

Budget Plan Sets Off Alarms

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has critics worried.

The president seeks to create a Child Safety and Juvenile Justice Block Grant, which would essentially fold all of the specific funding priorities in OJJDP's budget into one large pot to be dished out proportionally to the states. Of the \$280 million, \$254 million is slated for "juvenile justice programs."

The new arrangement would remove most of the authority the federal government holds over the field, several juvenile justice advocates argue. "This is an alarming and potentially devastating abandonment by the feds," says Morna Murray, director of the education and youth development division at the Children's Defense Fund.

The upside of the consolidation, according to the Bush proposal, includes the elimination of "formulas and earmarks ... creating a single, flexible and competitive grant program." The new scheme would also "address multiple child safety and juvenile justice needs, depending on local need or national priority," and expand "efforts to prevent crimes against children, and investigate sexual predators, [and] child prostitution rings."

Fundamental Change?

Theoretically, the current system is set up so OJJDP can develop research and pilot projects to improve juvenile justice practice, then fund efforts to implement the most promising efforts.

About one-third of the OJJDP budget is in a discretionary spending pot for the purpose of developing new initiatives. Other OJJDP spending lines include gang prevention, drug prevention, mentoring programs and Juvenile Accountability Block Grants (JABG).

But many who monitor the field are seeing this new plan while already believing that Congress and the Bush administration have short-changed juvenile justice in recent years. For the past five years, the agency's discretionary money for new programs has been almost completely earmarked by Congress. JABG (once an "overwhelmingly supported stream" by both parties, Murray says) had been reduced from \$250 million in 2002 to \$50 million by 2007.

"Leadership has waned in the past few years, as funding has slipped and earmarking has taken away [the agency's] discretion," said Shay Bilchik, who left last month as head of the Child Welfare League of America to become director of the new Center for Juvenile Justice Reform

and Systems Integration, based at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute. (See Newsmakers, page 10.)

"When you take the dynamic program that once existed at OJJDP and turn it into a block grant, you have abdicated any federal leadership role" in juvenile justice, said Bilchik, who served as OJJDP administrator under the Clinton administration.

Block grants tend not to fare well in tough fiscal times, Bilchik said: "Once you go to a block grant, you're setting yourself up for lower appropriations, eventually. It's just a matter of year-to-year appropriations."

Combining funding streams would hurt the ability of advocates to make a public case for specific funding streams, Murray argues. It is much easier for someone promoting mentoring to push for more mentoring grant money in general than it would be to push each state to use more of its block grant for that purpose.

Those specific budget line items offer a "core protection" that goes

away once you forsake programs for a block grant, says Miriam Rollin, vice president of federal policy at the advocacy group Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. "The only things that the core protections are attached to are the dollars. So if the dollars aren't there, the requirements aren't there."

Bush also proposed that the block grants include money for school safety, as well as child safety and exploitation, an issue that OJJDP Director J. Robert Flores is passionate about. "Of the \$250 million he's proposing, there's no way to know how much will go to JJ efforts," Murray says. "That's frightening."

A state could spend a large portion of its money on the newly added priorities, Murray said. Those working to fight sex crimes involving children "should be served," she said, "but not lumped in with JJ. This money is to help kids in trouble, and keep kids out of trouble, and there's no guarantee they'd get the money they need" under the new structure.

The prospects for congressional acceptance of the block grant plan are unclear. Murray sees "the chances of passing as nil." Bilchik believes opponents of the plan need to take it more seriously. Block grants "often appear to be a good option in a climate" where both parties are forced to contemplate spending thrift, he said.

Meanwhile, OJJDP faces decisions on its 2007 discretionary budget, which for the first time in years will not be consumed by congressional earmarks before it hits the agency's bank account. The grant management staff has dwindled over the years, so there is some speculation that OJJDP's parent agency, the Office of Justice Programs, will oversee the grant competition for 2007. Because the discretionary pot carries only the loose mandate of developing new initiatives, some advocates wonder what priorities the office will set.

OJJDP was unavailable to comment.

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FUNDING

Federal Budget Freezes Youth Programs

By Erika Fitzpatrick

For those who love budget slides, actuarial tables and the phrase "fiscal year," February was your month. Not only did President Bush drop his 2008 five-year budget plan on Congress' doorstep — where it pretty much landed with a thud — he also signed a catchall spending resolution to keep most federal agencies running for the rest of the fiscal year that began last Oct. 1.

The belated \$463.5 billion fiscal 2007 legislation rescinded unspent funds and reduced legislative line items — earmarks — freeing up about \$10 billion for other uses. With few exceptions, however, youth programs remained at 2006 funding levels.

