2007 Dissertation Award

The Section on Child Maltreatment (Section 1 of Division 37, APA) announces its eighth annual dissertation award. A $400 prize will be awarded to one successful graduate student applicant to assist with expenses in conducting dissertation research on the topic of child maltreatment. Applicants are requested to submit four (4) copies of the following:

1) A letter of interest, indicating how the applicant would use the award funds toward the completion of the dissertation research;
2) A 100 word abstract; and
3) A five-page proposal summarizing the research to be conducted.

Electronic submissions will also be accepted.

Please submit applications by April 15 to:

Sharon G. Portwood, J.D., Ph.D.
Executive Director, Institute for Social Capital
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
9201 University City Blvd.
College of Health & Human Services, Suite 335
Charlotte, NC 28223
sgportwo@uncc.edu

Applicants will be notified of the decision in June. The award will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco, CA, August 17-20, 2007.
Case Notes

Child Protective Services: The High Cost of Shifting Definitions

Michelle McCauley, Ph.D. & Kevin Kite, J.D.
Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT

Recent events underscore a seeming contradiction in the functioning of child protective service agencies in these United States. On the one hand, interested litigants have brought lawsuits alleging that state child protective services (CPS) lack the resources to adequately protect the children they are charged to protect. On the other hand, CPS agencies seem to be expanding actively the scope of their domain and the number of children that fall within their jurisdiction. This apparent contradiction underscores, in our view, a failure on the part of social services workers, practitioners, attorneys, researchers, and the general public to come to terms with an adequate definition of abuse itself.

A number of litigants have brought federal class actions alleging States’ failures to protect the child wards under their care. Advocacy groups such as Nebraska Appleseed and Children’s Rights have supported or spearheaded efforts to bring such class action lawsuits in Nebraska, Michigan, and Mississippi. See Carson P. v. Nebraska, Dwayne B. v. Granholm [Case: 2:06-CV-13548 U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan]; Mississippi: Olivia Y. v. Barbour[No. 3:04CV251LN U.S. District Court, Southern District of Mississippi)]. Although these cases differ in their specific allegations, they share a central concern that states do not allot enough resources to provide minimum acceptable services to their wards. These cases allege that the child wards of these States, presumably due to a lack of state resources, experience, among other things, lack of adequate foster homes, unacceptable oversight of foster homes, too few caseworkers, and failure to receive basic medical and mental health services. If these allegations are true, it is ironic that some of these children have been removed by the state from the custody of parents who, presumably, have failed to provide such minimal care themselves.

Other cases and events suggest that some CPS agencies are broadening their definitions of abuse, perhaps beyond the scope outlined by state legislatures. For example, in Lyons v. Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, No. 3-06-0027, the state DCFS concluded that a substitute teacher had abused a student by removing the student from the classroom and restraining the student, after the student exhibited aggressive and violent behavior that threatened to harm both teacher and student. The basis for this determination was a bruise on the child’s forehead, allegedly created by the incident. The agency’s abuse determination stood (through an administrative review) until the trial court held that the teacher’s behavior clearly did not fall within the State’s legal definition of abuse. Such incidents are of concern because it falls on CPS, as the “experts” in the field, to apply the law as defined by the legislature. When agencies interpret jurisdictional definitions beyond their legal bounds, the result is state resources fruitlessly expended.

Similarly, some commentators have expressed concern that additional children are being funneled into state custody and the care of CPS agencies because their parents cannot afford to provide needed mental health care and, at the urging of CPS, the parents are abdicating their parental rights to allow their children to receive such care while in state custody (Elizabeth A. Varney, Note: Trading Custody for Care: Why Parents Are Forced to Choose Between the Two and Why the Government Must Support the Keeping Families Together Act, New England School of Law New England Law Review, Spring, 2005. 39 New Eng. L. Rev. 755). In such cases, children with a supportive family may be placed in an already overburdened foster care system, further reducing the resources available to other, more endangered, children.

