

Making the Most of New Federal Investments in Child Abuse Prevention: JOINT GUIDANCE FROM NATIONAL PARTNERS

CONTEXT: Five national organizations, Children’s Trust Fund Alliance, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, EndCAN, National Family Support Network, and Prevent Child Abuse America have collaborated to provide this resource to state agencies and organizations to help inform funding decisions and plans for the use of child abuse prevention funds that were included in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief measure, passed on March 11, 2021 includes one-time emergency funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), including \$250 million in Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funding.

CBCAP funds are divided among all 50 states and territories via a formula based on child population for community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, enhance, and coordinate initiatives, programs, and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect and to support the coordination of resources and activities to better strengthen and support families to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. This historic investment in CBCAP represents a substantial increase (CBCAP is currently funded at \$60.6 million annually).

State CBCAP lead agencies received notice of their award amounts on April 30, 2021. The FY 2021 supplemental CBCAP grant has a five-year project and expenditure period from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2025. The funding must be obligated by September 30, 2025 and liquidated by December 30, 2025. Official Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-21-07 for the emergency funding was issued on May 5, 2021 to current CBCAP lead agencies, who must submit plans for spending the funds by June 7, 2021.

As national organizations, we have been working to educate Congress about the importance of this funding to meet the needs of families who have been impacted by the pandemic. We applaud the inclusion of this vital and historic funding both to help address the challenges facing children and families today and as a down payment on critical, long-term prevention infrastructure investments.

HOW WE GET THERE: To achieve this vision we need effective, equitable systems of support for families that ensure they can readily access resources, supports, and information that will enhance their well-being and reduce their likelihood of experiencing crisis. These resources should be community-based, responsive to community interests and needs, and work with an approach that is strengths-based to support families to build protective factors.

A continuum of supports and services, grounded and driven by anti-racist principles, approaches, and strategies, is required to address and undo existing structural and systemic racism, and meet the needs of diverse families and communities. Families must be engaged as partners in planning, implementation, oversight, and evaluation of these programs.

VISION:

Our shared vision is that all families are supported and strengthened to succeed in thriving communities.

Key Components

We believe the following components are important considerations for this funding opportunity:



PROCESS:

We encourage state CBCAP lead agencies and local systems to partner with families in planning, implementation, oversight, and evaluation to help ensure that the funds expended, and the work conducted, are most relevant and valuable to those who need and use them. This will ensure that services are community-driven and designed to meet the needs of families, and they receive the support and resources they need to thrive. This should include parents and youth with lived expertise in child welfare systems, as well as those who have benefited from prevention services and those who have not. We recommend providing stipends to families for food, child care, transportation, and compensation for time spent at meetings, reviewing documents, leading community conversations, and otherwise contributing to this work.

Program Instruction
from the Children's Bureau:
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We are pleased that the Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-21-07 from the Children's Bureau takes a strong and public stand that "strongly encourages lead agencies to reach out to families and community-based agencies to plan for the use of these funds, so that they may be used to increase supports especially for Black, brown, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ children and families, as well as communities who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty." To maximize the impact of these CBCAP dollars, states must center equity and address systemic barriers by engaging communities and cross-system partners to conduct an analysis of 1) racial inequities in existing prevention continuum services to identify gaps and opportunities for growth as well as 2) strategies that are currently being implemented to address systemic barriers and advance equity for families. CBCAP-funded programs can be an important tool in addressing racial inequities by increasing access and opportunity for communities and families that have been and are currently marginalized by systems and consequently, under-resourced and excluded from developing their own community-based responses. CBCAP-funded programs work best when they are developed by and for the diverse communities they support. This allows them to have a high level of trust with and responsiveness to families, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and immigrant families, and others who experience oppression and face institutional biases based on race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or disability when seeking help. Investment of funds should be meaningfully informed by communities, specifically those who are being excluded or failed by the current service array, and in ways that intentionally meet the needs of these families and their communities. This may include investing in programs shown to be effective for specific groups and developed by communities, prioritizing hiring from the community and physically locating services where they can be accessed by specific population groups more easily. Ensuring appropriate services are accessible to all children and families no matter where they reside should be a critical factor in the planning and oversight of CBCAP funds.

CBCAP lead agencies should also collaborate with other prevention and child- and family-serving systems and organizations in their planning and implementation of these funds. Prevent Child Abuse America state chapters, state Children's Trust Funds, Family Support Networks, and other state and local prevention partners who are not CBCAP lead agencies can be valuable partners to ensure these funds are used effectively, sustainably and help achieve our collective vision.

