



COFO Memo

A Publication of the Coalition of Family Organizations

American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors
American Home Economics Association
Family Service Association of America
National Council for Family Relations

Volume I, No. 1

Fall, 1977

WELCOME TO COFO!

This issue of COFO MEMO is your introduction to a new organization of which you are a very important part. At least one of the symbols on our masthead is already familiar to you because you are an individual member, or part of an organization which is a member, of at least one of the four national organizations, now allied in the Coalition of Family Organizations.

We're trying to put our resources in Washington together to improve and strengthen the Washington activities of the four organizations involved in the Coalition. Our basic purpose is to formalize the already existing, close, working relationship of these organizations on issues of common concern.

Our first project is the publication of this COFO MEMO. The publication is still in the experimental stage, and if costs and publication problems do not prove to be insurmountable, we hope that it will become a regular addition to your information sources about the Washington activities. In any event, the Coalition itself will continue, and we recognize that there are many other areas for close cooperation between the four organizations.

We plan to publish this newsletter quarterly, to give you a sense of how the federal government is likely to affect family life in the United States. We are hopeful that this publication will give you the broadest possible view of trends in Washington which will affect you in your work with families. The Washington representative of these national organizations comprise the editorial board for the COFO MEMO, and the result of their shared observations

are in turn passed on to you via this publication. We think that we can do this job better for you collectively than individually, and in the process profitably share this material among ourselves and with you.

There is a deeper reason for doing this, too. It's part of the reason that your national organizations have invested in Washington representation. Awareness of the family and its needs is bursting into American consciousness. Statistics show acceleration of family change, variously interpreted as healthy or sick. Politicians are concerned because the public is becoming aware of these changes. Political action is increasing, and we are beginning to see the birth of a politics of the family. Organizations concerned with family life and connecting with each other in new ways -- sometimes cooperatively, sometimes competitively, but increasingly -- politically.

Events are moving faster, and monitoring political activity is a greater task than ever before. All these trends are part of the reasons for forming COFO. The four national organizations represent different auspices, professional groups, and traditions, but all are essentially concerned with the state of American families. We're more relevant to this changing society than ever, but in the process we have the responsibility to "keep up". We hope the COFO MEMO will prove stimulating and informative as we try to bring you a picture of what is happening to the families from the complexities of the Washington scene.

Each of the participating national organizations in COFO would appreciate your comments about the COFO MEMO.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON FAMILIES

In the early days of last year's campaign, candidate Jimmy Carter appointed Joseph Califano (now Secretary of HEW) as his advisor and spokesman on family policy, during which he emphasized the need for a much greater awareness by the Federal government of how its policies affect the stability of American families.

The emphasis on this issue during the fall campaign--and the fact that Mr. Carter chose as his running-mate a Senator who had become a leading spokesman for family policy--inevitably heightened interest in the whole issue of the impact of federal government policies on families in America. It was no surprise, therefore, when the new Administration announced very early its intention to convene the first White House Conference on Families.

Almost simultaneously with these political developments, a group of national organizations primarily concerned with the needs of families, began meeting in the Fall of 1976 to discuss, among other things, whether they should form a coalition in Washington, D.C. to work cooperatively in various areas of family policy. Then, in December, 1976, these same representatives met in Washington and decided to form an ad hoc coalition devoted to one basic purpose: to try to influence the planning and implementation of the Administration's proposed White House Conference on Families.

The group called itself the Coalition for the White House Conference on Families; in addition to AAMFC, AHEA, FSAA, and NCFR, this broader Coalition includes other national organizations such as the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME), the Child Welfare League of America, the Coalition for Children and Youth, the National Conference on Catholic Charities, the National Council of Churches, the National Council on the Aging, the National Parent/Teachers Association, the National Urban League, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Children's Defense Fund.

Agreeing to certain basic principles about the proposed White House Conference, the new Coalition communicated these principles to Secretary Califano:

1. "That the planners of the Conference devise a nationwide process, involving representative interest groups, family life professionals and families themselves to define the common needs of contemporary families, including the special needs that grow out of economic, cultural, structural and life style diversity.