These events—agency determinations of abuse that fall outside legal definitions and efforts to bring children into CPS systems to provide the children with resources that parents cannot afford—share a common element: they result in limited resources being rerouted from those children most in need.

If true, fault does not lie solely with CPS. Mandated reporters and social workers alike seem to be uncertain about the outer boundaries of abusive behavior. We have allowed confusion and good intentions to cloud decisions and waste resources. Fault also lies with researchers and practitioners, who have not been proactive enough in clearly defining the boundaries of abusive behavior and highlighting the diversity of acceptable behavior with children. We must work towards a clearer consensus among, not only professionals, but also parents, legislators, and the general public about the definitions and boundaries of abuse. Finally, we need to commit ourselves to ensure that those children for whom the state is guardian receive, at the minimum, the basic level of care we would expect from a parent.
Best Practices

New Preschool CBT Treatment for PTSD

Ruth A. Arnberger, MSW
Young Child Trauma Project, Tulane Medical Center

Michael S. Scheeringa, MD, MPH
Tulane University School of Medicine

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is an effective treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but there has been limited application to young children. Two studies have demonstrated the efficacy of CBT for preschool children (Cohen & Mannarino, 1996; Deblinger, Stauffer, & Steer, 2001), but these were limited to sexual abuse trauma. The need for feasible and effective treatments for all types of traumas is accentuated by recent evidence suggesting that preschool PTSD is unremitting and resistant to standard community treatment (Scheeringa, Zeanah, Myers, & Putnam, 2005).

In an effort to fill this need, a treatment manual is currently being tested for effectiveness and feasibility with three through six year old children in a trial funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. This treatment manual, Preschool PTSD Treatment (PPT), is a theory driven, manualized protocol based on cognitive-behavioral treatment and empirically-derived parent-child relationship dynamics (Scheeringa, Amaya-Jackson, & Cohen, 2002). This 12-session preschool CBT manual begins with teaching the children and parents about PTSD with developmentally-appropriate cartoon drawings and examples (Session 1). Session 2 focuses on the children’s oppositional and defiant behaviors, which are commonly seen in preschool children following trauma. In Session 3, the children learn to self-identify and rate feelings. In Session 4, the children learn several relaxation techniques and how to measure and express gradations of feelings on a stress thermometer. Session 5 is the “tell the story” session in which the children are asked to recount in full detail the traumatic experiences and create a stimulus hierarchy. Sessions 6-10 prescribe in-office exposure and out-of-office homework exposures, gradually proceeding from “least scary” to “most scary” exposures, according to the children’s stimulus hierarchy. Session 11 focuses on future relapse prevention and Session 12 is a review and graduation.

A key difference from protocols for older children is the involvement of the caregiver in each session. In Sessions 1, 2, and 12, the parent and child work together with the therapist for the entire session. For all other sessions, the dyads meet briefly together with the therapist to discuss homework and then each meet separately with the therapist. During the children’s individual time with the therapist the parents observe from a TV monitor in an adjacent room.

This degree of involvement by the parents is crucial for several reasons. The children’s experiences are validated in the parents’ presence and the parents can support the children’s efforts in each session. The parents are available to contribute unique information to the therapist and often help the therapist understand the children’s body language and verbalizations. Caregivers learn about the children’s (and their own) triggers for anxiety and thus become more attuned to the children’s (and their own) inner life. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the parents and children become partners in working to “make the PTSD go away” through the completion of homework assignments.

Although PPT is still being evaluated for effectiveness and feasibility, a recent case study of PPT used with two preschoolers has determined that CBT techniques can be applied in a meaningful and effective fashion for different types of life-threatening experiences (Scheeringa, Salloum, Arnberger, Weems, Amaya-Jackson, & Cohen, in press). Through further evaluation, we can expect that this treatment may also prove to be effective in cases of child maltreatment.