**SERVICES:**

We encourage each state to determine through the process described above, which includes examination of data and engagement of stakeholders – and in particular, families – what strategies are the best fit for your landscape to advance the above vision that all families are supported and strengthened to succeed in thriving communities. We also share the following examples for consideration that have been demonstrated to have strong positive outcomes for families. For each, there is both a need for investment in individual services, as well as systems to support and maximize their effectiveness. Additionally, we encourage states to take an equity-centered approach to each of the service approaches, recognizing that doing so will help address existing inequities while also serving all families.

- **Economic and concrete supports:** A growing body of research shows that economic and concrete supports are an effective strategy for supporting children and families in their communities and preventing future involvement with child welfare – particularly given the stressors of the pandemic. Accordingly, addressing economic security and providing concrete support are a key part of the array of prevention services that should be offered in your communities and state. This approach could include leveraging Family Resource Centers, home visiting programs, and other community-based organizations to provide rental assistance, food, clothing, and baby supplies and link families to economic assistance programs like SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid. When these tangible supports are linked to social and emotional supports, they can be powerful strategies for addressing immediate concerns and building strength for a stronger economic future. In implementing these supports, it is important to focus on removing and addressing systemic barriers that disproportionately exclude people of color from accessing these supports as they are currently provided.
- **Evidence-based voluntary home visiting:** Currently only 3% of eligible families have access to home visiting services. Through the use of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program funds and one-time emergency CBCAP funds, states can expand their home visiting capacity to ensure more families have access to high quality, culturally appropriate home visiting services.
- **Family Resource Centers (FRCs):** These readily-accessible community or school-based welcoming hubs of support, information, and opportunities support families to build protective factors and address community conditions. FRCs are cost-effective, highly adaptable for various communities – be they urban, rural, immigrant, or ethnic, and have a track record of successful outcomes demonstrated by multiple external evaluations.
- **Prevention of child sexual abuse:** These funds can be used to support the implementation of evidence-based and evidence-informed training for adults and children on strategies for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Training should focus on educating adults about how to keep children safe and avoiding high-risk situations, as well as identification, and appropriate response to disclosures of child sexual abuse. Further, funding could be used to support the development of comprehensive Codes of Conduct within education settings and other youth serving organizations.
- **Services that are developed by and for communities of color:** Addressing inequities will require targeted investments in services that have been developed by and for families and communities of color. In working to implement supports and services that meet the needs of Black, Latinx, Native, and immigrant young children and their families, many states and communities are restricted by financing requirements for “evidence-based” services. Additionally, some program clearinghouses utilize criteria to determine a program’s “evidence” base which excludes smaller studies and/or qualitative studies that can show the impact of programs on outcomes for children and families

of color from being considered. This can thereby exclude programs from consistently being rated as “evidence-based” despite data that highlights the impact - resulting in a lack of evidence-based services that are developed by communities of color or are grounded in cultural values and traditions. The flexibility within CBCAP creates a unique opportunity to both fund programs that are developed by and for communities of color as an essential part of the service array and also support investments in building the evidence that these programs work. This can also include investments in continuous quality improvement processes that inform and support the adaptation of existing programs for diverse communities.

- **Warm lines:** These lines address parental stress and help families to access resources, and can help to avoid unnecessary involvement with Child Protective Services. Mandated reporters and other community members concerned that a family is struggling can use the warm lines to help families get access to community services and supports so their children can remain safely in the home. Warm line staff can help parents identify stress triggers, recognize coping strategies and enhance problem solving skills, identify ways to broaden social networks, provide access to child development information, and make referrals to essential services, supports, and resources.



STRENGTHENING PREVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUILDING LONG-TERM CAPACITY:

We encourage investments beyond funding individual programs to help states and communities build coordinated, inclusive, and robust systems and networks of supportive resources for children and families that build protective factors. These systems must work together to ensure equitable access to a comprehensive continuum of quality family strengthening services, initiatives, and activities that are provided in a coordinated systemic manner. We propose the following systems-level strategies for consideration that have demonstrated efficacy, and represent ways to utilize funding for greater reach and impact.