2. "That the White House Conference itself focus primarily on the impact of public policy at the federal level as it relates to family life.

3. "That in addition to consideration of governmental impact, the Conference should give recognition to the impact that other major institutions have on families. Such other institutions as education, the helping professions, religion, the media, business and labor should be among those discussed.

4. "That time be allotted to give serious discussion to the subject of informal and natural systems of support and mutual aid that families use to cope with problems. The White House Conference should give a focus to how these systems can be strengthened by government policy and by sensitizing formal institutions to work in coordination with these natural helping systems."

At this time, however, the Administration is still in the early planning stages for the Conference, and many questions still remain open.

At a recent meeting with Ms. Margaret Watson, Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary Arabella Martinez of the Office of Human Development Services within HEW, the Coalition did learn some specific information. Within HEW, the office of Assistant Secretary Martinez is most actively involved in the planning of the Conference. The Administration has requested \$3,000,000 in its fiscal 1978 budget, which would represent planning money for the Conference. According to Ms. Watson, a "decision memo" has been sent to Secretary Califano, outlining a variety of options.

To summarize, a broadly-based Coalition has been formed to influence the initial plan-

ning for the White House Conference on Families. At this point, HEW has made no basic decisions. The initial thinking is that the Conference will take place some time in 1979, but all other issues relating to budget, scope and format are still very much up in the air. Hopefully, by the next edition of this newsletter, HEW will have answered many of these questions and we will be in a better position to give you a more detailed report. (Ed. Note: See page 7.)

HR 7200 THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AMENDMENTS OF 1977

This bill which would amend several sections of the Social Security Act, is the only major social service legislation to come before the Congress this year. It is also very significant because the bill is the first family-strengthening legislation of the Carter Administration. In addition, its progress through the Congress demonstrates very dramatically the process a piece of social legislation must undergo before passage or defeat.

1. January-April 1977: Congressman George Miller (D-Calif.) began circulating a draft bill in the early weeks of the new Congress. His bill focused on the need for reform of the foster care and adoption practices in the states.

2. April-May 1977: In April, the subcommittee began circulating a draft of proposed legislation to reform the existing foster care and adoption practices in the states, incorporating many provisions from HR 5893.

On April 21, Representative Miller introduced his bill, HR 5893, which was referred to the Ways and Means Committee, Public Assistance Subcommittee.

On May 16, HR 7200 was finally introduced. It included many other matters not related to foster care and adoption but all related to the Social Security Act.

For family advocates, the most important breakthrough in this legislation was a newly broadened definition in the bill of child welfare services which placed a new emphasis on preventive services for families.

The House bill also provided for federally subsidized adoptions under the AFDC program, the formation of a national and regional adoption information system to assist in placement of children, and funding for the voluntary placement of children into foster care.

3. May-June 1977: Hearings were held. The response of the Committee and of those testifying was generally positive. The Carter Administration for budgetary reasons withheld support. Later, this position was reversed. Mark-up by the full Ways and Means Committee was held. The bill was reported out of Committee. Advocates for this legislation maneuvered to get the bill to the Floor of the House for a vote under "suspension of the rules," - meaning that no amendments could be offered. It was to be a quick passage or a quick defeat. This bill passed by a vote of 335 to 64. So far, so good.

4. July 1977: On the 12th the Senate Finance Committee began its hearings on HR 7200. The Committee's Chairman, Senator Russell Long (D.-La.), is considered by many to be the most powerful man in Congress. The bill had been referred to the Public Assistance Subcommittee chaired by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D.-NY). Most people did not expect the Finance Committee to be highly supportive of the legislation. However, one positive factor had developed: the Carter Administration had withdrawn its opposition to HR 7200. The opening day of the hearings, July 12, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano appeared before the Public Assistance Subcommittee to testify in support of the legislation. It quickly became apparent, however, that Senators Moynihan and Long were not very happy with the provisions of HR 7200.

July 26: The Finance Committee released a written document outlining its own version of the Public Assistance Amendments. On page 15 was written:

"Alternative for Committee Consideration -- the Committee may wish to consider ending the child welfare services grant program as a separate grant program and instead including the additional funding under the basic title XX social services program..."

