



DIGNITY  
INDEPENDENCE  
RESPONSIBILITY

## Focal Point Executive Summary

The United States faces its worst economic challenge in decades. APHSA's members, the nation's public health and human service administrators, share the widespread alarm over the difficult circumstances under which so many now suffer. As the nation's experts in helping to alleviate need and promoting the highest possible degree of health and independence, we offer the following summary of our plan that will:

- create a health and human service system that moves beyond the dysfunction of the past;
- provide the flexibility necessary for state and local agencies to flourish, yet hold both federal and state health and human service leaders accountable;
- deal realistically and with transparency about budget issues;
- pay for what works, not simply what we can count.

Those whom we serve require our best combined efforts; we owe them nothing less.

### ***Federal/State Relationships***

The public health and human service system is grounded in a federal-state partnership. When that partnership is balanced between state flexibility and reasonable federal oversight, it can be productive and beneficial for all levels of government. However, in recent years that relationship has deteriorated into one characterized by distrust, process-based audits, financial penalties rather than incentives, and federal micromanagement.

#### **Key recommendations:**

- **Provide a consulting role for state and local agencies, through APHSA and its affiliates, on all regulations and other administrative rules and policies.**
- **Restore federal administrative matching rates reflecting an equal partnership between the state and federal governments.**
- **Establish a partnership with states that will assure maximum state flexibility in all programs, coupled with performance standards that are reasonable, achievable, and in conformance with the many differences that exist among state programs and caseload demographics.**

### ***Health***

Few issues are as important, or raise as much concern, as the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective health care to our most vulnerable citizens. State Medicaid agencies are one of the most significant components of the health care system and efficiently cover millions of individuals.

#### **Key recommendations:**

- **Expedite the reauthorization of SCHIP.**
- **Provide a temporary FMAP increase as part of the Economic Stimulus Package.**
- **Repeal or rescind seven recent CMS regulations that will cost states \$50 billion over the next five years.**
- **Suspend the Medicare Part D "clawback" provision.**
- **Rebalance long-term care by restructuring "required" Medicaid services to reduce emphasis on costly institutional care.**
- **Eliminate administrative barriers that prevent Medicaid-Medicare coordination for the dual-eligible population by integrating data on eligibility and services.**
- **Include Medicaid agency directors in the nation's health care reform discussion.**



## ***Child Welfare and Well-Being***

The public child welfare system serves the nation's most vulnerable children and families. Despite certain advances made in recent legislation, public child welfare faces many challenges, particularly during tough economic conditions.

### ***Key recommendations:***

- **All children in care should receive federal support, regardless of income.** Congress should repeal current law that allows services only for the very poor
- **Federal financing should support cost-effective prevention services;** present financing is disproportionately directed toward funding out-of-home care.
- **The federal Child and Family Services Review process must be reformed** and replaced with a monitoring system that is fair and accountable. Further, the Title IV-E Audit process should end disallowances that take away funds from an already resource-strapped child welfare system, or allow states to reinvest these funds in child welfare services.

## ***Economic Services: TANF, Child Care, Child Support, and SNAP***

The critical underpinning of public health and human service system is the array of income assistance and support programs that include self-sufficiency services, nutrition assistance, child support, and quality child care. These needs are greatly exacerbated during economic downturns.

The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program** has established a strong record of stabilizing family income and moving millions into the workforce, and has vividly demonstrated the value of a flexible program that can provide funds and services in an innovative and tailored fashion. However, federal policies now hamper the program in numerous ways, from process-based audits to funding limitations that hurt important segments of those the program was designed to serve. Many TANF administrative burdens can and should be quickly rescinded, including unnecessary auditing mandates, reporting requirements, and funding restrictions such as the proposal to repeal states' ability to claim caseload reduction credit for excess maintenance-of-effort expenditures. Going forward, TANF's next reauthorization must address the loss in the block grant's value since 1996; the necessity of returning to TANF's original flexible policies; and the need to differentially address those who are disabled.

The **Child Support Enforcement program** is one of the most cost-effective and efficient of all government programs. Recommendations for improvement include repeal the Deficit Reduction Act provision that ended federal match for incentive payments; greater investment in automation; repeal of the \$25 fee charged to non-TANF families; greater incentives to pass through the full amount of child support collections; and allowing cash medical support to pay administrative costs related to "Fee-for-Service" Medicaid.

**Child Care** is one of the most valuable services performed by human service agencies; it both enables working parents to enter and remain in the workforce and helps nurture children's developmental needs in their critical early years. The Child Care and Development Fund block grant should be increased to improve access to child care subsidies and increase the access of children to high-quality care. Policy changes are also needed that will provide flexibility at the state and local levels so that quality care can be balanced with access and parental choice. Coordination is needed at the federal level among early care and education funding streams to assure consistent policy guidance and reduce policy conflicts. Finally, the effort to impose a national error rate on child care should be ended and replaced with accountability measures appropriate to a flexible block grant.

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (formerly the **Food Stamp Program**) has long been critical to the success of the web of benefits and services that states administer. SNAP's federal mandates have recently improved in some respects, but the program's rigid requirements and administrative complexity still present many challenges. SNAP law should allow numerous innovative demonstration programs, not just the handful that stringent federal requirements now approve. Simplified application and eligibility requirements, more flexible automated support, and removal of barriers to expanded Combined Application Projects would also help the program efficiently serve many more families. Other critical SNAP reforms include changes that would enhance access to nutritious foods and the restoration of true 50-50 regular matching funds, combined with enhanced match for automated system upgrades.