



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

April 24, 2012

Loss of Federal TANF Funds Means Elimination of Some State Child Welfare Programs

A cut in federal funding will require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to eliminate a child abuse prevention program that put workers in 27 school districts, eliminate funding for Family Resource Centers and reduce funding for the State Police Crimes Against Children Division (CACD) and some family support programs beginning July 1.

“We don’t want to see these services reduced, but this is the reality of federal budget cuts,” Governor Mike Beebe said. “Cutting federal programs has real consequences for real people, and we will continue providing the best services we can with fewer dollars.”

DHS Director John Selig agrees.

“It was not easy for us to give up these programs because we know they have helped thousands of struggling families in Arkansas,” Selig said Tuesday. “Unfortunately, we have to cut them in order to keep caseworkers who work to ensure the safety and well-being of children.”

The decisions are a result of a \$2,247,469 reduction in the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding that the DHS Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) uses to conduct thousands of child maltreatment investigations, said DCFS Director Cecile Blucker.

The Human Services Workers in Schools Program provides student or family counseling, parent training, crisis intervention and other services to lessen strain on families. Family Resource Centers educate parents about child development and appropriate responses to a child’s behavior.

Last year, the Human Services Workers in Schools Program served 15,429 students and Family Resource Centers served 11,448 families, Blucker said. Last fiscal year, the child abuse hotline run by CACD received over 50,000 calls and CACD investigated 6,378 abuse cases. State Police Col. JR Howard said his agency intends to maintain the level of services CACD provides by shifting money from elsewhere in the State Police budget.

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Blucker said the Human Services Workers in Schools Program and the nine Family Resource Centers have been a vital part of her division's efforts to focus on preventing abuse – rather than just reacting to it -- by reducing the stress on families and educating parents.

“Sadly, these cuts, and some expected later, will shift our focus away from preventive services that we know help families and protect children,” she said. “This is not our first choice, but a significant reduction in federal funding would leave us no alternative.”

Much deeper federal cuts to TANF funding are anticipated to hit DCFS in state fiscal year 2014, Blucker said. If those cuts go through, DCFS would not be able to manage the 34,000 child maltreatment investigations it handles today. DCFS likely would request state legislators to remove some lower risk allegations from the Child Maltreatment Act to cut down on the number of investigations. Those would include inadequate food, clothing and shelter for children age six and older, inadequate supervision of children age 9 and older, environmental and educational neglect, and some cases of medical neglect. Depending on how deep the cuts, some categories may need to be totally removed from the Child Maltreatment Act.

DCFS also would have to consider eliminating support services that it provides at-risk families, reduce the monthly amount it pays foster families and the number of contracts it has for placing foster care children in residential facilities.