Even that looked better than some of Bush's recommendations for 2008, which many advocates said were insufficient to address unmet needs in education, health, child welfare, job training and juvenile justice. (See related story, page 1.)

"The funding really is frozen in most of the areas we follow," said Miriam Rollin, vice president of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a group of law enforcement and victims' rights leaders who argue the best way to reduce crime is to invest in prevention programs. "You're eroding, and you're not meeting the vast amount of unmet need."

Others, however, gave the new

budget proposal high marks for trying to control federal spending.

The president's request is just the opening salvo in the annual appropriations ritual; Congress will shape the final budget. Here's a roundup of the key youth issues:

Department of Education

Some of that extra \$10 billion in 2007 money was tapped to boost ED funding for the Pell grant program by \$615.4 million, which translates into a maximum of \$4,310 for each of these need-based scholarships. This could be a rare area of agreement between Bush and the Democratic congressional majority. The president wants an even greater boost, to \$4,600 per grant, in 2008.

No additional funding was provided for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program, which remains at \$981 million. "It wasn't a surprise," said Erika Argersinger, policy director for the Afterschool Alliance, an advocacy organization. "It was disappointing, because we feel like we have seen growing support among policymakers for after school."

Bush didn't seek an increase for 2008 either, even though the program's authorization level of \$2.5 billion is more than double his \$981 million request. "For '08, we're go-

ing to be working to get increases in 21st Century," Argersinger said. She said that fully funded, the program would serve an additional 1.5 million kids.

Health and Human Services

Short- and long-term funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is expected to dominate HHS budget discussions this year.

The program faces a \$745 million shortfall in 2007, which would affect kids' health care coverage in 14 states, according to Edwin Park, senior health policy analyst at the liberal-leaning Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). Georgia, facing a more than \$130 million shortfall, recently announced an enrollment freeze.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) sent a letter last month asking Bush to include the \$745 million as part of his expected \$100 billion war-time supplemental funding request this year. A bipartisan array of "strange bedfellows" has coalesced in support of "gains in kids' coverage," Park said.

But long-term financing of the program is a thornier issue. Bush's five-year request for \$4.8 billion in

additional SCHIP funds is a fraction of what Park and other experts say is the \$12 billion minimum needed to maintain current SCHIP enrollment levels over the next five years.

Meanwhile, the conservative Heritage Foundation praised the president's budget for reining in health care entitlement spending and projecting the elimination of the deficit by 2012. Nina Owcharenko, senior policy analyst for health care at the foundation, wrote in a February report that Bush's SCHIP proposal is "fiscally prudent," would refocus the program on low-income uninsured children from families that are below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and would target dollars to states with populations most in need.

Bush's proposals to eliminate the \$630 million Community Services Block Grant and trim the Social Services Block Grant from \$1.7 billion to \$1.2 billion aren't expected to go over well on Capitol Hill, predicted Wade Horn, HHS assistant secretary for children and families.

As head of the Administration for Children and Families, Horn oversees at least 65 programs that serve vulnerable youth and families. Seeing the glass as half full, he pointed to the budget's request of more funds for abstinence education, services to protect unaccompanied children of illegal immigrants, money to speed interstate adoption of foster children and grants to expand home-based nurse visitation. But, he conceded, "it's a very difficult budgetary environment."

Head Start got a \$103.7 million increase, nudging its total to \$6.9 billion this year.

Department of Labor

The Youthbuild program, having completed a move from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to DOL, is still struggling to regain the 23 percent funding cut lost in the transition, said Dorothy Stoneman, president of YouthBuild USA, a nonprofit training and support organization. The 2007 budget and 2008 request of \$50 million each year represent level funding for this youth job skills program – \$15 million below the 2004 level.

Stoneman said two dozen of the 226 federally funded Youthbuild programs could close this year. As it is, about 14,000 kids who applied last year were turned away, she said.

"Level funding reflects, on the one hand, the approval of the program by the administration," Stoneman said, noting that it's a "compliment," because few discretionary grant programs for low-income communities are being expanded. "Being level-funded by anyone is still a tragic loss of opportunity" to serve disconnected youth, she said.

Re-emerging elsewhere in the president's DOL request were the \$3.4 billion Career Advancement Accounts (CAAs), which would collapse individual adult and youth job skills and training line items into state block grants. Rachel Gragg, federal policy director at the Washington-based The Workforce Alliance, doesn't expect Congress to suddenly take a liking to the accounts. Bush floated the idea in his 2007 budget request, but it didn't make it into work force investment legislation passed by the previous Republican-controlled Congress.

