



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of the Assistant Secretary | 330 C Street, S.W., Suite 4034
Washington, D.C. 20201 | www.acf.hhs.gov

December 8, 2025

Governor Phil Scott
Office of the Governor
109 State Street, Pavilion Building
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Phil Scott,

The steadfast leadership of First Lady Melania Trump and her commitment to the well-being of America's most vulnerable children is captured in the Executive Order (EO), *Fostering the Future for American Children and Families*. This landmark effort will strengthen our child welfare system and reaffirms our collective duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves. It is in that spirit that we write to highlight a pressing issue for your attention.

Among the most vulnerable children are those who have deceased parents, some of whom might be eligible for federal survivors benefits. These benefits could be the last, or only, financial support deceased parents can provide to their children. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is aware that states across the country, perhaps unknowingly, but however unfortunately, divert these survivors benefits away from a child to offset agency expenses.

In the spirit of the EO, this practice is contrary to the best interests of children, and we are working to put an end to this practice. To date, 12 states have enacted policies to stop the interception of children's survivors benefits and to conserve them for the child's unmet needs. To support other states in following suit, we will share resources to help your state to change this practice, including executive order templates governors may use when directing their state agencies on the issue, and we stand ready to assist you.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your dedication to the well-being of children in our country. Your child welfare agency bears the responsibility of safeguarding children and ensuring they are better off when they leave the state's custody than when they entered. ACF stands ready to provide technical assistance should your your state decide to enact reforms that conserve benefits for foster childrens future needs. If you have any questions or need technical assistance implementing this policy change, please contact Andrew Gradison (Andrew.Gradison@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,

Alex J. Adams
Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families

CC: Jenney Samuelson, Secretary, Agency of Human Services