

**More than \$2 Billion Available to Ease the Housing Struggles of Child Welfare Families and Youth:
NCHCW Urges Child Welfare Professionals to Take a Seat at the Stimulus Table**

During the Senate floor debates leading up to the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) shared a poignant story to help her colleagues grasp the full sense of urgency and gravity of the economic crisis facing American families. Sen. Boxer entered into the Congressional Record the story of her constituent, Mr. Arreola, a 27 year old father. "He is looking for jobs. Every day he goes to north Los Angeles to a job center. Two months ago he lost his job at a computer warehouse. He said he has had to put his two children into foster homes until he can find a new job. He said: "I'll take anything."

*The following day in floor debates, the Senator reiterated Mr. Arreola's story but this time, she issued a stern warning, "He is just desperate. He had to place his children into foster care. **We cannot do nothing.**" This message was clearly aimed at her Senate colleagues, however, as professionals and advocates who care about America's most vulnerable families, we must heed this advice as well – we must find ways to prevent family separation and homelessness among youth leaving care.*

Thanks in no small part to the efforts of Sen. Boxer and the willingness of Mr. Arreola to share his story, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) passed the Senate and was signed into law (P.L. 111-5) by President Obama on February 17, 2009. ARRA contains a number of provisions that child welfare professionals can tap "to assist those most impacted by the recession." One would be hard-pressed to find a group of families more impacted by this recession than those parents like Mr. Arreola, who are separated from their children in the face of this staggering economic crisis. Additionally, in recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the difficulties facing youth aging out of the foster care system – and advocates for older youth in foster care fear these challenges will only become more daunting in the weeks and months to come.

CWLA has provided comprehensive information about specific child welfare funds in ARRA including increases in the federal reimbursement rate through fiscal year 2010 for Title IV-E foster care, adoption, and guardianship programs. This information can be accessed by visiting the CWLA website, www.cwla.org, or by clicking [here](#). There is no funding in ARRA for the Safe and Stable Families Program; instead states may use the share of TANF or SSBG available in ARRA to meet any needs that may exceed their typical SSFP allotment.

However, given the current economic crisis it is entirely foreseeable that, like Mr. Arreola, thousands of families will arrive at the child welfare system in need of services that are not typically reimbursable through Title IV-E at a rate that might exceed both TANF and SSBG. The needs of these families might be most appropriately met with resources from the **\$1.5 billion Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)** funding available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, **\$1 billion available through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)** administered by HHS, and **\$100 million available for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)** administered by FEMA. Indeed, a child welfare organization could use these funds to both help provide direct assistance to families and youth *and* to hire a case manager to reach out to families and youth and assist them. Funds can also be used to *train child welfare case managers* on preventing homelessness among child welfare families and youth.

Taking Your Seat at the Table

NCHCW encourages child welfare directors and their designees to join the discussions communities are beginning to have about how to target the more than \$2 billion available to assist families provide safe, stable environments for their children. This brief is aimed at assisting child welfare directors better understand the resources available through the **\$1.5 billion Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)** fund and how child welfare directors can help to prioritize these funds for child welfare families and youth. NCHCW will post additional briefs about the HHS Community Services Block Grant and FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program when federal guidance is available.

HUD'S EMERGENCY SHELTER GRANT PROGRAM

What's available?

On March 19, 2008, HUD announced the availability of **\$1.5 billion for the New Emergency Shelter Grant Program called the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)** to provide short and medium-term rental assistance, housing relocation, and stabilization services for families and individuals during the economic crisis. This guidance is available at HUD's Homeless Resource Exchange website, www.hrehud.info or by clicking [here](#). HUD's Homeless Resource Exchange website is an excellent source of information about ARRA funds and other housing programs. HPRP funds will be distributed using the same funding formula that HUD employs for annual ESG allocations and you can view the list of allocations by clicking [here](#).

The funds are aimed at families and individuals who "but for this assistance" are homeless or at risk of homelessness. HPRP funds cannot be used for long-term assistance. This is because generally *all* ARRA funds are limited to two years and as such, long-term housing assistance like that provided under Section 8 is not available through HPRP.

HPRP is flexible and can be used to provide these four *housing-related* services: financial assistance, housing relocation and stabilization, data collection, and administration. Housing-related services include a variety of supports such as short-term (3 months) or medium-term (not to exceed 18 months) rental assistance and legal services, mediation, credit counseling, security deposits, utility payments and reconnection fees, moving cost assistance, and case management.

How can child welfare access these funds for youth and families?

In talking with HUD, NCHCW staff was assured that child welfare case managers are an appropriate referral source for these funds. HUD agreed that child welfare workers are often in a position to identify housing problems and prevent homelessness when given access to appropriate resources. The HPRP funds are an excellent match for the work of child welfare professionals serving precariously housed families. In fact, *it is entirely possible that a child welfare organization could use a portion of these funds to cover the cost of a staff time dedicated to preventing homelessness among child welfare families and youth.*

While HPRP allocations have already been determined, communities will be required to submit to HUD a "substantial amendment" to their Consolidated Plan detailing how HPRP funds will be targeted and dispersed. In order to prioritize

FUP and HPRP

HPRP grantees may "enter into a sub-grant with another local government to carry out the program (FR-5307-N-01, p. 12)." This is advisable when a local non-profit or government agency could quickly identify families and individuals that could benefit from the funds. For example, if a local public child welfare organization is currently holding a waiting list for FUP, the child welfare organization could easily identify and serve these families and aging out youth with funds from HPRP funds. Child welfare organizations are excellent candidates for a sub-grant. At a minimum, FUP families and youth could be prioritized for HPRP funds.

HPRP and Youth Aging Out

HPRP rental assistance is limited to 18 months. This happens to be the same limit on rental assistance through FUP for young people aging out of foster care. Child welfare agencies could use HPRP funds to expand or create FUP to prevent homelessness among youth aging out of foster care.

families at risk of separation or those who are unable to reunify or youth aging out of care in this plan, child welfare organizations should arrange to meet with community officials who oversee the Consolidated Plan and the agency that leads the local continuum of care process. This information can easily be obtained from the mayor or city council's office. These "substantial amendments" are due to HUD on or before May 19, 2009. NCHCW is available to assist child welfare organizations prepare for meetings about HPRP.

For more information HPRP:

Visit the Homeless Resource Exchange at www.hudhre.info
Visit the National Alliance to End Homelessness at www.endhomelessness.org

For more information about using HPRP for child welfare families and youth:

Visit the NCHCW website at www.nchcw.org or contact us via phone at 301-699-0151. You may also submit questions via info@nchcw.org.