The president requested a cut of more than \$100 million in youth job training, also disappointing Gragg. "We feel funding should be increasing," she said.

National Service

What bothers Gene Sofer, a consultant to youth-serving nonprofits, including Voices for National Service, is that Bush's rhetoric in praise of national service doesn't match "continuing budget cuts" to the Corporation for National and Community Service programs. "We understand that we have our work cut out for us," he said. "A lot of programs have been underfunded over the past several years, and all of them are ... going to be anxious to catch up."

Department of Justice

Given the years of White House recommended cuts in federal juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs, continued funding levels for 2007 – at around \$340 million, the same as fiscal year 2006 – is "progress," said Rollin of Fight Crime.

But while deficits will constrain the new leadership, status quo budgeting in 2008 won't distinguish the new Congress from its predecessor, she said. The budget is a "prioritization document," she said. "And so if there's no new money to go into anything, that means you agree with all of the prior priorities."

Budget Chart Note:

- (a) Reflects \$4.3 billion spent to retire account shortfall.
 (b) Due to complexity of budgeting, figures are estimates only; 2006 enacted level is actual dollars spent.
 (c) Baseline figure only.
 (d) Projected spending without supplemental funding to fill an expected 14-state shortfall of \$745 million.
 (e) Funds would be transferred to Labor Department for a multiagency ex-offender initiative.
 (f) Proposed new initiative to create a single competitive grant program to address child safety, juvenile justice, and school safety, including Walsh Act activities. Consolidates at least 13 separate programs (juvenile justice formula and block grants, mentoring, block grants, etc.) into one account.
 (g) Proposed new account consolidating numerous Justice Assistance programs, including Weed and Seed and Drug Courts.
 (h) Youth training would be funded from this proposed Career Advancement account.
 (i) In 2006, Youthbuild was appropriated through Housing and Urban Development; it is now under the Labor Department.
 Sources: White House and agency budget documents covering fiscal 2006-2008; appropriations laws for fiscal 2006-2007; documents from the Child Welfare League of America; and for SCHIP, Edwin Park, senior health policy analyst, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The Federal Youth Budget

