

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 1, 2017

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Mr. Dodaro:

Many children and youth are affected by violence and other traumatic experiences, such as abuse or neglect at home, witnessing parental drug misuse, or living in fear of a parent's deportation. Exposure to trauma or toxic stress can impact a child's wellbeing and can result in lasting neurological and psychological effects that—left unaddressed—may harm a child's long-term academic, health, and societal outcomes. Studies show that only a small fraction of the children who need support and services to address trauma receive such care.

Children and youth come into contact with educational professionals and social service providers during the school day and at after-school programs, and child welfare workers assess and work with families in crisis. These officials are responsible for screening and referring children and families to service providers in areas such as mental health, substance abuse, and physical disabilities. Teachers, social service providers, and child welfare workers need specialized supports, such as training to identify and implement practices that effectively help children who have experienced trauma, and better mechanisms for sharing information across systems to support interventions.

To help inform federal and congressional efforts to improve care for children affected by trauma, we request that the Government Accountability Office review how selected states identify and treat children and families who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing trauma. Specifically: 1) How are selected states, through school personnel, child welfare, and social service providers, among others, identifying and providing support to children and youth who have experienced trauma or at risk of trauma, including ways they are sharing information and data across systems to support interventions; 2) What training is available in these states to support these providers and how is it funded; and 3) What supports do federal agencies provide to help states improve services to children affected by trauma?

Thank you for attention to this request. If you have any questions please contact Max Kanner in Senator Durbin's office ([Max\\_Kanner@durbin.senate.gov](mailto:Max_Kanner@durbin.senate.gov)) or Jill Hunter-Williams ([Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov)) in Representative Davis' office.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Danny K. Davis  
United States Representative