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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 25, 2000

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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via
SPECTER

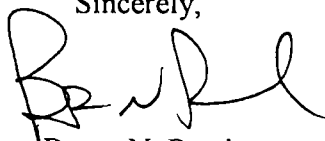
Dear Senator Specter:

I am writing to update the Committee on the status of the FY 2000 Youth Violence Prevention Initiative ("Initiative") outlined in the Senate Committee report accompanying S. 1650. Attached you will find a report on our efforts. It begins with a brief overview of the status of the White House Council on Youth Violence, which is responsible for coordinating youth violence prevention programs across the federal government, including the various components of the Initiative. This is followed by an update of each of the funded activities presented in the order they are listed in the Senate appropriations bill.

As you know, the programs included in the Initiative represent just a portion of the federal government's overall efforts to prevent and reduce youth violence across the Nation. In FY 2000, the federal government will invest over \$8 billion across nine agencies in programs that address youth violence or otherwise promote healthy youth development. Programs encompass a diverse range of prevention strategies, such as the hiring of community police officers to patrol schools (Department of Justice), assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to help cities crack down on those supplying guns to youth (Department of the Treasury), and support for model media literacy programs to help prevent violent behavior (Department of Education and National Endowment for the Arts).

I hope this information will be useful to you and the Committee and I look forward to working with you on this issue of vital importance.

Sincerely,



Bruce N. Reed
Assistant to the President for
Domestic Policy

Update on FY 2000 Youth Violence Prevention Initiative

February 2000

The White House Council on Youth Violence

The mission of the White House Council on Youth Violence, established by the President in an executive memorandum on October 15, 1999, is to develop a more effective policy and programmatic coordination strategy across Federal agencies on youth violence issues. The Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy chairs the Council. The Office of the Vice President and the Office of Management and Budget are regular participants. The Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Labor are regular program members of the Council. The first Council meeting took place on February 24, 2000, and generated a fruitful discussion.

The Council's duties include: developing a citizen's information hub; producing reports on youth violence; expanding the Safe Schools/Healthy Students model of collaboration; providing tools for parents to deal with the issue; coordinating the Federal research agenda; and developing further policy responses. \$325,000 for the Council's operations was provided by the President to the Office of Policy Development from the Executive Office of the President's Unanticipated Needs FY 2000 appropriation.

Sonia Chessen from the Department of Health and Human Services has been named as the Director of the Council. Ms. Chessen has spent her career working on youth development and violence prevention issues, both in government and in the non-profit sector. Over the last year, she has been serving on the interagency management team for the Safe School/Health Students Initiative, as well as working with the various Departments in an effort to coordinate the research agendas in the area of youth violence. In her new capacity, Ms. Chessen will continue to facilitate the coordination of policy, program and research endeavors within and across the Departments.

Additional staff for the council include RADM Susan Blumenthal, who will serve a Senior Public Health Advisor to the Council. RADM Blumenthal is a national expert in women's health and mental illness. She has directed national research programs at the NIH as the Head of the Suicide Research Unit. In this position, she developed and coordinated research and education initiatives on suicide, violence, mood disorders and behavioral medicine.

Marie Burke will serve as the Council's Deputy Director. Ms. Burke is an agency representative from the Department of Justice where she has been a staff attorney working on issues such as alcohol abuse in Indian country, gun violence and underage drinking. Ms. Burke brings to the Council a strong background in youth violence. Prior to her work at the Justice Department, she served as Director of the Violence Prevention Programs at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Office of the United States Surgeon General

The Office of the Surgeon General received \$476,000 to produce a Report on Youth Violence. Work on the Surgeon General's Report is progressing. The office has commitments from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as co-lead agencies, and has identified both a scientific editor and a managing editor. Members of the Surgeon General's staff have attended the first meeting of the American Medical Association-American Nurses Association-American Psychiatric Association Youth Violence Commission and have begun joint planning for the community meetings that will occur this spring. The Report is slated for completion by the end of 2000.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In FY 2000, CDC received \$11.6 million to fund National Centers of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention and the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. The Centers of Excellence will serve as national models for the prevention of youth violence. These Centers will support the development and use of effective interventions, promote interdisciplinary research, foster collaboration between researchers and communities, and empower communities. The Resource Center will provide a single point of access for information about youth violence, including intervention strategies, that will be available on a toll-free number in English and Spanish, on the Internet, and be linked to private resources. These new activities will complement ongoing evaluations of programs for high risk and middle school youth as well as an ongoing Suicide Research Center and an evaluation of suicide prevention among high school students.

