



Date: January 7, 2019
To: Members of the Coalition of Residential Excellence
From: Don Forrester, Executive Director
Subject: December 2018 CORE Monthly Report

LEGISLATION

As 2018 came to an end, all legislative bills previously filed and not enacted into law over the preceding two-year-period disappeared. Of course, some bills have a way of surfacing in enacted legislation through the process of an amendment to an appropriation act. The passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act earlier in 2018 is a prime example of how legislation previously not favorably enacted through the regular legislative process found itself in legislation.

Frankly, I was surprised that the year 2018 ended without a continuing resolution being enacted to keep the government operational. Knowing that legislation had been written and not filed since October, I would also have been surprised had the continuing resolution not included an amendment to extend waivers to Title VI-E of the Social Security Act to States already operating under a waiver. The current waivers are set to expire in 2019. A number of states reportedly maintain that provisions of FFPSA are far more restrictive regarding prevention services than those permitted them through current use of IV-E funds extended through waivers. Consequently, adherence to the strict provisions of FFPSA would be a huge step backwards.

Of course, as I write my report for December, 2018, 25% of the government is without funding and who's to say when the partial government shutdown will end? If there is credibility in news releases, the shutdown may last for an extended period. Consequently, as the year ended, there was no acceptable appropriation act to host an amendment(s).

Despite the name, as I have shared before, FFPSA falls perilously short of the label. The rhetoric used to describe the merits of prevention fall short of the reality permitted under the passed legislation. In order to be eligible to receive "prevention" services, the child must

Executive Director's Report for December 2018

already be at risk for out-of-home placement and that implies abuse/neglect has already taken place.

In addition, the prohibition for IV-E monies to be used to provide something other than short term treatment services effectively implies there is no value in the care provided through congregate care settings. Many of the CORE providers serving children in a live-in cottage parent model do so without receiving reimbursement. Consequently, passage of FFPSA is not intended to interfere with those placements. That's not to say, the reality will work out according to actual provisions inherent in legislation.

From the perspective of our membership, it is imperative that tweaks be made in current legislation that fails to offer the live-in cottage parent model the same level of consideration as foster parents. While I applaud efforts to support and redirect families through prevention services, the reality exists that currently there is a capacity crisis across the nation and their continues to be the need for removal of children to ensure their safety.

It is imperative that we not lose sight of the importance of having a voice. The folks in California, Florida, and elsewhere who are less than thrilled with the harm coming their way related to funding prevention services without an extension of their IV-E waiver are not going to be silenced.

We live in an age where the squeaky wheel gets the grease. That should provide us incentive to continue making legislative contacts and express the continuing need for the services provided by members of the Coalition of Residential Excellence.

In terms of anticipated filing of other legislation, it is my understanding that Congressman Chuck Fleischmann's office plans to file the modernization of houseparent exemption legislation soon. Once filed, the legislation is going to need sponsorship from other legislators. Will Strother, in Congressman Fleischmann's office, is coordinating those efforts. It would be extremely helpful if our membership could influence legislators to support that effort.

I will be on Capitol Hill later this month and will attempt to garner a better understanding of the new appointments associated to committee structures and heads of those committees. It is my understanding that Senator Chuck Grassley will chair the Senate Finance Committee. Senator Grassley is from Iowa.

2019 CORE Membership and Advantages

As a reminder, CORE membership dues for 2019 are due in January. Hopefully, all of you have received a renewal application to continue membership. If for some reason, you did not receive one, please let me know.

As a side note, increasing membership in the Coalition of Residential Excellence continues to be part of our strategy for having a voice related to legislation. I am convinced that it will take a

Executive Director's Report for December 2018

united effort of those involved in serving children and families from hard places to make an impressionable difference on Capitol Hill.

During 2018, I had the privilege of meeting with two or three statewide associations regarding legislation, provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act and things to consider in moving forward. As recently as New Year's Eve, I received a telephone call from a provider from one of those associations asking for information and pledging his support in helping us garner a voice in Washington.

Everyone in our membership has someone in Washington representing their interests. Why not work collaboratively together in making our message clear and garnering the momentum needed to orchestrate change? We owe it to the children and families we serve.

Please know of my willingness to meet with provider groups in your area to talk about the importance of standing united against the threats that minimize and misrepresent the services and outcomes provided by our membership.

Outcome Tracking

At the end of November, I reached out to our membership requesting answers to five questions:

- 1) What are your overall program goals?
- 2) How do you measure your program's effectiveness to determine outcomes?
- 3) What is the frequency of your data collection?
- 4) What do you do well?
- 5) What kinds of information do you collect post discharge for former residents?

I am very pleased with the information that I've received in response to that request. I will be providing information garnered from the answers to those questions with the CORE Board at our next board meeting on January 29-30th. Subsequently, the de-identified information will be shared with all of you. If you've not yet responded to the request, we continue to need you input.

One of the criticisms often directed to residential care settings is that we focus more on tracking numbers of children served and utilization rates than we do in highlighting outcomes that substantiate the value of our work.

As an industry, the criticism is often valid. There isn't a universal list of outcomes that is representative of what consumers and donors should or could expect to find. In terms of

Executive Director's Report for December 2018

strengthening our voice legislatively, nothing is of more importance than accurately telling our stories and having outcome data to back it up.