

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Director

Before the
Committee on Human Services
Brienne K. Nadeau, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

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Good morning, Councilmember Nadeau, members of the Committee, and Committee staff. I am Brenda Donald, director of the Child and Family Services Agency. I am pleased to testify before you today.

Last month, Mayor Bowser presented “A Fair Shot,” the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019) Budget and Financial Plan, the District’s 23rd consecutive balanced budget. This budget does more to make Washington, D.C. a place where people of all backgrounds and in all stages of life can live and thrive. It makes key investments in infrastructure, education, affordable housing, health and human services, economic opportunity, seniors, and public safety. These investments reflect key priorities that District residents identified at Budget Engagement Forums and telephone town halls during the budget formulation process.

The Mayor’s proposed budget for CFSA, which I will present today, demonstrates her leadership and commitment to some of our most vulnerable residents.

I also want to acknowledge that this is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to promote the importance of protecting children and strengthening families—both key elements in CFSA’s mission. We support some of our city’s most vulnerable children, youth, and families in breaking negative cycles and finding the on ramp to the pathway to the middle class.

FY19 Focus and Priorities

CFSA’s proposed FY19 budget is driven by several strategic realities. I want to share these foundational concepts with you.

Rightsizing: For over a decade, the overall number of children CFSA serves has declined. As a result, we are continuing to right size our budget in line with service demand. Five years ago, at the beginning of FY13, we were serving a total of 3,632 children. At the beginning of this month (April 2018), we were serving 2,257. Of that number, 855 (38 percent) are in foster care. Declines like that made it possible for CFSA to reduce the number of providers of family foster homes in Maryland from seven to one in FY17 in order to establish a new level of quality, parity, and partnership in serving children—and also revitalize the local foster care business model. For FY19, we continue on the positive path of aligning our budget request with service demand.

Ensuring Services Are Necessary and Effective: Over the past six years, CFSA has emphasized helping families to stay together whenever possible. Today, we are monitoring 62 percent of the children we serve in their birth homes because of the agency’s commitment to prevention services and family support. In FY17, we streamlined and improved services through our Safe and Stable Families Redesign to ensure that all services we provide are both necessary and effective based on utilization, outcomes, and no duplication of effort. Through this redesign process and our evaluation, CFSA determined that not all evidence-based best practices work well with our population. As the Title IV-E waiver expires in March 2019, CFSA is tightening our long-standing relationships with the local Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives. In cooperation with these partners, we have defined and expanded the types of



families to be served while also strengthening the service array previously available using federal funding.

Honing the Basics: Our FY19 budget request supports a strategic focus on improvements in the critical core areas of Prevention, Practice, Placement Stability, and Permanence. This focus aligns with the values in our ongoing Four Pillars strategic agenda.

Investing: Finally, the budget request for CFSA includes investments in services our children and families need and in modernized data management to meet federal requirements.

Proposed Budget Overview

The overall FY19 budget request for CFSA is \$224.2 million, which includes \$161.2 million in local funds, \$60.2 million in federal funds, and \$2.8 million in special purpose revenue and intra-District transfer funds. This proposed budget ensures that we can continue to meet our mission and provide critical core services to children and families. For example, it supports:

- The District's 24-hour hotline for reporting child abuse and neglect.
- Our in-house health assessment center for children and youth entering or re-entering care.
- Individual caseloads within standards so that social workers conducting investigations and family assessments and managing in-home and out-of-home cases can do the quality work that leads to good outcomes.
- Continuing community-based prevention and family support services through the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives.
- An array of placements for a projected 947 children and youth in care.
- Improved support for family reunification and other pathways to permanence for children and youth in care.
- Continuing life skills development, teen parent, educational support, and transitional services for youth in care.

The Mayor's proposed FY19 budget for CFSA includes \$5.1 million in enhancements. The breakdown is as follows:

- A total of \$1.1 million will go toward enhancing services our families need most: mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Two million dollars will allow the District to comply with new federal requirements to upgrade and modernize our automated case management system. For 20 years, we have had the system known as FACES. Over the next few years, we will come into compliance with federal requirements by building a new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System—or CCWIS.
- A final \$2 million portion of the \$5.1 million enhancement will help to defray loss of federal funds for administrative costs.



The FY19 budget also reflects a modest reduction due, primarily, to two factors. The first relates to the continuing decline of the number of children in foster care and resulting programmatic and administrative efficiencies. In FY19, we will save \$5.6 million in foster care room and board and \$2 million in adoption and guardianship subsidies, for overall savings of \$7.6 million. The second factor reflects the work I mentioned earlier to ensure all the services we provide are both necessary and effective based on utilization, outcomes, and no duplication of effort. As a result, in FY19, we will discontinue both HOMEBUILDERS[®] and Project Connect that were part of our experimentation with evidence-based models under the Title IV-E waiver demonstration project. In order to maintain fidelity to these national models, we had to adhere to narrow and rigid eligibility and practice standards that did not work for too many of our families. This supports a reduction of \$4.973 million and helps to prepare CFSA for the end of flexible federal funding in March 2019.

Overall, the proposed budget for CFSA supports our performance improvement and outcome priorities for FY19.

Conclusion

In closing, resources allocated to CFSA will play a critical role in supporting our clients and their families. The Council and this Committee are critical allies in this effort, and I appreciate your work to ensure we operate efficiently and effectively. I look forward to our continued partnership to achieve our shared goals and to give all residents a fair shot at benefitting from Washington, D.C.'s continued prosperity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am prepared to answer your questions.