National Institutes of Health

National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH) research findings are changing the ways Americans will look at violence and have to treat and possibly prevent it. Research points to the importance of a nurturing social environment in childhood, good early education and success in academic areas and it has been learned that the influence of peers, whether positive or negative, is of critical importance. In the coming years, NIMH expects to encourage a new generation of studies that will attend, particularly, to the relationships between mental disorders and violence, including suicide. This will include a focus on anxiety disorders, depression, or suicidal ideation, which often co-occur with behavior problems, as well as research on conduct problems and problems of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity in youth.

NIMH is coordinating research involving dissemination of prevention and early intervention strategies CDC and other Federal agencies, including the Departments of Education and Justice. The Institute currently has a number of new research announcements in the field and others under development. For example, NIMH has joined with several other NIH Institutes and Centers to sponsor new announcements relevant to youth behavior problems: Research on the Development of Interventions for Youth Violence, OD-00-005.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration - Center for Mental Health Services

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

In 1999, SAMHSA jointly funded 54 Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grants with Department of Education (Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities) and the Department of Justice, (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention). In 1999, SAMHSA contributed \$23.5 million to the SS/HS Initiative and this year will use FY 2000 dollars to continue to fund the grants made in FY 1999. Additional funding from FY 2000 will be used to fund 23 new grants. As a significant number of high quality applications from FY 1999 remain unfunded—only 54 of the 443 applications received were funded--the new grants will be selected from the original slate of applications. A new grant competition will not be run in FY 2000. It is anticipated that the new grants will be made in March 2000.

School Action Grants

Five million dollars of the 1999 appropriation was used to fund 40 School Action Grants (SAGs). These grants were awarded to communities to establish coalitions among education, mental health, and the criminal justice systems in the area of youth violence prevention and to pilot an evidence-based practice for violence prevention. It is anticipated that an additional 23-28 awards will be made with 2000 funds, with expanded focus on minority populations and suicide prevention.

Evaluation and Technical Assistance

In 1999, \$1.5 million was dedicated to the National Evaluation Program and \$2.8 million to the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Action Center. The evaluation program provides program evaluation and evaluation consultation to assess both process and program effectiveness of the SS/HS grant programs. The Action Center provides consultation and technical assistance to SS/HS and SAG grantees as well as to unsuccessful applicants. Additional resources from the 2000 funding will be added to existing technical assistance and evaluation efforts to address these needs in additional grantees.

National Public Awareness Campaign

Two million dollars in FY 1999 supported social marketing and public awareness to ensure that SS/SH and SAG programs are sustained in their communities and that information about violence prevention is successfully disseminated to target audiences. This work will continue in 2000.

Violence Prevention at the Community Level

These grants would be used to develop partnerships with local mental health systems. The local systems would choose from a menu of options including the facilitation of partnerships between Education and Justice authorities at the State level similar to SS/HS, creating and implementing a prevention systems orientation, enhancing linkages of Local Mental Health Authorities to Local Educational Agencies and others.

Parenting Initiative

In partnership with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), CMHS will support grants for the development of parenting skills to prevent violence. Funds would be used

to link existing SS/HS grants that have a special interest in this area. These funds would allow for both expanded programming and additional evaluation.

Suicide Prevention Initiative

CMHS will develop a National Strategy to Prevent Suicide. Additional monies are intended to be used to more closely address the problem of youth suicide and link to the School Action Grant program to support evidence-based suicide prevention programs.

Department of Education (ED)

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities – Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative:

The FY 2000 appropriation provided \$111 million for the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC). This is an increase of \$21 million over the FY 1999 appropriation. \$82 million of these funds will be used for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS). These funds will be combined with funds from the Department of Justice (OJJDP Title V) and Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA/Knowledge Development and Application), as described above under SAMHSA- CMHS, to form one coherent funding source for Local Educational agencies (LEAs). Approximately \$60 million of ED's contribution to the SS/HS Initiative will be used to continue the 54 grants made in FY 1999. The remaining \$20 million will be coupled with funds from SAMHSA to fund approximately 23 new grants.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Coordinator Initiative and Other National Programs:

In FY 2000, \$50 million was appropriated for the SDFSC Middle School Drug Prevention and School Safety Program Coordinators, an increase of \$15 million over the FY 1999 appropriation. Approximately, \$45 million of the appropriation will be used to fund new grants; the remaining funds will support continuation awards for grantees that received only one year of funding. Approximately 100 new grants will be awarded. The Department expects to make the new grant awards by the end of June 2000. The remaining National Program funds—approximately \$30 million—will be used for: a competitive program to examine the most effective strategies for preventing youth from being suspended or expelled, and for providing them with educational services if they are put out of school; for violence, alcohol, and drug prevention activities in the higher education area; and for a series of inter-agency efforts designed to address areas such as conflict resolution, gang prevention, and truancy.

