



# Capitol View On Kids

*The latest news on children and families in  
in Washington D.C.*

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## Adoption Incentives Draft-Reauthorization Released

On Wednesday, August 7, members of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Ways and Means Committee released a draft bill to reauthorize the adoption incentive fund. The adoption incentives fund, currently appropriated at approximately \$39 million (pre-sequestration levels), awards a portion of the funding to states that increase their adoptions of children from foster care. It was originally created as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The draft bill language (legislation cannot be introduced when the house in question is out of session) would alter the current incentive fund by basing awards on the adoption rates rather than actual numbers of adoptions. It would maintain the incentive for increases in overall adoptions and for the adoptions of older children and would add in an award for the number of subsidized guardianships. This is an effort to recognize ongoing state efforts where the number of children waiting in foster care for adoption have gone down because foster care placements have gone down. A rate would reward states still making progress in placements despite decreased numbers of children.

Currently states are rewarded for an increase in the overall adoptions (\$4000 per child), special needs adoptions (\$4000) and older child adoptions—considered a child age 9 or older (\$8000). In the last reauthorization a \$1000 incentive was included for states that experienced an increase in their adoption rate. This part of the award was only provided to states if the funding, which is appropriated each year, did not run out. According to the Congressional Research Services (CRS), between 2008 and 2011 states were eligible for \$10 million in awards based on the rate but received just \$2 million due to the lack of appropriations.

The reward for guardianships is new and is an attempt to broaden the award to recognizing overall permanency. Some have also argued that it should include reunification however that becomes a challenge in collecting state data and how you define and measure such reunifications since a median of 13 percent of children reunified will reenter foster care within a year.

The legislation does not extend the \$15 million annual awards for kinship navigator, family finding, family group decision making and substance abuse treatment grants. Due to budget methodology extending this grant program would be calculated as spending new money. The Administration requested a three year extension which would align it with the next reauthorization of the Title IV-B programs. It also had the benefit of costing less than a five year extension.

Perhaps most significant in the bill, it directs states to determine savings realized due to the gradual increase in federal funding of special needs adoption as a result of the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success Act (PL 110-351). That law gradually removes the current adoption assistance eligibility from the old 1996 AFDC-welfare eligibility standards. Instead it provides federal coverage for all special needs adoptions and phases it in by age group until all special needs adoptions are covered in 2018. The

savings to states (more federal dollars mean less state spending) could be as high as \$500 million in the fiscal year 2018 according to the budget projections at the time of Fostering Connections passage. The original law directed states to reinvest that savings into other child welfare services but it has never been enforced or documented by HHS. As a result, Congress added additional language in the 2011 Family Services and Innovations Improvement Act (PL 112-34) on requiring a documentation of such spending and reinvestment. This bill would add additional language and a directive to states to both document the saving and the spending and to use at least 20 percent of it for post-adoption services. Even if CBO projects are off by as much as 50 percent, the state spending would be close to what is now provided under Title IV-B Child Welfare Services.

In release of the draft the committee statement said, "The draft was developed with the goal of producing bipartisan legislation based on testimony received at a Human Resources Subcommittee hearing earlier this year. A detailed summary of the draft legislation can also be found at [www.waysandmeans.house.gov/AdoptionIncentives](http://www.waysandmeans.house.gov/AdoptionIncentives). They further go on to describe the bill:

The draft legislation would:

Extend the authorization of the program through FY 2016;

2. Add an award for placements with legal guardians;

3. Provide awards based on improvements in the rate of adoption and other permanent placements, even as the number of children in foster care declines; and

4. Require States to report on savings resulting from the ongoing phase-out of certain federal adoption assistance eligibility requirements, and to use at least 20 percent of such savings for post-adoption services.

The public is encouraged to submit comments on the draft legislation, by August 30, 2013 to [AdoptionIncentives@mail.house.gov](mailto:AdoptionIncentives@mail.house.gov). To see the Ways and Means' press release on this proposal and to learn more, [click here](#).



## Bryan Samuels To Leave ACYF For Chapin Hall

Bryan Samuel, the Commission for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) will be leaving his post to accept a position as Executive Director, for the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. He is set to take the position on September 16 according to the University. Commissioner Samuels has served in the office since the Senate confirmed his nomination in February of 2012. Under Samuels ACYF has placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of [promoting trauma informed care](#) in addressing child well being for children affected by the child welfare system. He has also emphasized the importance of using [evidence-based and evidence-informed practices](#) in various speaking engagements and presentations. ACYF has oversight of a range of children and youth programs which are more directly supervised under the Children's Bureau and the Family and Youth Services. The scope includes adoptions, foster care, child protection and several youth serving programs.

Mr Samuels will be returning to his home state of Illinois where he served as the Chief of Staff within the Chicago Public Schools under Arne Duncan. Duncan has served as President Obama's Secretary of Education since the beginning of the administration. Before working in education Samuels was the director for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. A statement by the University said, "As executive director, Samuels will advance Chapin Hall's multidisciplinary, data-driven efforts to improve the well-being of children and youth, their families and their communities. Through its research and policy analysis, Chapin Hall enables people concerned about the welfare of children—policymakers,

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service providers, families and communities—to be better informed and supported, and to exercise their responsibilities to children more effectively.”

As part of the announcement Samuels said, “Everything I’ve done in D.C. has been about moving child welfare from a philosophical platform to an evidence-based platform. We want to build a child welfare system that children benefit from having been involved in, and we can’t do that without science.”

It was not immediately clear who his replacement will be and when a future appointment will be made. Since Bryan Samuels’s approval by the Senate in 2010, the position was one of several administration appointments that have been removed from the required Senate approval process. The change was part of a package of lower-level presidential nominations removed from required Senate OK. It was a bipartisan attempt to limit some of the Washington gridlock resulting from the ever-growing time it takes to vet, appoint, vet and then vote on presidential nominations.



### ***UPCOMING CAPITOL HILL BRIEFINGS/EVENTS***

- *Meeting-conference call joint meeting of the Child welfare-Mental Health Coalition and the National Foster care Coalition to discuss the reauthorization of the adoption incentive fund. The meeting will be held on **Monday, August 19, from 3:00 – 5:00 pm EDT at the Children’s Defense Fund (25 E St, NW Washington DC)** Please RSVP to Stefanie Sprow ([ssprow@childrensdefense.org](mailto:ssprow@childrensdefense.org)) if you plan to attend this meeting by COB Friday, August 16.*
- ***September 9, 2013**, U.S. House of Representatives resumes session*
- ***September 13, 2013** U.S. Senate resumes session*

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