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CONTACT:
Kenneth J. Wolfe, 202-690-1217
Kenneth.Wolfe@acf.hhs.gov

HHS, PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS TEAM UP, ANNOUNCE $35 MILLION PLAN TO KEEP AT-RISK FAMILIES TOGETHER

New initiative aims for early identification, targeted services

Washington, DC — The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is teaming up with four national foundations to combat family homelessness. Families comprise the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population, now accounting for more than one third of the overall group.

ACF will provide $1 million per year to each of five grantees for five years ($25 million total) to demonstrate the effectiveness and potential cost-savings of projects incorporating stable housing and comprehensive services that focus on safety, positive family functioning, and child well-being. The initial funding opportunities were announced this week and selected grant recipients will be announced in September. Funding for the following four years is dependent on the availability of funds and grantees meeting certain benchmarks.

Additionally, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and Edna McConnell Clark Foundation will provide a combined total of at least $10 million over the next five years. This money will be used for technical assistance and rigorous national evaluations of the supportive housing plan’s effectiveness.

This cooperation supports President Obama’s public-private partnership initiative, aimed at combining public and private sector funds, skills, and resources to solve community problems. Supportive housing is also an important step toward ending
family homelessness, a key goal of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which is chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

This supportive housing plan builds on a successful pilot effort, Keeping Families Together, which paired supportive housing in New York City with on-site case management for families experiencing chronic homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, and/or child welfare involvement. Three years after the pilot ended, the overwhelming majority of the families had stable housing, six children previously placed in foster care were reunited with their biological families, and school attendance improved steadily.

ACF’s new initiative aims to determine whether similar programs could be effective in other areas of the country.

“As more states move toward serving families safely outside of foster care, it has become more apparent that families face multiple challenges,” said Commissioner Bryan Samuels of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. “This initiative is designed to help us identify high need families earlier and to provide the right set of targeted services that lead to meaningful family improvements.” Improvements include reducing child abuse and neglect, reducing the number of foster care placements, and increasing housing and employment stability, Samuels added.

This initiative also aims to spur local philanthropic organizations and local and state public agencies to join forces at the community level, similar to the partnership that has been developed between the administration and national foundations.

“Grantees will be encouraged to build on or leverage relationships with key stakeholders including local philanthropic partners, employment and education programs, substance abuse treatment, health, mental health, and child-serving agencies and family and criminal courts,” said Samuels.

The administration encourages child welfare agencies across the country, in partnership with local housing agencies and shelters, to apply for the grants at www.grants.gov.

The four national foundations have released a joint statement.