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Adoption / Foster Care

**POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM SSI CHANGES ON
THE TITLE IV-E FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

THE LINK BETWEEN TITLE IV-E AND SSI:

A child who is eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is eligible for title IV-E adoption assistance if the child meets all of the special needs criteria at the initiation of the adoption proceedings. The special needs criteria are:

1) the child cannot or should not be returned home; 2) there exists a specific factor or condition because of which it is reasonable to conclude that the child cannot be placed for adoption without providing title IV-E adoption assistance; and, 3) except where it would be against the best interests of the child, a reasonable, but unsuccessful, effort has been made to place the child without title IV-E adoption assistance.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF NEW SSI ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

❖ Fewer special needs children will be eligible for the title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program.

The change in definition for "childhood disability" under the SSI Program instituted under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act is more restrictive than the current definition. For example, some children with emotional and behavioral disorders may no longer be eligible for SSI based on the new definition of childhood disability. Therefore, title IV-E adoption assistance subsidy will not be available for some special needs children who were eligible for this program based on their SSI eligibility. The more restrictive SSI criteria will apply both to future SSI eligibility determinations, as well as to redeterminations of eligibility for children currently receiving SSI.

❖ Without an SSI or title IV-E adoption assistance subsidy, it may be more difficult to find adoptive placements for special needs children, because potential adoptive families may lack the resources to care for them.

❖ There may be an increase in the number of disabled children and families who enter the child welfare system.

Some families will lose SSI eligibility due to the more restrictive SSI eligibility criteria, which will increase financial pressures on families. Financial pressures can compound the stress which the family may already experience, potentially resulting in a need for child welfare services, including out-of-home placements.

❖ Because some children will lose SSI eligibility, States may begin to claim title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance reimbursement for children in foster or adoptive placements, who were previously supported by SSI.