

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



Christian Coalition "could get churches and church officials into serious trouble with the IRS," according to Milton Cerny and Albert Lauber Jr., attorneys in Washington, D.C., in a memorandum prepared at the request of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Citing IRS Tax Code Statute 501c-3, Huff said non-profit tax status is given to churches because they are charitable organizations. Forbidden are activities such as:

- endorsing/opposing candidates in state-ments to members.
- giving financial contributions to candi-dates in the religious group's name, collect-ing money on behalf of a candidate or pro-viding in-kind services.
- distributing campaign literature.

Huff also remarked the above actions ap-ply only to religious groups, not individu-als. Pastors and church members can put bumper stickers on their cars and actively work for a candidate's election, conduct voter registration drives, hold non-partisan forums or debates and send questionnaires to candidates to determine where they stand on issues.

—GERRY CHERRY
10/31/96

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

COMMISSION GETS DRAFT PLAN FOR MAJOR REVAMPING

■(GIT) Agency Directors of the Commis-sion on Children and Youth (OCCY) re-ceived a massive draft plan Tuesday for a complete change in the way Medicaid dol-lars are divided for youth services in Okla-homa.

Developed over two years by the Insti-tute for Human Services Management of Bethesda, MD, the plan was funded by a grant and requested by the Needsmet Com-mittee of OCCY with the consent of other state agencies providing child services. Pre-sented by Hansine Fisher and Tracey Feild, the goal of the plan is to make the service system more community based, family cen-tered and client driven, hence more efficient.

The plan calls for state children's advoca-cy agencies to match federal funds for monies to deliver services to Oklahoma's children. Currently, state Medicaid matches federal dollars and is responsible for admin-istration of the programs run by the agen-

cies. Research found "significant opportu-nities" for getting more federal Medicaid dollars in Oklahoma within the current man-aged care waivers.

Three requirements to make the plan work are:

- Cooperation among agencies, includ-ing a workable, written plan signed by par-ticipants, before the money is received from the federal government Feild and Fisher said.
- Legislation to change how state agen-cies receive Medicaid monies, and
- A willingness on the part of agencies and the legislature to turn funds over to com-munity programs for administration, be-cause, as Fisher said, people in the commu-nities know what's needed. Feild and Fisher cited Tulsa and Enid as communities with workable, community-based programs which really do put the dollars where the children's needs are. As for children in in-stitutional care, 20 percent could go home tomorrow Feild said, if local collaborators could pull together with the goal of keeping the child in the community.

In presenting the program, Feild and Fisher said there's a lot of money that could be captured through federal Medicaid pro-grams which require only meeting the crite-ria established for that program and match-ing funds.

State agencies, Feild said, could design their systems so that the cost of providing the service is already provided by federal dollars. "Limit the service to people you can afford to serve," Feild said, and "eliminate those people who don't fit the criteria of your service."

The key, Feild said, is to "let the controls be at the door of the state agencies already providing services." For instance, let the Department of Human Services (DHS) match federal funds to obtain medicaid dol-lars and subcontract with whomever they want as service providers.

According to Feild and Fisher, none of these ideas are untried. Oregon, Ohio, Florida and other states already have plans in place to maximize the federal dollars re-ceived by their states.

As a result of the state agency responsi-bility for matching the federal funds, the state agency would then be liable for meeting all audit responsibilities and paying any bills due for exceptions to the audits.

The bottom line, Fisher said, is "the chil-dren served with public dollars belong to all of you. The goal is to make sure the money goes into local services."

The 70-page draft document was pre-sented to representatives of the departments of mental health, education, juvenile affairs, DHS and health, as well as appointees of the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Other statewide children's advocacy agencies are also represented on the OCCY.

Ken Lackey, executive director of the office of juvenile affairs, wondered if it is a good idea to run funds through the local agencies at all. "Why not let the legislature appropriate the money to local entities?" he asked.

"In a lot of states," Field replied, "we're spending a lot of money on kids and we don't know what we're getting. Some states finally began asking, 'Are we spending our dollars wisely? What are we buying here? Is it worth paying for?' In Ohio, for instance, kids were passed around to the different agencies," depending on what was happening in their lives, Fisher said.

Lackey agreed the benefits would be to provide administrative expenses at the local level, and provide more comprehensive ben-efits to the children.

"You are poised in Oklahoma to do some-thing very exciting at the local level. State agencies have to want it and say this is how we're going to do it," Fisher said. "Reinvest the money back into children's services. Agree the money will be set aside for inno-vative, community-based programs and give the dollars to the community to design their service system."

—GERRY CHERRY
10/29/96

HIGHEST NATIONAL AWARD GIVEN OKLAHOMA ADOPTION PROGRAM

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Oklahoma's One Church, One Child program received the "Father Clement" award at the 1996 One Church, One Child national conference held in September in Minneapolis. The award bears the name of Father George Clement, who founded the One Church, One Child program which promotes the adoption of black children by African-American fami-lies through black congregational churches.

One Church, One Child began in Okla-

Continued on next page