- **Creating the context for healthy children and families through social norms change:** Funds could support conducting surveys of positive community norms regarding topics such as help seeking, and parenting behaviors like infant safe sleep and disciplinary practices. The analysis of those norms can be used to develop strategies that grow positive social norms, change perceptions, and create positive changes in behaviors.
- **Equity and social justice:** This is an opportunity to further expand and solidify your child abuse prevention work toward advancing racial and social justice, expanding and ensuring access to services for currently underserved populations and communities within your state. This includes enhancing an anti-racist continuum of services, for example, by investing in communities of color through funding to develop and/or build evidence for programs and services that are grounded in cultural values, affirm families of color, and meet their needs; as well as closing gaps in access to programs for families based on their immigration status, language, disability, gender or sexual orientation, or geographic location. These investments are most effective when those who are the potential participants in the programs and services are integrally involved in their design, operations and evaluation.
- **Evaluating programs and strategies that show promise:** It is essential that we continue to grow our understanding, as a field, of what programs and strategies are effective, for whom and in what context. Also, if needed, conduct original research, including gathering and analyzing data about your work. This is another area where the perspectives of those with lived experience will be important for ensuring that the evaluations ask the right questions, look at the most reasonable outcomes and use strategies that help make it comfortable for participants to share personal information.

- **Framing recommendations and messaging:** The FrameWorks Institute, Prevent Child Abuse America, and the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities/Council on Accreditation recently partnered to update the 2004 prevention framing brief, so the field is equipped with communication strategies to effectively advocate for programs and policy changes at the state and local levels. In the brief, "[Reframing Childhood Adversity: Promoting Upstream Approaches](#)," FrameWorks recommends that child adversity be framed as a public issue, a preventable problem, and a solvable problem. In order to build support for our efforts and broaden our constituency base, we highly recommend using the framing recommendations to develop messaging campaigns or materials, so our messages across the country are common, strong, and unified.
- **Infusing systems and staff with skills to help families build strong protective factors:** When staff and others use a strengths-based approach to help families build protective factors, they are addressing current life situations and building the capacity of families to thrive in the future. Communities and systems can be designed to create supportive environments that help strengthen the protective factors of families.
- **Networks of Family Resource Centers:** Family Resource Centers (FRCs) can be effectively networked across geographic areas to maximize their collective impact to ensure coordinated quality support for families. Networks with a funded, staffed backbone entity can increase FRCs' capacity, connectedness, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, provide training and technical assistance, work on addressing systemic issues that no one FRC could address on its own, and collectively share and track data.
- **Supporting the work of [Thriving Families, Safer Children](#) jurisdictions:** The goal of Thriving Families, Safer Children is to create more just and equitable child and family well-being systems that benefit all children and families – developed in collaboration with community stakeholders and driven by the voice of individuals with lived expertise – with an emphasis on addressing structural and social determinants of health, including systemic and structural racism.
- **Sustaining and building effective partnership structures that elevate parent voices:** Parents who have faced and overcome challenges are critical partners in supporting resilient and strong families and communities. Their voices are powerful for educating the public, policymakers, and others regarding important strategies for strengthening families and communities. Formal structures allow for training, support, and more cohesive partnerships among parents and staff.

Addressing Funding Sustainability

We recommend using the expanded American Rescue Plan Act CBCAP funding for these strategies while you plan for their sustainability using other federal, state, and/or philanthropic funding.

We encourage you to also partner with state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments who are receiving \$362 billion in state and local aid as part of the American Rescue Plan via the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Those funds can be used to provide assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits. Leveraging the CBCAP funds with this aid to states and communities will greatly expand the reach and impact of the CBCAP dollars. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has released its guidance on pre-award requirements for state

and local aid, outlining immediate steps communities need to take to receive direct payments. They have created a new office dedicated to the distribution of pandemic relief funds to state and local governments. They have also launched a new [website](#) with resources on COVID-19 relief programs, including resources for families, businesses, and the \$362 billion Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.

