

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5378

To establish a grant program to facilitate nationwide accessibility and coordination of 211 services relating to developmental disabilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 21, 2024

Mr. BOOKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To establish a grant program to facilitate nationwide accessibility and coordination of 211 services relating to developmental disabilities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Enhancing Access to
5 Support and Emergency Services for Individuals with De-
6 velopmental Disabilities through 211” or the “EASE with
7 211 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM FACILITATING NATIONWIDE AC-**
2 **CESSIBILITY AND COORDINATION OF 211**
3 **SERVICES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENTAL**
4 **DISABILITIES.**

5 (a) 211 GRANT PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Health
6 and Human Services (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
7 retary”), shall carry out a program under which the Sec-
8 retary awards grants to improve the capacity of 211 serv-
9 ices to support individuals with developmental disabilities.

10 (b) APPLICATIONS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desiring a
12 grant under this section shall submit an application
13 to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and
14 containing such information as the Secretary may
15 require, including a description of an advisory coun-
16 cil that the eligible entity will establish for purposes
17 of advising on the implementation and oversight of
18 the eligible entity that will be supported by the
19 grant.

20 (2) ADVISORY COUNCIL.—

21 (A) MEMBERS.—An advisory council de-
22 scribed in paragraph (1) shall be comprised of
23 individuals selected by the eligible entity, in-
24 cluding—

25 (i) individuals with developmental dis-
26 abilities;

1 (ii) family members and caregivers of
2 individuals with developmental disabilities;

3 (iii) representatives of stakeholder
4 groups with experience administering 211
5 services, such as United Way Worldwide;
6 and

7 (iv) representatives of other relevant
8 stakeholder groups, including relevant non-
9 profit and advocacy groups such as State
10 developmental disabilities councils, centers
11 of excellence on developmental disabilities
12 of institutions of higher education, protec-
13 tion and advocacy systems, centers for
14 independent living, parent training and in-
15 formation centers, and family-to-family
16 health information centers.

17 (B) DUTIES.—An advisory council de-
18 scribed in paragraph (1) shall advise the eligible
19 entity receiving the grant with respect to—

20 (i) developing training standards for
21 211 specialists;

22 (ii) compiling reports required under
23 subsection (f), and policy improvement rec-
24 ommendations;

1 (iii) increasing the awareness and ef-
2 fectiveness of 211 services in all commu-
3 nities of the area served;

4 (iv) developing accessible resource ma-
5 terials and making accessibility improve-
6 ments to phone, text, and other commu-
7 nication interfaces and systems; and

8 (v) other appropriate topics.

9 (C) PRIORITY.—In selecting members for
10 an advisory council described in paragraph (1),
11 an eligible entity shall prioritize selecting mem-
12 bers described in subparagraph (A)(i).

13 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity shall use
14 amounts awarded under this section to carry out any of
15 the following:

16 (1) Establishing, improving, or maintaining the
17 211 database of the eligible entity with respect to
18 developmental disability resources.

19 (2) Hiring and training 211 specialists to assist
20 individuals with developmental disabilities in navi-
21 gating services.

22 (3) Developing and implementing data collec-
23 tion protocols ensuring that data is disaggregated by
24 race and type of disability.

1 (4) Upgrading technology and data manage-
2 ment systems to track and analyze service referrals.

3 (5) Conducting resource mapping to identify
4 gaps in resources relating to developmental disabili-
5 ties in the area served.

6 (6) Conducting accessible outreach and public
7 awareness campaigns targeting individuals with de-
8 velopmental disabilities and their families and care-
9 givers regarding the availability and use of 211 serv-
10 ices for such individuals, families, and caregivers.

11 (d) DATA COLLECTION.—The Secretary shall estab-
12 lish data collection protocols for use by eligible entities in
13 monitoring the use of 211 services by individuals with de-
14 velopmental disabilities, including with respect to the col-
15 lection of—

16 (1) information on referral outcomes and bar-
17 riers encountered; and

18 (2) disaggregated and deidentified data on race
19 and type of disability to identify disparities in serv-
20 ice access and quality.