July 28: Mark-up of HR 7200 begins.

5. August 1977: On the 11th, fifteen major organizations sent a letter of protest to Secretary Califano, protesting the lack of leadership by HEW staff in the face of Senate Committee action. A meeting was requested with the Secretary. A month later a meeting was agreed to by HEW to meet with the child and family interest groups.

6. September: The meeting on the first with HEW officials revealed that they had taken no action because the welfare-related items added to HR 7200 were so undesirable. It might be necessary for the President to veto the whole bill. In addition, there was wide concern that Senator Long would attach this now undesirable package to the Social Security Financing legislation which was also before the Finance Committee. Since Social Security Financing was a Carter Administration priority, the President probably would not be able to veto HR 7200 if it were attached to that vital bill.

On the 16th, the Finance Committee was advised that the Carter Administration had withdrawn its support of HR 7200 because of the added welfare amendments. That day Senator Long announced the advisability for the Committee to consider joining HR 7200 to the Social Security Financing bill.

On the 19th, Administration witness, Secretary Joseph A. Califano, appeared before the Finance Committee to defend the Administration's new welfare reform bill, S. 2084 (recently referred to this committee.)

At the on-going markup hearings, on the 29th, Senator Long attempted to get the Finance Committee to attach only the AFDC-related provisions in HR 7200 to the Social Security Financing bill. This effort failed by a tied vote of 8-8.

7. October: On the 29th the Committee voted to report out the bill.

8. November: The Senate Finance Committee reported out the Social Security Financing bill on the first. In addition, the fiscal relief pieces of HR 7200 were reported to the floor of the Senate where they were added to the Social Security Financing bill which was passed.

The Senate Finance Committee has published a report--95-573--on the Public Assistance Amendments of 1977. It is available from the Senate Document Room (or through your Senator).

The Senate adjourned November 7.

According to Senate aides, the "good portions" of the bill will be taken up probably in February when Congress returns. These include the child related portions of the bill--adoption and foster care and child welfare. Senator Cranston is thought to be the member who will be most active on the bill's behalf in the new session.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In September 1977, Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D.-Md.) introduced legislation H.R. 8949, the Family Violence Prevention and Treatment Act, which sets as a national priority the elimination of family violence. The principal aim of the legislation is to establish within the ACTION agency a new National Center for Community Action Against Family Violence. Similar to the VISTA program, the Center would recruit annually at least 1000 stipended volunteers from local communities, train and place them in their own neighborhoods, and would attach these new programs to the already existing ACTION network. The Center would also undertake a media campaign to increase public awareness about the problem of domestic violence, would act as a clearinghouse of information to assist those working in the field and would have a toll free "hotline" telephone number for immediate emergency help and information.

In addition, the bill would establish a federal interagency council to coordinate and integrate existing and future federal programs related to family violence.

Reps Lindy Boggs (D.-La.) and Newton Steers (R.-Md.) have introduced a similar piece of legislation, H.R. 7929, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Act. The Boggs-Steers legislation resembles the Mikulski bill but appears more research oriented and does call for a three year grant program to support demonstration projects funded through National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH),

60% of the annual appropriation would be mandated for direct prevention and treatment services, including emergency shelters, jobs counseling, self-help programs, family rehabilitation and an available emergency hotline.

Rep. Mikulski recognizes the importance of further research into the causes of domestic violence, but she also believes that a great deal is already known about the problem, and the need now is for more direct assistance to existing and new community efforts related to preventing and treating family violence.

Within Congress there is an expressed interest in holding hearings on the legislation after Congress reconvenes in January. The legislation has already been referred to the House Subcommittee on Select Education (of the Education and Labor Committee) which is chaired by Rep. John Brademan (D.-Ind.) and to the Subcommittee on Health and Environment of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. This Subcommittee is chaired by Rep. Paul Rogers (D.-Fla.). There has been some preliminary discussion about joint hearings between these two subcommittees.

