This report describes (1) the assistance that HHS and Education provide to help state and local agencies support children affected by trauma. Officials in child welfare and education agencies in the six selected states reported using a range of approaches to help children affected by trauma, including training staff, screening children, and providing services and support systems. To train child welfare workers, educators, and birth and foster parents to understand trauma and its effects on children, agencies in the six selected states used various approaches, such as learning communities, which include in-person learning and coaching, and online courses. Several state child welfare agencies also used learning communities to train clinicians in trauma-focused therapies. In addition, child welfare and education agencies in five states used screening tools to identify children exposed to and exhibiting symptoms of trauma. Children identified as experiencing trauma are referred for a trauma-informed mental health assessment. Also, to help children affected by trauma, child welfare and education agencies in five of the six states provide support and services. For example, in one state, caseworkers provide specialized services, including weekly visits, to children and families.

Officials in the six selected states reported facing various challenges in their efforts to support children affected by trauma, and they emphasized the importance of engaged leadership in establishing and sustaining support for these children. In three states, officials said that a lack of such leadership hindered their efforts, and they described cases that included delayed, incomplete, or unsuccessful implementation of initiatives. Officials in all six states also talked about limitations on their agency’s capacity to support children affected by trauma, including:

- high rates of staff turnover, especially in child welfare;
- limited staff time to dedicate to trauma initiatives;
- lack of clinicians trained in trauma-focused therapies; and
- insufficient funding to support trauma initiatives.

Officials in some states reported strategies they have used to help address these challenges, including providing additional support to employees and coordinating with partner agencies to jointly leverage resources, expertise, and data.