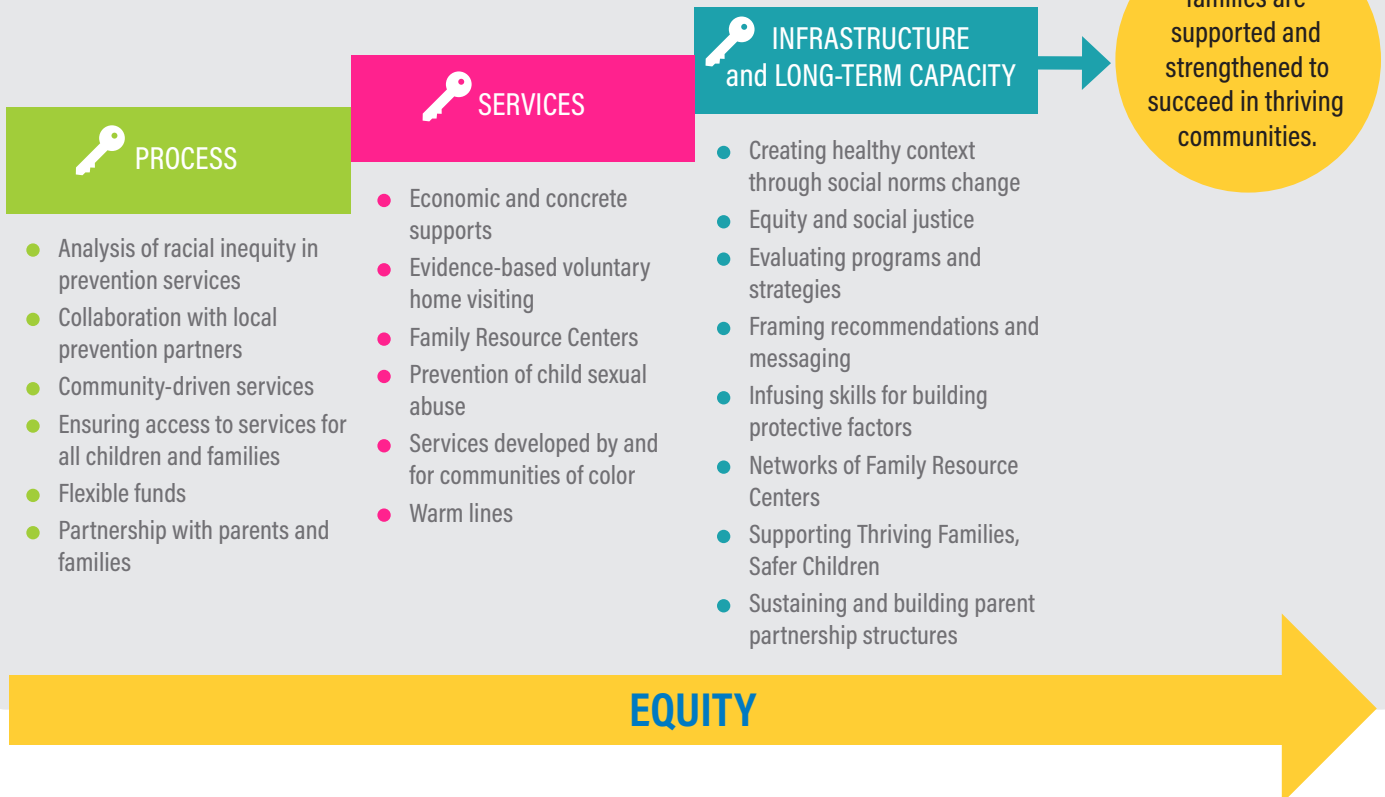
Our national organizations are committed to advocating for additional federal funding, including CAPTA reauthorization, sharing information about existing federal funding streams that can be leveraged, and working with your states and organizations individually to develop sustainability plans.

Conclusion

States have the opportunity now to make strategic investments, respond to immediate needs of families, and build capacity for a more equitable and effective continuum of quality family strengthening services that create the conditions for thriving children, families, and communities. We hope the recommendations outlined will serve as guidance as you leverage the one-time, emergency CBCAP grants to build a more comprehensive and systematic approach to supporting families and children in your communities.

PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Investing in building a more comprehensive and systematic approach to supporting communities, families, and children.



About the National Organizations



**Center for the
Study of Social Policy**
Ideas into Action

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY

The [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP) is a national, non-profit policy organization that connects community action, public system reform, and policy change to create a racially, economically, and socially just society in which all children and families thrive. To do this, we translate ideas into action, promote public policies grounded in equity, support strong and inclusive communities, and advocate with and for all children and families marginalized by public policies and institutional practices. As the home of the [Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework](#), CSSP has a wealth of resources to support implementation of a strengths-based, protective factors approach. As an organization [committed to undoing systemic racism](#), CSSP has developed tools and resources including a [policy framework](#) to support states and communities in advancing [an anti-racist prevention continuum](#). CSSP offers training, technical assistance, and guidance related to Strengthening Families implementation as well as supporting efforts to advance racial and social justice.



CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND ALLIANCE

As the national membership organization for state children's trust funds, the [Children's Trust Fund Alliance's](#) mission is to provide supports, resources and peer connections to children's trust funds across the country. The Alliance is a national thought and implementation leader in strengthening families and communities, preventing child abuse and neglect, building partnerships with parents, promoting parent voices regarding policies and practices and helping systems and services incorporate a strengths-based protective factors approach. We work across the social ecology and engage with parents and community members as partners to ensure diverse perspectives are recognized and valued.

The Alliance provides [training and technical assistance](#) regarding partnering with parents, including training in "Better Together" and "Strategic Sharing." We have worked with CBCAP state lead agencies and numerous other state systems to help them develop and support formal parent advisory councils. The Alliance supports multiple [networks of parents](#) (the Alliance National Parent Partnership Council, The Birth Parent National Network and the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership) and helps build linkages between parents and policymakers. Our [website](#) is a source of publications, videos and social media-ready materials that parents have developed to promote the protective factors and how they help strengthen families.

With the goal of infusing systems and staff with skills to help families build strong protective factors, the Alliance's nationally recognized training on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework, [Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work](#), is available free of charge as an online interactive training. CEUs are available for a small fee. In addition, the Alliance's intensive virtual training of trainers has resulted thus far in more than 1,500 Alliance Certified Trainers across the US who are using our curriculum (videos, audios, powerpoints, training manuals, training tools and other materials). This curriculum focuses on training those who work with families to best help parents build their own family's protective factors and incorporates a strengths-based approach, paired with respect for cultural differences. The Alliance's national training, technical assistance and collaborative consultation are designed to strengthen communities, programs, and systems.



ENDCAN

[The National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect](#) raises awareness of the health, mental health and public health impacts of abuse and neglect. EndCAN works to change the perception of child abuse and neglect in the United States as problems seen solely as social and legal issues, to also being a health, mental health and public health problem that can be treated. We also bring together a wide array of supporters to dramatically expand funding for research, training, prevention, and advocacy while supporting a community for survivors by creating an environment for them which is inclusive, authentic and Louder Than Silence.



NATIONAL
Family Support
NETWORK

NATIONAL FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Founded in 2011, the [National Family Support Network](#) (NFSN) is a membership-based organization of state Networks of Family Resource Centers (FRCs), with 32 current Member Networks, comprised of more than 3,000 FRCs. The mission of the NFSN is to promote positive outcomes for all children, families, and communities by leveraging the collective impact of state Networks and championing quality Family Support and Strengthening Practices and Policies. The NFSN is the one-stop hub for all things related to Family Resource Centers and Networks of FRCs. Some key resources include: 1) compilation of information, documents, videos, and research reports on FRCs; 2) continua illustrating the steps to fund FRCs, develop a Network of FRCs, and the connection between FRCs and Child Welfare – including Family First implementation; 3) information about and examples of leveraging federal funding for FRCs; 4) sample requests for proposals for funding FRCs; 5) information about tools to assess, track progress, and measure outcomes for families engaged in FRCs; 6) sample evaluation plans for FRCs; 7) sample FRC identification surveys; 8) sample FRC Network job descriptions and operating guidelines, and 9) consultation and technical assistance related to any of the above. Additionally, the NFSN developed and promotes implementation of the nationally-adopted [Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support](#), which uniquely integrate and operationalize the Principles of Family Support Practice with the Strengthening Families Approach. The Standards create common language and expectations across different kinds of Family Strengthening and Family Support programs, such as FRCs, home visiting programs, and child development programs, to help ensure that families are supported and strengthened through quality practice. They are available along with all implementation tools for free on the NFSN website. The NFSN also provides the Developing and Sustaining Effective Parent Advisory Committees Training, a unique highly-rated training for Program staff to maximize the great potential of Parent Advisory Committees, which is co-trained with staff and an experienced National Parent Leader.



PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

[Prevent Child Abuse America](#) is the nation's oldest and largest organization committed to preventing child abuse and neglect before it happens. We promote programs and resources informed by science that enable kids, families, and entire communities to thrive – today, tomorrow, and for generations to come. Our success relies on a nationwide network of state chapters and nearly 600 Healthy Families America home visiting sites, which provide parents and caregivers a wide variety of services and resources in communities across the country. Our respected experts also develop innovative research that our vast network then puts into action. And we raise public awareness and engagement and advocate for family friendly policies at the national, state, and local levels to support programs that ensure children and families get what they need to succeed. PCA America can provide technical assistance and consulting in building prevention infrastructures, child sexual abuse prevention, research and evaluation, framing and advocacy.