Finally, the Office of Public Liaison in the White House, at the request of the Center for the Elimination of Violence in the Family, a New York State shelter for battered women, has held two meetings, one in July, the second in October of 1977. The group included representatives from the White House, government agencies, women's shelters and other people dealing with this problem. They met to discuss and plan future strategies.

WELFARE REFORM

The goal of welfare reform was essentially a system that would provide access to a full or part-time job for every family with children and an adult member able to work and that would also provide a decent income for those who cannot work or do not earn adequate income. Also considered of importance were equity in federal benefits, administrative simplicity in the system, elimination of fraud and abuse in the welfare programs, and fiscal relief to state

and local governments. It was hoped these could be achieved without higher initial cost than that of the present system. (The current federal share of the cost of public assistance programs is about \$25-27 billion.)

When the "Program for Better Jobs and Income" was unveiled in August, the major change was in fact the cost which would be \$30.7 billion in 1978 dollars, an increase of about \$2.8 billion in new money.

Public Service Employment is the cornerstone of the legislation which would create 1.4 million public service jobs and training slots with 300,000 part time jobs. This program would give access to the principal wage earner in families with children if the adult earner could not find employment in the private sector. The federal minimum wage would apply unless the state minimum wage were higher. PSE jobs would be created on the local level and emphasize skills that could be transferred to the private sector. There is provision for part time work and flexible work hours so as to assist single parents with children between the ages of 7 - 14.

Eligibility for PSE means that the applicant would be the principal wage earner in a family with children. Initially, the adult must make an eight-week search in the private jobs sector and only after that would the person be eligible for a PSE job. A PSE job can last only a year, at the end of which, the worker must again search for a private sector job. The idea is to ensure PSE jobs being viewed as temporary measures and not as permanent employment.

Cash Benefits result from a consolidation of funds from five or six current programs including Aid to Families with Dependent Children AFDC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Food Stamps, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Under the new program, 32 million people would be eligible for cash benefits, which would be divided between two categories of persons--those not expected to work (NETW) and those expected to work (ETW). Those not expected to work include the aged, the blind, the disabled, single parents with children under the age of 7, and two parent families where one parent is incapacitated.

The basic benefit for a family of four is \$4200 which is 35% below the current poverty level. An aged, blind, or disabled individual maintaining a separate household would receive a basic benefit of \$2,500 while a couple would receive \$3,750. A single parent whose youngest child was 7 would be required to take a part time job, during school hours, when the children were away.

Those families that are expected to work would have a lower basic benefit level of \$2,300. Families in this lower tier include two parents with two children or a single parent with no children under the age of 14.

The cash grant to a healthy single persons would be \$1,100 and for a childless couple \$2,200, if there were no available private sector jobs.

Work incentives are those administrative devices that would make work more profitable than welfare. It would work like this: For families in the "expected to work" category and with the lower benefit level of \$2,300, when the adult member finds employment in the private sector, the first \$3800 of income earned on the new job would not be taxable. This is called an earned income disregard. For every dollar earned above the first \$3,800, the federal benefit would be reduced by \$.50. This is the benefit reduction rate. There is also the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that would, in effect offer a rebate to the family through the tax withholding process.

Fiscal Relief and State Supplementation has been worked out so that every state would be assured of at least a 10 per cent saving on current welfare costs, with a promise of increased fiscal relief through a system of federal-state matching payments during the three year transition period as the new program is being phased in.

The Welfare Program would be administered by a centralized network linking 4,000 field offices. The central bureau would compute benefits and payments and, in essence, make the final determination of eligibility. The states would have the choice of joining in the process and intake functions. The federal-state staff required to administer the new system would be reduced, and administrative costs should also decline.

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A major unanswered question in the new program is that of Medicaid, the largest uncontrollable cost in the current welfare program

There is also disagreement about the phase-out of the food stamp program. Some unions do not want the program funds folded into the basic federal grant; other organizations support the inclusion of food stamp money in the cash grant.

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH.

On February 17, 1977, President Carter established a Presidential Commission on Mental Health, with Mrs. Carter serving as the Honorary Chairperson. The Executive Order creating the Commission called for a preliminary report to be submitted by September 1, 1977, and a final report by April 1, 1978.