References:


Member’s Publications


This book expands on Dr. Edward Zigler’s work in integrating the fields of child development and social policy, while using scientific knowledge for action as the model. Contributors discuss these key questions: What are the most powerful research insights of the last 30 years that promote effective action for children and families? What are the most powerful constraints or limits of our knowledge base to promote effective action for children and families? What are the primary components of short-term research agenda to make the most powerful difference for children and families? This edited volume focuses on both the influence of social policy on children’s development and the unique perspective, insight, and skills that developmentalists bring to this policy and its formation. Programs to ensure good beginnings for all children are discussed, while the needs of those who are most vulnerable are also addressed.


A large body of child protection literature focuses on termination of parental rights, family reunification, and children’s re-entry into care as outcomes of children in foster care. Studies have investigated child, placement, family, and parent variables as predictors of case outcome. One important group of variables, however, remains largely unstudied: these are factors related to parents’ service experience. Parents’ service experience includes parents’ perceptions of and involvement in the various services in which they must participate in order to recover their children from foster care (e.g., mandated treatment programs such as substance abuse rehabilitation, parenting skills classes, etc.). The parental perspective on the foster care process is a critical element in the life of a child protection case, and its influence on case outcome must be explored. A brief review of the current literature on case outcome predictors is provided and parents’ service experience is highlighted as an area in need of investigation. Suggestions for the measurement of parents’ service experience are also offered.


This recent article discusses ethical issues in forensic evaluations and delivery of services in forensic mental health practice. It includes discussion of various issues that forensic mental health practitioners face including informed consent and disclosure. Confidentiality, legal privilege, duty to protect third parties and the dual roles of forensic mental health practitioners.


The text uses historical and systems perspectives to examine the interaction between the social science community and the law. Each chapter contains a historical or a philosophical introduction to a problem, followed by discussion of the major legal issues and reviews of a wide range of research, including experimental literature. In addition to addressing many topics typically covered in psychology and law texts, Levine emphasizes social problems, dealing with issues such as abortion, intimate partner violence, divorce and custody, child protection, and more.


Recent estimates of Shaken Baby Syndrome awareness suggest that approximately half of all American adults have not heard of the often devastating risks of shaking an infant. Using a sample of 288 undergraduate students, we developed a measure of attitudes around infant care practices. A total of 264 community participants completed a revised survey. Between-group comparisons, exploratory factor analyses, and internal consistency tests were employed to determine the directionality and reliability of any scale structure present in the data. A five factor structure fits the data reliably, and each of these factors seems to represent a unique dimension. Implications for using this measure clinically and preventatively are discussed.

For too many traumatized children and their families, chronic stressors such as poverty, substance abuse, and family or community violence—coupled with an overburdened care system—pose seemingly insurmountable barriers to treatment. This empowering book provides a user-friendly blueprint for making the most of limited resources to help those considered the "toughest cases." Evidence-based strategies are presented for effectively integrating individualized treatment with services at the home, school, and community levels. Written in an accessible, modular format with reproducible forms and step-by-step guidelines for assessment and intervention, the approach is grounded in the latest knowledge about child traumatic stress. It has been recognized as a treatment of choice by state mental health agencies nationwide.

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**Student Column**

**Samantha Miller**

*John Jay College of Criminal Justice*

I hope you all had happy holidays. My name is Samantha Miller. I am the student representative for Division 37, Section on Maltreatment. Before I explain what my function is and how I can help you, let me tell you a little about my background and academic interests. Hopefully, over the course of the year, I will come to learn about many of you and your work, as well.

I am in my second year of PhD studies at the Graduate Center of City University of New York in Clinical Forensic Psychology. After receiving my undergraduate and master's degrees in psychology from Stanford University in 2001 and 2002, I traded in the sunshine for rain and obtained a master's degree in criminology at the University of Oxford in England. Currently through my clinical externships, I work as a therapist at the Child Advocacy Center of Manhattan and as an intake evaluator for juvenile felony offenders in an alternative sentencing program. I administer diagnostic interviews; participate in trauma interventions; provide individual and family counseling; and teach social and life skills. Many of my patients and their families are involved in the court and probation systems, including Department of Youth Services and Department of Social Services. My research interests include impact of child abuse and neglect, child maltreatment prevention, the child welfare system, the impact of community and agency intervention, child-caregiver attachment relationships, and social policy and law affecting children and families. My advisers are Angela Crossman, Ph.D., and Cathy Widom, Ph.D., at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

As for what I envision the student representative to do: I hope to facilitate a forum in which students and professionals can connect with each other. The idea is that conversations with peers and colleagues can assist in the process of finding, airing, and articulating one's clinical or research expertise. If you are a professional and are interested in mentoring students, or have some activities or opportunities to share, do not hesitate to contact me and let me know. Likewise, I encourage students to email me with thoughts or questions about topics that are of specific interest to you.

