



CONNECT Act Reintroduced

Important Legislation Reintroduced During National Foster Care Month

On May 14, U.S. Senators Gary Peters (D-Michigan) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) reintroduced bipartisan legislation known as the CONNECT (Childhood Outcomes Need New Efficient Community Teams) Act. This important legislation ([S.1465](#)) will assist states in addressing the unique challenges of youth who are involved with both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, known as dual status youth. The RFK National Resource Center is proud to have assisted with the development of the CONNECT Act and applauds the diligence of Senators Peters and Grassley in working to ensure its passage.

The following [PRESS RELEASE](#) was jointly issued by the offices of Senator Gary Peters and Senator Chuck Grassley:

Senators Reintroduce Bill During National Foster Care Month

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senators Gary Peters (D-MI) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) today reintroduced bipartisan legislation to help states identify and meet the needs of children who come into contact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, also known as dual status youth. The Childhood Outcomes Need New Efficient Community Teams (CONNECT) Act would authorize competitive grants to improve data collection on dual status youth and encourage better cooperation between state agencies overseeing juvenile justice and child welfare programs. Grassley co-chairs the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, and Senator Peters is a member of the Caucus.

“We cannot allow bureaucratic red tape to prevent the juvenile justice and child welfare systems from providing at-risk youth the services they need,” said Senator Peters. “This bipartisan legislation would help our civil servants collect the information necessary to design tailor-made programs to help these children. By gaining a better understanding of the hardships dual status children have had to endure, we can do more to ensure that they have the opportunity to lead happy, productive lives.”

“Youth involved in both the foster care and juvenile systems shouldn’t face additional challenges because of lack of coordination,” Grassley said. “Too often, these state agencies don’t interact enough. Child welfare and juvenile justice experts need to work together to keep vulnerable youth safe, off the streets, and away from crime. Our bill encourages state and local agencies to work as a team to develop best practices and better policies to help at-risk youth and help them succeed in life.”

The CONNECT Act authorizes grants administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help state juvenile justice and child welfare agencies collect data on dual status youths to foster a better understanding of their unique circumstances and improve coordination in the delivery of services to at-risk children.

Research has found that many dual status youths have a history of trauma, mental health conditions or substance abuse issues that require specialized treatment, and often experience poor educational performance, higher recidivism rates, higher detention rates, disruptive living arrangements and substantial behavioral health needs. According to the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, as many as 55 percent of children in the juvenile justice system have also had contact with the child welfare system. Between 2015 and 2019 approximately 30,000 children were placed in the Michigan foster care system and between 2015 and 2017 there was an annual average of 32,607 delinquency petitions filed to the Michigan juvenile system. A juvenile delinquency petition occurs when cases involving those under 18 years of age are referred to juvenile court.

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About Us

Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, uses proven models, frameworks, tools, resources and the best available research to serve local, state, and national leaders, practitioners and youth-serving agencies to improve system performance and outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system. RFK National Resource Center focuses primarily on youth with prior or current involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (dual status youth), the review and improvement of juvenile probation systems, and the use of a model framework to address the state and national laws and policies governing the exchange and sharing of data, information, and records for youth and families. To learn more about us and how we can serve your jurisdiction, please visit www.rfknrcjj.org.

Every Child Deserves a Childhood

Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps is a private, non-profit licensed child welfare agency providing community-based services, education, foster care and adoption, residential treatment, and juvenile justice programming to individuals and families in crisis. Our programs are focused on helping children and adolescents deal with past hurts, develop self-esteem, and have a chance for a brighter future as contributing members of society. All that we do at RFK Children's Action Corps is based on the belief that every child deserves the chance to lead a happy, healthy, and productive life. For more information and to get involved, visit www.rfkchildren.org.