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Press Releases

States Take Aim at Reducing Number of Children in Foster Care

NGA Center Picks Six States for Policy Academy Dedicated to Improving Outcomes for Vulnerable Children

WASHINGTON — Recognizing that there are too many children in foster care and that their safety and well-being may be improved by other means, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) has selected six states—Arkansas, Florida, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and South Carolina—to participate in a policy academy to safely reduce the number of children in foster care. The academy is being conducted in partnership with Casey Family Programs, a Seattle-based foundation committed to safely reducing nationwide the number of children in foster care by 50 percent by 2020.

During the last two decades, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled. However, there is growing recognition that with appropriate services and supports to the families, many of these children could safely remain at home and avoid the trauma of separation from their home and community. For children who must enter foster care, they are more likely to have positive outcomes when placed in family-like settings and quickly reunited with their family, placed with kin or adopted.

This policy academy offers state teams, made up of representatives from governors’ offices, state child welfare agencies, other relevant state agencies and stakeholders, the opportunity to work with national and state experts to improve outcomes for children and youth who come to the attention of the child welfare system.

“Most children in foster care have been removed from their homes because of neglect or abuse to ensure their own safety and well-being,” said John Thomasian, director of the NGA Center. “This policy academy will help states devise strategies for reducing the number of children in foster care while improving long-term outcomes for vulnerable children.”

During the course of the academy, states will develop a two-year strategic plan to reduce the number of children in foster care while ensuring that safety remains paramount. The plans will focus on reducing the number of children entering care, shortening length of stay for those in care and/or improving permanency outcomes to reduce returns to care, as well as strategies for sustaining effort over time.

By the end of 2008, participating states are expected to:

- Improve their understanding of the state’s child welfare data trends and what drives those trends;
- Improve collaboration among mental health, substance abuse, child welfare and other systems;
- Develop a plan that identifies outcomes the state wants to achieve and strategies for achieving them, specific action steps with timelines for moving forward and a plan for tracking progress and measuring success; and
- Identify new, increased or redirected funding to support and sustain the state’s work.

For more information, visit www.nga.org/center.

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Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation’s governors and one of Washington, D.C.’s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, go to www.nga.org.

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