Legislative Mandate

The Abandoned Infants Assistance Program (AIA) was established in 1988 with the passage of PL 100-505, the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act, and is administered by DHHS, ACF, Children's Bureau. The Act was reauthorized in 1991, 1996, 2003, and 2010.

Mission

The mission of the AIA program is to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for infants and children who are abandoned, or at-risk of abandonment, principally due to substance abuse and/or HIV, by providing them and their families with comprehensive and coordinated services.

Goals

AIA projects seek to prevent abandonment and assist abandoned infants and children by:

- preserving, stabilizing, or reunifying families by providing access to critical resources;
- promoting permanent, loving, primary relationships for children;
- enhancing the ability of parents and other caregivers to provide a safe, stimulating, and nurturing home environment;
- addressing the health, mental health, developmental and educational needs of children;
- supporting parents in their efforts to modify or eliminate substance use, and/or cope with HIV/AIDS;
- addressing the complex needs of children with drug exposure and/or HIV; and
- providing care for children affected by drug exposure and/or HIV.

AIA Projects

- Are typically trauma-informed, strengths-based, family-centered and individualized.
- May serve women prenatally, thereby reducing the impact of prenatal substance exposure and perinatal HIV.
- Continuously focus on ongoing engagement and rapport building.
- Hire staff who are nonjudgmental, warm, engaging, culturally competent, and able to tolerate confrontation and rejection.
- Work collaboratively with community partners, such as child welfare agencies, health providers, treatment programs, and courts, to provide a comprehensive array of services.
- Are located throughout the country in a variety of settings that have included hospitals, community-based organizations, residential drug treatment programs, and child welfare agencies.
- May be home-based, office-based or located in treatment settings.
- Serve mothers with risk factors such as substance use problems, HIV, domestic violence, psychiatric illness, criminal conviction and a history of childhood trauma.
- Report successes in maternal and family outcomes, particularly with regard to family stability, placement with the biological parent, income, in-kind benefits, basic resource access, employment, child welfare involvement and recovery.

Typical Services Provided by AIA Projects

- Case management
- Parenting education and support
- Assessment and intervention services
- Life skills training
- Basic resource assistance
- Legal, transportation, education, health and mental health services
- Infant developmental screening and intervention