21 (e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary, in con-
22 sultation with other applicable Federal agencies, shall—

23 (1) award 1 or more grants to entities, deter-
24 mined by the Secretary to be qualified for such
25 grants, to establish technical assistance centers; and

1 (2) work in coordination with each entity car-
2 rying out such a center to provide technical assist-
3 ance to recipients of awards under subsection (a) to
4 facilitate the planning, development, and implemen-
5 tation of activities described in subsection (c).

6 (f) RECIPIENT REPORTS.—Each recipient of an
7 award under this section shall submit an annual report
8 to the Secretary on activities carried out under this sec-
9 tion, for the duration of the award.

10 (g) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year
11 after the end of the grant program under this section, the
12 Secretary shall issue a report containing information re-
13 garding—

14 (1) best practices for States desiring to expand
15 their 211 services, including how to make the serv-
16 ices more accessible;

17 (2) the most common needs relating to develop-
18 mental disabilities for which individuals use 211
19 services;

20 (3) how many individuals and families are as-
21 sisted by the 211 service helplines;

22 (4) the demographics, including age, race, lan-
23 guage, and support needs, of individuals with devel-
24 opmental disabilities utilizing the 211 service

1 helpline, or on whose behalf such helpline is utilized;
2 and

3 (5) best practices for establishing a resource
4 database with resources relating to developmental
5 disabilities.

6 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) 211 SERVICE.—The term “211 service”
8 means a service providing residents with information
9 and referrals with respect to health and human serv-
10 ices and other provider agencies—

11 (A) via voice telephone, text telephone,
12 short message service, text, internet phone, or
13 other telecommunication methods; or

14 (B) by utilizing the 211 public-facing, on-
15 line social service directory.

16 (2) DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY.—The term
17 “developmental disability” has the meaning given
18 such term in section 102 of the Developmental Dis-
19 abilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000
20 (42 U.S.C. 15002).

21 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
22 ty” means—

23 (A) a State; or

24 (B) a local or regional entity, or other enti-
25 ty, providing a 211 service for a State.

1 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
2 quire.

3 (d) PRIORITIZATION.—In making grants under this
4 section, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities
5 that indicate in their applications an intention to provide
6 services to underserved or underrepresented communities
7 or to secondary schools underperforming in providing
8 transition planning described in subsection (e)(2).

9 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity receiving a
10 grant under this section—

11 (1) shall provide peer or family navigators to
12 help individuals with developmental disabilities and
13 families and caretakers providing services or support
14 for such individuals to connect to, and access, appro-
15 priate resources and services; and

16 (2) may be used to coordinate with local edu-
17 cational agencies (as defined in section 8101 of the
18 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
19 (20 U.S.C. 7801)) for purposes of transition plan-
20 ning with respect to individuals with developmental
21 disabilities, such as planning for—

22 (A) postsecondary education and employ-
23 ment;

24 (B) housing;

1 (C) legal and financial matters (such as
2 supported decisions-making and alternatives to
3 guardianship);

4 (D) use of Federal benefit programs and
5 eligibility;

6 (E) self-direction and self-advocacy;

7 (F) health and behavioral health, including
8 home and community-based services;

9 (G) building and maintaining community
10 ties and friendships;

11 (H) planning and visioning a life course;

12 and

13 (I) disaster and emergency preparedness
14 and safety.

15 (f) REPORT.—An eligible entity that receives a grant
16 under this section shall, not later than 1 year after the
17 activities carried out under the grant are completed, sub-
18 mit to the Secretary a report that contains data on how
19 the grant funds were used.

20 (g) DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY.—In this section,
21 the term “developmental disability” has the meaning given
22 such term in section 2.

1 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To carry
2 out this section, there is authorized to be appropriated
3 \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

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