



ABANDONED INFANTS ASSISTANCE ACT ASSISTING FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS & SUBSTANCE USE

The Services

- The Abandoned Infants Assistance (AIA) Act supports services to children and families affected by substance abuse and HIV to prevent abandonment and promote safe and permanent homes for children. The AIA Act funds 36 programs in 18 states and the District of Columbia, including a National Resource Center.
- Communities with AIA programs are reporting successes such as decreases in the number of boarder babies, in the length of time children board in hospitals, and in the incidence rates of child abuse and neglect.
- The most recent data indicates that AIA programs have served over 35,000 individuals, including mothers, infants, children, fathers, and other caregivers.
- Through interagency collaboration, comprehensive home-based and on-site services, case management, and peer support, AIA programs address the complex needs of families and reduce costly duplication of services.
- The programs funded by the AIA Act provide culturally and gender appropriate services. The most recent data indicates that more than 86% of the children served by AIA programs were children of color, 59% of mothers were African-American, and 20% were Hispanic.
- Women who participate in AIA programs are less likely to use drugs or alcohol and are more likely to be employed rather than on public assistance.
- AIA programs help children to maintain or reestablish connections with their families. Support services are also provided for relatives of children who are not able to reside with their parents.
- Through social work/legal collaboration, AIA programs assist parents with HIV/AIDS to develop future custody plans for their children, thus minimizing trauma for the children and financial burden on the government.
- AIA programs help many mothers and children move from substandard and dangerous housing into residential treatment centers and supportive housing environments.

The Continuing Need

- More than 1 million children exposed to alcohol and other drugs at birth are at risk of parental abandonment.
- Between 1991 and 1998, the number of infants abandoned in hospitals rose 46% and the number of infants boarding in hospitals beyond medical discharge rose by 38%. Cases reported in 1998 were also distributed over a larger geographic area.
- Women, particularly women of color, are among the populations with the fastest growing rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the United States.
- Thousands of children are at risk of being orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Their families need access to AIA programs that will assist them in custody planning for their children.
- Additional funding for AIA would enable current service projects to meet a growing demand, some of which will likely result from the mandated report of newborns affected by substance abuse to CPS and ultimately AIA projects. It could also support projects in new regions of the country experiencing a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, substance use, infant abandonment, and hospital boarder babies.