The Commission has now submitted its preliminary report to the President, and while the recommendations made by the Commission at this point are very limited, the report does spell out the issues and problems the Commission intends to address before submitting its final report. According to the report, these issues can be grouped into four general categories:

1. Providing needed mental health services.
2. Financing needed mental health services.
3. Expanding the base of knowledge about mental illness and mental health; and
4. Identifying strategies that may help prevent mental disorder and disability.

The Commission also made several observations concerning the financing of needed mental health services, saying "...current deliberations over national health insurance present this Commission with a special opportunity and responsibility to study the issues of cost and financing, to examine the ways in which financial barriers prevent people from receiving services, and to determine how financing mechanisms can be used to develop a more organized and effective network of mental health services". They further pointed out that much more data were needed before the Commission could make useful recommendations on this issue and request the President to direct the Secretary of HEW to assist in the development of these data.

October 4, 1977

Honorable Joseph A. Califano
Secretary, Department of Health, Education
and Welfare
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are a Coalition of four national organizations representing approximately 80,000 individuals throughout the country, many of whom provide services to millions of American families. Others in our membership are engaged in scholarly activity. This Coalition was recently formed to work together at the national level with one common concern: insuring that government policies at all levels promote the stability and strength of American families.

When the President announced his intention to convene the first White House Conference on Families, we strongly supported that decision; and over the past several months we have been meeting with other national organizations to discuss the initial planning for this Conference. It has come to our attention that one of the options you are now considering is a proposed merger of the White House Conference on Families with the White House Conference on Children and Youth scheduled for 1980.

We believe such a merger would not do justice to either White House Conference. While we recognize there are many common issues that would be considered by two separate White House Conferences, the fact remains that a White House Conference on Families would require the federal government to focus on issues far broader than those involving only children and youth. These would include such issues as family economics, the impact of the handicapped dependents on family life, marital and domestic relations problems where children are not involved, the effects of the changes in women's work patterns, and the problems of families dealing with their aged members.

The original decision by the President, which you obviously supported, clearly recognized the need for a concentrated approach dwelling solely on family concerns in the broadest sense. We are convinced that such an approach would be jeopardized by the merger of the White House Conferences.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter with you or one of your representatives at your earliest convenience.

For: COALITION OF FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS
American Association of Marriage and
Family Counselors
American Home Economics Association,
Center for the Family
Family Service Association of America
National Council of Family Relations

Sincerely yours,

W. Keith Daugherty,
General Director
Family Service Association
of America

cc: Arabella Martinez
Assistant Secretary for Human Development Services

INCREASING INTERESTS

Growing concern about the forces affecting American families has been indicated by a number of developments at all levels of government and in private groups.

In 1976, the Foundation for Child Development and the Lilly Foundation funded a project called the Family Impact Seminar. This seminar is directed by A. Sidney Johnson, III, who was formerly the top staff person of the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth. The Seminar's objective is to review the way government policy is influencing family life in the U.S. and to determine whether or not any mechanism might be found that would be useful in making government policy more responsive to families.

In September, the Carnegie Council on Children published its five-year study, All Our Children which The New York Times reported on its front page. The study proposes some new and dramatic steps for government, and its recommendations are heavily economic. Its main thesis addresses the frustrations of parents and the lack of support for them. Also, it urges the country to develop a national family policy as comprehensive as our defense policy.

Recently, the National Conference on Social Welfare has put together a group called the National Commission on Families and Public Policies. The first major meeting was in June of this year. Partial funding for this effort has come from HEW. This group is still in its early stages of organization.

On the grass roots community level, parents have been organizing to address their problems and frustrations with the media, lack of help for handicapped children, lack of voice in the media, etc. In New York City there is the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers. In Columbia, Maryland, there is the National Committee for Citizens in Education (a parent group). The conference of Catholic Charities has provided leadership support for its grass roots movement called the Parents Rights Conference which has chapters all over the country. Many of these parents groups are indicating their desire to influence the proposed White House Conference on Families.

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