

FACES OF THE
**SOCIAL
SERVICES
BLOCK
GRANT**

INTRODUCTION

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 (P.L. 97-35) and is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. The program is an entitlement to states and falls into the category of "non-defense mandatory spending." SSBG, a flexible funding source that can be used for nearly 30 different types of services, allows states and local jurisdictions to tailor social service programming to their populations' needs. The flexibility of SSBG is crucial to its recipients as it helps fill the gaps in and between other human services programs receiving insufficient federal funding.

Each year, the federal government allocates funds to states to support social services for vulnerable children, adults and families through SSBG. Because of SSBG, states and local jurisdictions are able to provide essential services that help achieve a number of goals: to reduce dependency and promote self-sufficiency; protect children and adults from neglect, abuse and exploitation; and help individuals who are unable to take care of themselves.

Ten states pass SSBG funds directly to counties: Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin, though counties access SSBG funds in other states as well. In 2012, NACo conducted a survey that revealed counties most commonly use SSBG for adult protective services, which benefit elderly and disabled adults, and child protective services. In another NACo analysis of Federal Audit Clearinghouse data, counties used over \$763 million in SSBG funds in FY 2015.

Although the focus on Capitol Hill is the total dollar amount of SSBG, it is important to acknowledge the impact SSBG has on individuals across the country. This report brings a more personal perspective to SSBG as we look into the unique experiences of individuals and the vital role the block grant has played in helping them overcome obstacles in their lives.

As we enter into the 115th Congress, SSBG's future remains uncertain as the program continues to be targeted for further cuts. Although SSBG has champions on both sides of the aisle, the current unpredictability around the federal budget and efforts to reduce spending threatens the future of the block grant. In fact, in 2016, the House Ways and Means Committee approved legislation that would completely eliminate the block grant. We will continue to advocate for the protection of SSBG and against further cuts to the block grant in 2017 and beyond.

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AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES



In Texas, with the help of SSBG funds, APS was able to provide Gladys with a new home.

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a program provided by state and local governments nationwide to serve seniors and adults with disabilities who face abuse, neglect and exploitation. APS is crucial in keeping vulnerable adults at home in the community. The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) is the only designated federal funding source to states for APS. In FY 2014, 37 states used SSBG for APS, serving at least 578,000 adults. A National Adult Protective Services Association survey of APS directors found that cuts to or elimination of the block grant would be devastating to APS programs.

In Texas, APS became involved with Gladys after she began exhibiting self-neglect, a common APS case. Gladys became increasingly withdrawn after the death of her husband. It was soon apparent that Gladys needed care and was stealing from the local grocery store and her neighbors. Gladys repeatedly refused to accept help from APS. Eventually, Gladys' utilities were cut off and she was involuntarily hospitalized several times.

APS obtained a court order to enter her home when it was reported that Gladys had booby trapped her yard.

When APS entered, the home was as dangerous and deplorable as feared, including a makeshift stove of a hubcap over burning wood and rain water for drinking. APS was granted an emergency order for protective services and although Gladys was resistant, she calmed down when in the ambulance. Gladys was placed in a nursing home. Though the APS team feared she would deteriorate further, when the supervisor visited she had adjusted well and was playing the piano. Gladys was grateful for her new friends at the facility and took pleasure in gathering in a prayer and praise circle nearby.

With the help of SSBG funds, APS was able to remove Gladys from a dangerous situation and place her into a new home.

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CHILD WELFARE SERVICES



In Los Angeles County, child welfare services funded by SSBG played a critical role in helping Patricia reunite with her children.

Across the country, millions of children receive child welfare services each year, improving their health and well-being. SSBG funding provides critical front-end child welfare services that other funding streams cannot. In FY 2014, 49 states reported using \$47 million in SSBG expenditures for child welfare services. The absence of SSBG funding to identify risks, provide immediate support and refer children and their families to services, can put children at risk of out-of-home placement or delay reunification.

In California, child welfare services played a critical role in helping Patricia reunite with her children. Due to struggles with substance abuse, Patricia gave up her first seven children to adoption. She was sober for her next two children, but her third child tested positive for drug exposure. As a result, all three children were taken into custody and placed into foster homes.

With nowhere to turn, Patricia visited Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS). DCFS referred her to a large non-profit organization that connected her with the substance abuse treatment and other family-focused services that Patricia needed.

Both Patricia and her husband started going to therapy and attend-

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ing parenting courses. They learned about child development, anger management and relapse prevention. Additionally, a community advocate went with Patricia to court appointments, helping her understand the ins and outs of dependency court and what it would take to get her children back. After three years, and the help of child welfare services, Patricia's children could return home.