I look forward to meeting you all in person at conferences and to learning from those who have already been involved with the Section. Whether you are a new member or a veteran, I encourage you to contact me at smiller@jjay.cuny.edu.
Public Policy

Mid-Term Elections: Impact on Child Protection Issues

Thomas L. Birch, J.D.
National Child Abuse Coalition

The November 7 elections brought significant changes in Congress as the House and Senate shift to majorities for the Democrats, gaining five seats in the Senate and 30 in the House. The voting records of the new Democratic leadership elected in the House and Senate score considerably higher on children’s issues than those of their Republican predecessors. The same is true for those Democratic Representatives and Senators who will assume the chairs of committees and subcommittees charged with making decisions on policy and funding for programs serving children and families. However, the impact of these changes on the politics of child protection remains to be seen, and much will depend upon contacts constituents make with their Representatives and Senators to impress upon them the important role played by federal policies and funding to serve children and families back home.

A significant number of the newly elected legislators ran campaigns focused on improving the lives of America’s children. Some of the new faces in the House – like Rep.-elect Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Heath Shuler (D-NC), and Nick Lampson (D-TX) — ran on issues important to children, especially children’s health care. The same is true for two of the newly elected Senators, Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Bob Casey (D-PA). Sen.-elect Claire McCaskill (D-MO) comes to Washington with experience as a board member of the CASA (court-appointed special advocate) program. One new House member, Rep.-elect Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), is a former social worker. From among the newly elected House members who will serve in the 110th Congress come nearly two dozen with experience as sitting or former state legislators.

“The election returns...have increased the number of legislators favorable to the concerns of children.”

The election returns may in fact have increased the number of legislators favorable to the concerns of children. In the 30 House races where Democrats beat incumbent Republicans or won open GOP seats, almost two-thirds of the Republicans ranked among the worst legislators for children on the Children’s Defense Fund Action Council Congressional Scorecard. Three Senators at the bottom of the scorecard rankings – Jim Talent (R-MO), Conrad Burns (R-MT), and George Allen (R-VA) – were defeated. What’s more, the Congressional Progressive Caucus expects to gain at least seven new members from the newly elected House Democrats, — among them, Jerry McNerney (CA), Ed Perlmutter (CO), Bruce Braley (IA), John Sarbanes (MD), Keith Ellison (MN), Carol Shear-Porter (NH), Paul Hodes (NH), and John Hall (NY).

The makeup of the new leadership in the House and Senate will be key to setting the agenda and creating an atmosphere of political support for children. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), the next Speaker of the House, and others on the Democratic leadership team rate highly as supporters on issues important to children and families, unlike their Republican predecessors in those leadership positions. In the Senate, with Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) as Majority Leader, children should expect a reliable champion. The new Majority Whip, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), also stands tall for children.

The immediate notable difference for child welfare policy between the current Congress and the new Congress convening in January will be the new committee chairs and the composition of committees responsible for policy and funding for child and family services programs. In the House, Rep. David Obey (D-WI) – with a solid voting record for children – will take over as head of the Appropriations Committee, replacing Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA) who ranks at the bottom on the children’s congressional scorecard. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) is poised to resume the chairmanship of the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee he held the last time the Democrats controlled the Senate. Harkin enjoys a 100 percent score on the children’s issues scorecard.
“The report puts to rest any claim that domestic programs like education, housing, and social services are growing uncontrollably.”

