

Implementing the Fostering Connections Act:

How the Children's Bureau National Resource Centers and Implementation Centers Can Help States and Tribes

Understanding Adoption Incentives, Adoption Assistance, and the Adoption Tax Credit

BACKGROUND. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351) was signed into law on October 7, 2008. The new law amended parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to connect and support relative caregivers,

improve outcomes for children in foster care, permit Indian Tribes to operate title IV-E programs, improve incentives for adoption, and achieve other purposes.

The Act extends the funding authority for adoption incentives and makes changes to the requirements for earning incentive awards and to some incentive amounts. It also stipulates that any appropriated adoption incentive funds not needed will be paid as incentive awards to any State that increases the rate at which children are adopted from foster care.

In addition, the Act phases in elimination of all income, resource, and family structure tests associated with eligibility for Federal title IV-E adoption assistance, including tests that were established as part of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. It further provides that as of fiscal year (FY) 2010, the revised adoption assistance eligibility criteria also apply to any child who has been in care for 60 or more consecutive months at the time the adoption assistance agreement is finalized, without regard to

CHILD WELFARE IMPLEMENTATION CENTERS:

The five Children's Bureau Implementation Centers (ICs) develop formal partnerships with States and Tribes in their Federal Regions to implement longer term strategies for achieving sustainable, systemic change in support of improved outcomes for children and families. State child welfare agencies, federally recognized Tribes, and Tribal consortia that receive title IV-B grant funds may propose an implementation project related to Fostering Connections by submitting an application per an IC's request. To reach the IC in your Region, please contact the Training and Technical Assistance Coordination Center, ttacc@jbsinternational.com or (240) 645-0872.





the child's age at that time. And it stipulates that as of FY 2010, the revised adoption assistance eligibility criteria apply to any siblings of a child affected by the new eligibility rules, provided that the sibling will be placed in the same adoptive home as the child affected by the new rules.

Finally, the Act requires States to provide information to individuals adopting a child from foster care, and those considering such an adoption, regarding their potential eligibility for the Federal adoption tax credit.

ALLOWABLE FUNDING AND COSTS. Where allowable and as part of a public assistance cost allocation plan, a title IV-E agency may claim certain costs related to implementing the new adoption assistance eligibility rules and providing information about the adoption tax credit as title IV-E administrative costs. For more information, see section M of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families Program Instruction ACYF-CB-PI-10-11, at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2010/pi1011.htm#sectm.

HOW WE CAN HELP. The National Resource Centers (NRCs) and Implementation Centers (ICs) provide training, technical assistance, research, and consultation designed to build the capacity of State, local, Tribal, and other publicly administered

or supported child welfare agencies and family and juvenile courts. The NRCs and ICs assist States and Tribes in improving child welfare systems and in using the results of Children's Bureau monitoring reviews to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

The following are a few of the ways that the NRCs can help States and Tribes to implement the Act's provisions related to adoption incentives, adoption assistance, and the adoption tax credit:

- Delivering training on applying adoption assistance policy and regulations to specific children and families and on defining and assisting with the implementation of action strategies to address the organizational and structural barriers to negotiating adoption assistance.
- Assisting States in developing their State Child and Family Services Plan recruitment and retention plans and other diligent recruitment and retention strategies.
- Providing training and technical assistance (T/TA) on using numerous service array tools that can assist agencies in determining the types of services that they could enhance with additional revenues.
- Assisting in determining what data need to be collected related to adoption incentives, adoption assistance, and the adoption tax credit; assessing the feasibility of doing so; helping plan how to systematically collect the information through State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems or similar mechanisms; and providing examples of data reports being used in other jurisdictions.
- Identifying tracking measures and reports that can help ensure compliance with the requirements related to adoption assistance and the provision of information on the adoption tax credit, which could include alerts or retrospective reports on compliance.

CONTACT US. To request T/TA related to adoption incentives, adoption assistance, and the adoption tax credit, please submit a request at <https://www.ttaccportal.org>. If you have questions, please contact the Training and Technical Assistance Coordination Center at ttacc@jbsinternational.com or (240) 645-0872.