With the help of SSBG funding, Los Angeles County's DCFS and the non-profit organization were able to provide services to Patricia that allowed her to overcome her substance abuse and be reunited with her children. In Los Angeles County, SSBG funding has made it possible for vulnerable families like Patricia's to receive these services and start a new future.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



In Alabama, Chelsea received CPS support thanks to SSBG funds.

Child protective services (CPS) are services and activities intended to protect and safeguard children who face abuse, neglect and exploitation. SSBG is a critical federal funding source for vulnerable children who are unable to protect their own interests. In FY 2014, 39 states reported spending a total of \$329 million of SSBG funds for CPS.

In Alabama, CPS became involved with four-year-old Chelsea after her neighbors placed a neglect report about an unsupervised child in the street. When local authorities returned Chelsea to her home, the officer noticed the deplorable living conditions. Upon CPS' initial visit and assessment, they learned that the three children living in the home did not meet their proper developmental

milestones—they were not toilet trained and were non-verbal. Due to severe neglect, the children were removed from their home and connected to a mental health agency for psychological diagnosis and evaluations.

Each child's separate needs were addressed: one sibling was referred to the local Head Start, the second sibling received residential care and the last sibling received inpatient treatment. Within a year's time, each child thrived in their respective treatments and could return home.

In addition to these health services, CPS also made sure the family received outpatient services from the community mental health agency. The agency taught the parents about each child's diagnosis and how to reinforce skills the children were taught in their treatment. SSBG funding can be used for a variety of critical services, including those Chelsea's family used.

In Alabama, CPS is one of the main uses of SSBG funding. In 2014, Alabama used \$9 million, or about 40 percent, of its SSBG funds for CPS. Although there are other national funding sources for CPS, including the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), SSBG funding for CPS far outpaces CAPTA funding. In fact, in 2014, Alabama used \$18 million of SSBG funds, while receiving only \$389,796 from CAPTA.

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SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS



In Coshocton County, SSBG-supported services allowed Rachel and Phyllis to maintain their independence at an old age.

State and local governments may use SSBG funds to support of a variety of services for older adults, which includes individuals 60 years of age and older. These services help older adults remain in their homes and communities, live independently and improve their quality of life. Services may also be provided to prevent or remedy abuse, neglect or exploitation of older adults. In FY 2014, 41 states reported spending \$284 million for services for older adults.

In Ohio, over \$9 million of annual SSBG expenditures go towards services for older adults. In Coshocton County, SSBG-supported services allowed Rachel and Phyllis' to maintain their independence at an old age. The two women were both 100 years old and living at home. Although they were limited in their ability to care for themselves, high costs prohibited them from moving into a nursing facility. With no other options, they were connected with Coshocton County's Job and Family Services agency and the Coshocton City Health Department. The City Health staff and the Job and Family Services agency provided Rachel and

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Phyllis with home-based services and home-delivered meals. Specifically, the women received housekeeping services, weekly visits from health professionals and Meals on Wheels food delivery.

With the help of SSBG funding, Coshocton County's Job and Family Services agency and the Coshocton City Health Department were able to provide services to Rachel and Phyllis that allowed these women to stay in their homes. In Coshocton County, SSBG funding has made it possible for older residents, just like Rachel and Phyllis, to receive these services and live the remainder of their lives where they are most comfortable.

DISABILITY SERVICES



With the help of SSBG funding, Alameda County's DCFS was able to provide Nate with the vital medical services he needed to survive.

State and local governments may use SSBG funds to support a variety of services to persons with disabilities or those in danger of abuse, neglect or exploitation. These services include investigation, emergency medical services, emergency shelter and counseling. In FY 2014, 21 states spent \$277 million on special services for persons with disabilities.

In California, Christy was raising three children by herself. One of her children, Nate, was born with a disabling lung condition that required regular medical intervention. Christy and Nate received disability services after Christy was laid off from her job and lost health coverage for both herself and her son. With no health insurance, Christy missed one of Nate's weekly checkups. Knowing that ongoing medical treatment was critical for her son, the family doctor called child protective services.

Rather than losing custody of her children, Alameda County's Department

of Children and Families Services (DCFS) referred Christy and her children to a community-based program that supports families who receive support through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). Thanks to this program, Christy's son was now eligible for health insurance to support his special needs.

In addition to receiving special services for Nate, over the course of six months a family advocate visited the home weekly and referred Christy to parenting and therapy classes as well as therapy classes for her children. Additionally, the advocate helped Christy develop a resume and look for jobs.

With the help of SSBG funding, Alameda County's DCFS was able to provide Nate with the vital medical services he needed to survive. The additional services provided by DCFS, also supported by SSBG, were critical for Christy's and her children's future success.

IN FY 2014, 21 STATES SPENT \$27 MILLION ON
SPECIAL SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

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