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), always a strong advocate for children, won re-election on November 7 and will take over the chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee responsible for much child protection legislation. Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), author of the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grants title in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), will return to the chair of the HELP Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development. Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), will step into the chair of the Finance Committee where he has worked closely with the outgoing chair, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) on child welfare policy.

In the House, Rep. George Miller (D-CA), long an advocate for protection of children and support of families, will take the chair of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, responsible for handling CAPTA, which expires at the end of the 2008 fiscal year and must be reauthorized by the 110th Congress. Six of the House freshmen have been named to serve on the Committee on Education and the Workforce: Reps. Jason Altmire (D-PA), Phil Hare (D-IL), Dave Loebsack (D-IA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), and John Yarmuth (D-KY). Two freshmen Senators — Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) — have been appointed to the Senate HELP Committee which shares the CAPTA responsibilities with the House.

DEMOCRATIC LEADERS PLAN NEW YEAR PASSAGE OF FY07 OMNIBUS MONEY BILL

The Republican-led 109th Congress adjourned in December, leaving the work unfinished on nine appropriations bills. Instead, the lame duck Congress in one of its last acts passed a third continuing resolution carrying FY07 funding at the FY06 levels through February 15, 2007. For the new 110th Congress convening in January, the incoming chairman of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Rep. David Obey (D-WI) have announced their intention to fold the remaining appropriations bills covering the domestic portion of the federal budget into a single measure serving as a continuing resolution for the remainder of the 2007 fiscal year, but more closely resembling an omnibus spending bill.

The budget action announced by Byrd and Obey will leave the new 110th Congress free to take up the business of FY08 budget when the President’s proposal is sent to Capitol Hill in early February. Without the unfinished business of FY07 appropriations still on the agenda. A press release from Obey and Byrd observed that the last time each of the appropriations bills were passed by Congress individually and signed into law on time was 1994, which was the last time they each chaired the Appropriations Committees.

According to congressional staff, the joint resolution to come before Congress early in 2007 will include some adjustments to provide more money for priorities such as health, education and veterans’ medical care which would fall short at the levels already provided in draft spending bills. Federal agencies apparently will have the opportunity as well to make the case for funding for new programs or other priorities. However, there is no indication yet that any of the child welfare funding would be included for some adjustment upward.

Significantly, the incoming appropriations chairs announced that the final continuing resolution to be passed will not include any of the earmarked funding for special projects contained in the remaining FY07 spending bills already drafted. What’s more, the congressional Democratic leadership has placed a moratorium on earmarks until reforms are put in place to create a more transparent process for decisions about funding for legislators’ projects. The earmarked money already set aside in the various pending appropriations bills remains on the table for reallocation to program spending in the final omnibus spending measure.

SPENDING ON DEFENSE/SECURITY OUTPACES DOMESTIC DISCRETIONARY FUNDING

Contrary to the claims of conservative budget cutters, domestic funding has shrunk as a percentage of the economy and is below 2001 levels, according to a report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). The report puts to rest any claim that domestic programs like education, housing, and social services are growing uncontrollably.

Between 2001 and 2005, funding for domestic appropriations remained relatively stable, without growth, as a share of the economy. Then, in action taken on the FY 2006 appropriations bills, Congress curtailed domestic discretionary funding to a greater extent than any year since 1996, the first budget year produced by the newly elected Republican majority Congress and its Contract with America. By contrast, funding for defense and homeland security has increased significantly.
From 2001 to 2005, domestic annual appropriations grew only 0.5 percent a year, taking inflation and population growth into account. Defense, homeland security, and international affairs averaged 8.3 percent growth each year. According to the CBPP report, funding for security programs, when adjusted for inflation and population growth, has grown 16 times as rapidly as funding for domestic programs.

In addition to considering the affect of inflation on spending calculations, CBPP takes account of population growth. As population increases, government services are spread over a larger number of people supported by a larger number of taxpayers. If government remains static in the face of a growing population, either the share of Americans receiving government services would have to fall every year or the average benefits received by each person would have to be cut each year.

**PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS BILL EXTENDING PREVENTION FUNDS**

Legislation extending for five more years the funding authority for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program of support for prevention services was signed into law by President Bush on September 28. The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (S. 3525), was sent to the White House after approval in its final form by the Senate on September 20 and by the House on September 26.

The bill, which authorizes through 2011 the program of grants to states to prevent child abuse and neglect, retains the four categories of service required to be addressed by the states in the basic program: family preservation, family support services, time-limited family reunifications services and adoption promotion and support. The statute just enacted also includes new provisions targeting $40 million in newly authorized mandated spending to address issues proposed 1) by the House for supporting monthly caseworker visits with children who are in foster care, and 2) by the Senate for competitive grants to provide interagency collaborations to increase services for children in the child welfare and child protection system whose parents or caretakers abuse methamphetamines or other drugs.

In combining the two diverse purposes for the targeted dollars in legislation as passed separately by the House and Senate, the final agreement divides the $40 million annually between the two activities, with support for services to families with substance abuse receiving almost the entire share with decreasing amounts to 2011, and support for improvements in caseworker visits starting at $5 million in 2008 and increasing annually to 2011. The total five-year authorization of funding provides $345 million in mandatory spending each year (with $40 million set aside for the targeted activities), and $200 million in discretionary spending to be appropriated each fiscal year through 2011.

The funding aimed at addressing substance abuse in child welfare cases may be used for a variety of services like family-based comprehensive long-term drug treatment, early intervention services, child and family counseling, mental health services, and parenting skills training. The spending on caseworker support would focus on activities in recruitment, retention, training, and access to technology.

The new legislation also increases the mandatory share of Promoting Safe and Stable Families grant allotments for Indian tribes from 1% to 3% of mandatory funds and from 2% to 3% of discretionary funds. In addition, the measure reauthorizes the Court Improvement Program, and also reauthorizes the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program, including the creation of a new voucher program to offer mentoring support nationally where existing programs currently do not reach.

**OUTDATED ELIGIBILITY RULE CUTS FOSTER CARE FUNDS**

The number of foster children receiving federal assistance has declined significantly over the last decade, according to a report from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) — *Ten Years of Leaving Foster Children Behind*. As part of the 1996 welfare reform law creating the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, Congress made the decision to tie eligibility for federal foster care assistance (Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) to whether a child was removed from a family that would have qualified for public assistance under the old welfare program known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). As a result, the federal government will now subsidize a portion of states’ foster care and adoption assistance costs only if the child’s family was eligible for AFDC in 1996. Over the ensuing ten years, as inflation has increased, fewer children meet the requirements of the outdated poverty standard, and fewer children placed in foster care receive federal support. But not because they and the families caring for them don’t need the financial help.
“Funding for security programs... has grown 16 times as rapidly as funding for domestic programs.”

Since federal funds are restricted to subsidizing the foster care placements of fewer children, states have been forced to pick up the shortfall using money they otherwise need for making much needed improvements in child protective services and supporting underfunded abuse prevention programs to keep more children safe at home and out of foster care in the first place.

The foster care subsidy eligibility rule was proposed as a temporary measure which Congress intended to amend. However, it has endured for 10 years, leaving the rule tied to a public assistance program that no longer exists and based on outdated income-eligibility requirements. As it has stood for ten years now, the rule denies assistance to abused and neglected children who would otherwise be entitled to it.

In the 109th Congress just adjourned, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA) introduced in 2005 H.R. 3576, the Leave No Abused or Neglected Child Behind Act, aimed at making improvements in federal child welfare law, including provisions which would have had the effect of expanding eligibility for foster care and adoption assistance by eliminating the current AFDC-based income eligibility requirements. The bill was referred to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, where it languished without attention. Now that the Democrats will be in the majority in the 110th Congress, and with McDermott expected to chair the Human Resources Subcommittee, the prospect of similar legislation moving along has much improved. What’s more, one of the 21 cosponsors of the McDermott bill, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), is in place to chair the Ways and Means Committee in the new Congress and exert control over legislation deemed appropriate for the committee’s consideration.