Elementary School Counseling Program:

The Elementary School Counseling Program received \$20 million from the funds provided for the Fund for the Improvement of Education. ED is in the process of developing guidelines for this program. We anticipate making awards by the end of July 2000.

21st Century Community Learning Centers:

\$453 million was appropriated for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. ED also estimates that the funds will support approximately 590 new awards, bringing the total number of awards to 1,050. ED estimates that the funds will provide for some 3,900 centers, 2,360 more than in FY 1999. Applications for FY 2000 funds are due March 20. ED plans to make awards by the end of May.

Violence Prevention Demonstration Program in Civic Education:

The FY 2000 appropriation for the Civic Education program is \$9.85 million, of which \$1.5 million is to be used to conduct a violence prevention demonstration program. ED expects to receive an application by March 15, 2000, and to make an award by April 30, 2000, to the Center for Civic Education to continue the violence prevention demonstration program begun in FY 1999. The demonstration program is being conducted in six urban and one suburban school districts in five States.

Character Education:

ED plans to use \$7.3 million of the funds provided for the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) to continue the Character Education Program. Of this amount, approximately \$2 million will be utilized for new grant awards and \$5 million will support continuation awards. ED anticipates making 10 awards and 21 continuation awards in FY 2000. The application deadline for new grant awards was February 11, 2000. Awards will be made by the end of April.

Incarcerated Youth Offenders Program:

Of the \$19 million appropriated for the State Grants for Incarcerated Youth Offenders program, \$5 million was earmarked in appropriations language to continue the Literacy for Prisoners Program as authorized, previously, under the Adult Education Act. The remaining \$14 million is for State Grants for Incarcerated Youth Offenders. While Youth Offenders is a State formula grant program, not all States apply for the funds. In FY 1999, 40 States applied for and received funding. ED is currently in the process of making the FY 2000 awards. We estimate the number of grants will be about 40. The program serves about 6,700 youth offenders. Literacy for Prisoners is a forward-funded discretionary grant program. In FY 1999, 13 projects received funding, and they will receive continuation grants in fall 2000 with the funds appropriated for FY 2000. No new competition is planned for FY 2000.

Inexpensive Book Distribution:

The Department will award \$20 million under its contract with Reading is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF) to provide, through local aid to local nonprofit groups and volunteer organizations, reading motivation activities. Federal funds provide up to 75 percent of the costs of books, with the remainder obtained from private and local sources.

Parental Information and Resource Centers:

The Department currently plans to use the additional \$3 million for the Parent Information Centers to supplement the activities of the Centers in providing information and activities to help parents in identifying and preventing violent behavioral tendencies in their children. The Department plans to make one or more awards in September.

State Agency Neglected and Delinquent Program:

Funding for this program has been increased for FY 2000. The increase will be distributed by formula.

Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants Program

The Committee recommended that \$80 million be appropriated for the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants Program. The committee also recommend that, of the total appropriation, \$36 million be used for the teacher training partnership grants. From this amount, the Committee recommended that awards be made to support teacher partnerships grant activities as part of the Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. ED is in the process of incorporating this guideline in the FY 2000 award application for the program. The application forms are expected to be sent out by the end of March 2000.

Department of Labor (DOL)

Youth Offenders

In FY 2000, \$15 million was appropriated (reduced to \$13.9 million after the across the board budget cut) to continue and expand the Youth Offenders projects initiated by the Department in 1998. Currently, there are 14 Youth Offenders projects providing education, job training and job placement services to youth age 14 to 21 who are at-risk or who have been involved with the juvenile justice system. DOL will use the FY 2000 funds to strengthen linkages in the target communities between the workforce development system, juvenile courts and the parole system, schools and health services. DOL has worked closely with DOJ (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) to design and implement the Youth Offender initiative.