



H.R. 2480: The Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Child abuse and neglect is heartbreaking, immoral, and inexcusable, yet it continues to affect millions of children across the country. Despite significant declines in the rate of child abuse and neglect across the 1990s and 2000s, the rate of child maltreatment has ticked up in recent years as the opioid epidemic has devastated families and communities across the country.

In 2017, more children received an investigation or response from child protective services agencies than any other time in the decade prior.

Due to the increased demand on their services, state child protective services agencies are struggling to adequately respond to the growing number of reports they receive each year. This has resulted in long response times and compromised quality of service in some cases. In working to meet increased demands, states have been left unable to proactively provide prevention services to families who could benefit from support during difficult times. Congress must act to correct these issues - no child affected by abuse and neglect should experience a long wait to receive services, and no child or family should be denied needed prevention services.

The Stronger CAPTA will help states address the recent rise in child abuse and neglect by providing strategic funding to improve the quality of child protective services and to build networks of prevention services designed to strengthen families.

The bill will also help address child abuse and neglect by improving collaboration between states regarding data and accountability. Specifically, the bill strengthens accountability by ensuring the funding is spent at the local level and supports evidenced based services. The bill also establishes the development of uniform standards for counting child fatalities and near fatalities related to child maltreatment for reporting purposes. It also establishes a working group and pilot program to improve the understanding of the information in the child abuse and neglect registries and look at how states can better share data from these systems.

Stronger CAPTA will:

- Support the development of strategies and best practices for reducing rates of child abuse and neglect linked to parent substance use disorder.
- Provide funding for research and technical assistance activities aimed at enhancing providers' and administrators' knowledge of effective child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment strategies, particularly for families facing complex needs.
- Strengthen and expand intrastate coordination among agencies serving vulnerable families at risk of child abuse and neglect to ensure such families have access to physical and mental health services, domestic violence prevention programs, disability supports, and substance use treatment when necessary.
- Address racial bias across the child welfare system and ensure that prevention services are accessible to all families.
- Educate child welfare professionals and paraprofessionals on practices and strategies that effectively treat and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Ensure community and parent involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of prevention services.
- Increase prevention funding for tribal organizations and migrant programs.
- Streamline duplicative and burdensome requirements on states so they can focus on protecting children instead of excessive paperwork.