Compiled by Erika Fitzpatrick

m = Million b = Billion X = Program did not exist or was not funded

Agency/Program	2006 Enacted	2007 Request	2007 Enacted	2008 Request
Agriculture				
Child Nutrition Programs	\$12.6 b	\$13.7 b	\$12.6 b	\$13.9 b
Women, Infants & Children Program	\$5.4 b	\$5.4 b	\$5.4 b	\$5.5 b
Education				
21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$981 m	\$981 m	\$981 m	\$981 m
Charter Schools	\$214.8 m	\$214.8 m	\$214.8 m	\$214.8 m
Credit Enhancement for Charter Schools	\$37 m	\$37 m	\$37 m	\$36.6 m
School Dropout Prevention	\$4.9 m	X	\$4.9 m	X
Education for the Disadvantaged	\$14.5 b	\$16.5 b	\$14.7 b	\$16.1 b
Neglected and Delinquent Youth	\$49.8 m	\$49.8 m	\$49.8 m	\$49.8 m
Even Start	\$99 m	X	\$99 m	X
Improving Teacher Quality	\$2.9 b	\$2.9 b	\$2.9 b	\$2.8 b
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	\$11.7 b	\$11.7 b	\$11.7 b	\$11.5 b
Safe & Drug-Free Schools (State)	\$346.5 m	X	\$346.5 m	\$100 m
Safe & Drug-Free Schools (National)	\$141 m	\$197 m	\$141 m	\$224 m
Alcohol Abuse Reduction	\$32.4 m	X	\$32.4 m	X
Mentoring	\$49 m	\$19 m	\$49 m	X
Incarcerated Youth State Grants	\$23 m	X	\$23 m	X
GEAR UP college prep program	\$303 m	X	\$303 m	\$303 m
TRIO (Upward Bound/Talent Search, etc.)	\$828 m	\$380 m	\$828 m	\$828 m
High School Intervention/Reform	X	\$1.47 b	X	X
Pell Grants	(a) \$17.3 b	\$12.7 b	\$13.7 b	\$15.2 b
Health and Human Services				
State Children's Health Insurance (b)	\$5.9 b	(c) \$5.2 b	(d) \$5.7 b	\$6.1 b
Head Start	\$6.8 b	\$6.8 b	\$6.9 b	\$6.7 b
Abstinence Education – mandatory state payments	\$50 m	\$50 m	\$50 m	\$50 m
Abstinence Education – community (and evaluation)	\$114 m	\$141 m	\$114 m	\$137 m
Unaccompanied Alien Children	\$77 m	\$105 m	\$77 m	\$135 m
Adolescent Family Life	\$31 m	\$30 m	\$31 m	\$30 m
Adoption Incentives, Opportunities and Awareness	\$57 m	\$69 m	\$51.2 m	\$63.4 m
Interstate Home Study Incentives	X	X	X	\$10 m
Community Services Block Grant	\$630 m	X	\$630 m	X
Center for Mental Health Services	\$884.2 m	\$849 m	\$884.2 m	\$807 m
Children's Mental Health Services	\$105.1 m	\$104 m	\$105.1 m	\$104 m
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention	\$192.9 m	\$180.6 m	\$192.9 m	\$156 m
Substance Abuse Block Grant	\$1.7 b	\$1.76 b	\$1.76 b	\$1.76 b
Child Abuse Grants	\$95 m	\$95 m	\$95 m	\$106 m
Child Care and Development Block Grant	\$2.1 b	\$2.1 b	\$2.1 b	\$2.1 b
Child Support Enforcement and Family Support	\$4 b	\$4.1 b	\$4 b	\$4.08 b
Child Welfare Services and Training	\$294 m	\$294 m	\$294 m	\$294 m
Compassion Capital Fund	\$65 m	\$100 m	\$65 m	\$75 m
Ready to Learn	\$24 m	X	\$24 m	X
Family Planning	\$283 m	\$283 m	\$283 m	\$283 m
Foster Care	\$6.6 b	\$6.94 b	\$6.6 b	\$6.9 b
Chafee Independent Living	\$140 m	\$140 m	\$140 m	\$140 m
Chafee Education and Training Vouchers	\$46 m	\$46 m	\$46 m	\$46 m
Head Start	\$6.8 b	\$6.8 b	\$6.9 b	\$6.8 b
Maternal and Child Health Block Grant	\$693 m	\$693 m	\$693 m	\$693 m
Mentoring Children of Prisoners	\$49 m	\$40 m	\$49 m	\$50 m
Promoting Safe and Stable Families (discretionary)	\$89 m	\$89 m	\$89 m	\$89 m
Runaway and Homeless Youth	\$103 m	\$103 m	\$103 m	\$103 m
Social Services Block Grant	\$1.7 b	\$1.2 b	\$1.7 b	\$1.2 b
Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood	\$150 m	\$150 m	\$150 m	\$150 m
Housing and Urban Development				
Ex-offender services	X	X	X	(e) \$25 m
Justice				
Child Safety and Juvenile Justice (f)	X	X	X	\$280 m
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	\$342.7 m	\$176 m	\$342.7 m	X
Formula grants	\$80 m	\$93.2 m	\$80 m	X
Mentoring	\$10 m	X	\$10 m	X
Incentive/Delinquency Prevention Grants	\$65 m	\$32 m	\$65 m	X
Juvenile Block Grants	\$50 m	\$33.5 m	\$50 m	X
Missing Children	\$48 m	\$51 m	\$48 m	X
Violence Against Women Act	\$386.5 m	\$347 m	\$386.5 m	\$370 m
Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$12 m	\$11.7 m	X	X
Byrne Public Safety and Protection (g)	X	X	X	\$350 m
Drug Courts (including family drug courts)	\$10 m	\$69.2 m	\$10 m	X
Weed and Seed	\$56 m	\$49.3 m	\$56 m	X
Labor				
Career Advancement Accounts (h)	X	\$3.4 b	X	\$3.4 b
Youth Training (Workforce Investment Act)	\$941 m	(X)	\$941 m	\$841 m
Job Corps	\$1.5 b	\$1.5 b	\$1.57 b	\$1.5 b
Reintegration of Offenders	\$68.7 m	X	\$68.7 m	\$39.6 m
Prisoner Re-entry	\$19.8 m	\$19.6 m	\$19.8 m	X
Youthbuild (i)	\$50 m	\$50 m	\$50 m	\$50 m
Independent Agencies				
Corporation for National and Community Service	\$909 m	\$851.5 m	\$885 m	\$828.7 m
Learn and Serve America	\$37 m	\$34.2 m	\$37 m	\$32.1 m
National Civilian Community Corps	\$36.7 m	\$5 m	\$26.7 m	\$12 m
Foster Grandparents	\$111 m	\$110.9 m	\$111 m	\$98 m
Drug Policy Office Media Campaign	\$100 m	\$120 m	\$100 m	\$130 m
Drug Policy Office Drug-Free Communities	\$80 m	\$79.2 m	\$80 m	\$90 m