



MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

I am pleased to present the FY 2012 President's Budget request for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF programs strive to promote the economic and social well-being of children, individuals, families, and communities.

The FY 2012 ACF budget makes significant investments in critical programs that address the human services needs of our Nation – maintaining our commitment to the most vulnerable children, families and communities – in balance with fiscal responsibility. For example, the budget targets funding to early childhood education by investing almost \$900 million more in Head Start and Early Head Start, and a total of \$1.3 billion in additional funding for child care, continuing President Obama's commitment to our youngest learners and exemplifying his belief that investments in early care and education will pay off as children grow.

The budget also seeks to ensure that programs are responsive to the needs of America's most vulnerable families by: (1) supporting a comprehensive approach to early learning and school readiness by providing new investments in quality and heightened program standards across child care settings; (2) proposing a package of child support enforcement investments that support family self-sufficiency and responsible fatherhood, and that recognize the essential role of both parents in providing financial and emotional support for children; (3) proposing child welfare reform that builds on evidence-informed practices by incentivizing states to improve outcomes for children in foster care and others who are receiving child welfare services; and (4) providing a range of strategic, targeted investments to improve services for vulnerable children and families, including funding to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations and enhance their ability to provide social services to those most in need.

The budget also reflects the tough choices the President has identified as necessary to get our deficits under control. To support the freeze on discretionary spending, funding for the Community Services Block Grant program is reduced, and reforms are proposed to introduce competition and increase the program's effectiveness. Funding levels are also reduced for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Finally, the budget responds to the President's call for a government that is accountable and transparent. In this vein, we will employ rigorous program integrity mechanisms, and judiciously target staff resources, to safeguard the investments sought in this budget, and we will set tough performance standards and closely monitor their achievement.

David A. Hansell
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Children and Families