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The Pregnancy Assistance Fund

The Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) program focuses on meeting the educational, social service, and health needs of vulnerable expectant and parenting individuals and their families during pregnancy and the postnatal period. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA; P.L. 111-148, as amended) established the program and provided \$25 million in annual mandatory funding for each of FY2010 through FY2019. The law identifies eligible populations as expectant and parenting teens, college students, and women of any age who experience domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Background

The research literature indicates that pregnancy has high costs for the individuals eligible for the PAF program. Teenage mothers and fathers tend to have less education and are more likely to live in poverty than their peers who are not parenting. Nearly one-third of adolescent females who have dropped out of high school and college cite pregnancy or parenthood as a reason. One analysis found that single young women who had children after enrolling in community college were 65% more likely to drop out than their same-age peers who did not have children after enrolling. Studies further indicate that approximately 3% to 9% of women experience domestic violence during pregnancy.

Grant Categories and Requirements

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) administers the PAF program, and funding is awarded competitively to the 50 states, District of Columbia (DC), U.S. territories, and tribal entities (hereinafter, state grantees) that apply successfully. The grantees may use the funds as follows:

- to provide subgrants to institutions of higher education (IHEs), high schools, or community service providers to enable these subgrantees to establish, operate, or maintain pregnancy or parenting services for the expectant and parenting population;
- to provide, in partnership with the state attorney general's office, certain legal and supportive services for women who experience domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, or stalking while they are pregnant or parenting an infant; and
- to support, either directly or through a subgrantee, public awareness about PAF services for the expectant and parenting population that is eligible for the program.

The PAF authorizing law requires each subgrantee to provide an annual report to the state grantee that itemizes program expenditures; reviews and evaluates its performance; and describes its achievements in meeting the

needs of participants, including the frequency with which they used services. Grantees must prepare an annual report to HHS on this subgrantee information, the number of subgrantees that were awarded funds, and the number of individuals who were served with funds.

IHEs, High Schools, and Community Service Providers

Subgrants can be provided to high schools (schools that serve grades 7-12), community service organizations (organizations that provide social services directly or by government contract), and IHEs (vocational schools, community colleges, universities, etc.). Only IHEs must provide a 25% match of their awards with funds or non-monetary support such as services and facilities.

The law specifies that subgrantees can carry out selected activities on campuses and in communities, such as conducting a needs assessment to examine pregnancy and parenting resources on a campus and within a community, as well as setting goals for improving such resources and access to them. Other activities can include annually assessing the performance of the subgrantee in meeting needs of participants with regard to child care, flexible or alternative academic scheduling, parenting education, basic provisions, and including maternity coverage and availability of riders for additional family members in student health coverage.

Offices of State Attorneys General

State grantees must partner with their state's office of the attorney general to provide specified activities—intervention services, accompaniment services, and supportive social services—targeted to individuals of any age who are pregnant or have been pregnant in the past year and are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, or stalking. “Intervention services” refers to 24-hour telephone hotline services for police protection and referral to shelters. “Accompaniment services” means assisting, representing, and accompanying a woman in seeking judicial relief for restraining orders and help with filing criminal charges, among other activities. “Supportive social services” means transitional and permanent housing, vocational counseling, and individual and group counseling aimed at preventing domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

These partnership grants also focus on providing training and technical assistance (related to domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, or stalking against pregnant women or women pregnant within the past year) to specified entities, such as government agencies, professionals working in social service settings, and nonprofit organizations.

