

Proposed
JWB Children's Services
Council of Pinellas County
Federal Revenue Maximization
Guidance
FY 2010-2011

Given the current economic condition, both nationally and on a state level, it becomes necessary for Florida to ensure that prospective funding opportunities are maximized to every extent possible. According to a November 2009 Pew Charitable Trust study entitled: *Beyond California: States in Fiscal Peril*. Florida is among nine other states identified as having major fiscal challenges and characteristics. Florida is aligned closely with California's bordering states of Arizona, Nevada, and Oregon due to the "bursting housing bubble". Florida's situation is further compromised by double digit unemployment and a declining population. See Tab 1 for *Beyond California: The States to Watch* and the excerpted report on Florida.

The state agency budget reduction presentations to the Legislature in early November identified critical areas where federal funding via grants, reimbursement formulas, waivers, or stimulus recovery are in jeopardy if state general revenues are reduced. JWB has specifically identified the following proposed federal legislation that will enable the state to enhance early childhood investment opportunities. However, the state must position itself in order to be eligible to participate, by maintaining General Revenue funding in child care, Pre-Kindergarten, and grades K-3, as well as child welfare.

Early Learning Challenge Fund – Contained in Title IV of **H.R. 3221**, this legislation will offer states two grant opportunities to address their Early Learning Systems in terms of quality, that will improve school readiness rates in

Kindergarten. The 5 year renewable grant is competitive, with matching requirements that may be waived due to financial hardship. If the Legislature reduces the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten per-child rate from \$2,575 to \$1,942, Florida risks losing to other Pre-K-for-All states such as, Iowa, District of Columbia, Oklahoma, and West Virginia that are enhancing funding or phasing in programming (*Source: Pre-K now*)

The 3 year grant is competitive and assists states in developing an Early Learning System with match requirements that may also be waived. Florida appears to be eligible for this 3 year grant at its current education funding. However, the funding is non-renewable and would limit the outcomes that could be gained under a 5-year renewable grant by assisting the state in *expanding* the early learning system. See Tab 2 for the Early Learning Challenge Fund overview (*Source: Zero to Three*).

Home Visitation – H.R. 2667 - Early Support for Families Would require mandatory funding to states to create and expand early childhood visitation programs. The funding would start at \$100 million in 2010, increasing up to \$750 million by 2014. It could be used to support rigorously evaluated programs that utilize nurses, social workers, and other professionals to visit families in need. Research has identified that early childhood home visitation programs help reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, and improve child health and development. While the bill requires state match, the state's Healthy Families allocation should qualify. Scientific research has supported the argument for making investments in a child's earliest years. A study released by Child Trends shows that when infants are raised in high-poverty conditions, their cognitive abilities start to decline, with disparities showing up as early as 9 months of age. By 24 months of age, researchers report, the differences

become even more pronounced. The House and Senate have both included this provision in America's Healthy Future Act of 2009, health care reform legislation. See Tab 3 for **H.R. 2667 Bill Analysis** (*Source: National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators*).

Fostering Connections to Success Act (2008)

Florida's Child Welfare System is currently benefiting from a Title IV-E waiver that is set to expire in FY 2010-2011. This waiver increased the number of children eligible, allowed for flexible use of out-of-home care dollars for in-home care services to keep qualified families intact, and provide a broader array of service. The state was also allowed to receive Recovery Act dollars in addition to the waiver authority that was granted in FY 2006-07. It is unlikely that the waiver will be extended. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R.6893/P.L. 110-351) may become the next flexible funding opportunity for the state to improve child welfare outcomes. See Tab 4 **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions** – (*Source: Center for Law and Social Policy*)

The Act will improve the lives for hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption and improving education and health care. Additionally, it will extend federal support for youth to age 21. The Act will also offer, for the first time, important federal protections and support for many American Indian children. According to the collaborative guide created by Children's Defense Fund and Center for Law and Social Policy, the implementation for FY 2010-2011 include the following:

- States, for the first time, have the option to extend federally supported foster care payments to ages 19, 20,

or 21 for youth in foster care who were in care at age 18 or to youth who had kinship guardianship or adoption assistance agreements that became effective after they reached age 16. (States also may opt in at a later time.)

- Short-term training under Title IV-E for relative guardians, agency, court staff, attorneys, and court appointed special advocates and guardians ad litem can now be reimbursed at 65%.
- The elimination of income and resource eligibility requirements for the federal adoption assistance program continues to be phased in to cover children 14 and older, children in care for 60 consecutive months, and siblings of such children.
- The Secretary of HHS must submit, no later than this date, a report to the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee a report that describes how the case-by-case waivers of non-safety licensing standards for relatives have been implemented, and recommends policy changes to increase the percentage of relative foster family homes that are licensed.
- Short-term training under Title IV-E for relative guardians, agency and court staff and attorneys, court appointed special advocates and guardians ad litem can now be reimbursed at 70%.
- The elimination of income and resource requirements for the adoption assistance program covers children 12 and older, children in care for 60 consecutive months, and siblings of such children.