



Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 transforms federal child welfare financing streams to allow funding for services to families whose children may be at risk of entering foster care. The law aims to prevent unnecessary removal of children from their families by allowing federal funding for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training. Further, the law attempts to improve the well-being of children in foster care by discontinuing federal reimbursement when a child's placement in a congregate care setting is unnecessary. The law also provides for increased support for young people as they transition from foster care to adulthood.

Prevention Services under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act

Allows states the *option* to use Title IV-E funds to provide prevention services and programs for up to 12 months for children at imminent risk of entering foster care, any parenting or pregnant youth in foster care, and the parents — biological or adopted — and kin caregivers. There are no restrictions on the number of times a child/family is eligible for services.

For example: a child is 2 years old, comes to the attention of CPS and is a candidate for foster care. Services available under Family First are provided and resolve the issue. Then, when that same child is in Jr. High, they again come to the attention of CPS. Another 12 months of services are available to the family at that time.

Eligible Services Include:

- Evidence-based mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services
- Foster care maintenance payments on behalf of a child living with a parent in a licensed residential family-based treatment facility for up to 12 months.
- In-home parenting support (includes parenting skills training, parent education and individual and family counseling)
- Support for evidence-based kinship navigator programs

There is no income eligibility test for families to receive these services.

Enhanced Support under Title IV-B

Eliminates the time limit for reunification services provided during a child's placement in foster care. Adjusts to the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program to allow for services to a family for a 15-month period that begins on the date that the child returns home.

Requires states to adopt an electronic system to help speed up placing children in foster care, guardianship, or for adoption across state lines. The law provides limited funding to help states in the development of such a system.

Encouraging Placement in a Family-Like Home

Beginning October 1, 2019, this law ends federal reimbursement when states inappropriately place children in non-family settings, such as group homes or congregate care facilities. This law creates new procedures to make sure that placement in a non-family setting is appropriate and meets the clinical needs of the child. In addition, there will be continued evaluation to ensure the child's placement in a non-family setting remains the most appropriate.

Requirements for Placement in a Group or Congregate Care Facility:

- A. A qualified residential treatment program that provides trauma-informed services (as defined below)
- B. A setting specializing in providing prenatal, post-partum, or parenting supports for youth who are in foster care.
- C. For youth who are at least 18 years of age, a supervised setting in which they live independently.
- D. A setting providing high-quality residential care and supportive services to children and youth who have been found to be, or are at risk of becoming, sex trafficking victims.

Standards for Qualified Residential Treatment Programs:

- Designed to address the needs, including clinical needs as appropriate, of children with serious emotional or behavioral challenges and is able to implement the treatment identified for the child by the assessment of the child.
- Within 30 days of placement, an age-appropriate and evidence-based assessment must occur to determine whether or not the child's needs can be met with a family member or foster family home. A team of family members and professionals should participate in the assessment and decision making process.
- Within 60 days of the placement the Court must approve or disapprove the placement
- After a child is in a QRTP for 12 consecutive months or 18 non-consecutive months, the state must submit to the federal government signed approval from the head of the state agency for continued placement.
- Requires presence of registered or licensed nursing personnel and other licensed clinical staff to be on-site when appropriate to the level of care required by the child.

Improves Services to Older Foster Youth

Reauthorizes the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee) through FY 2021.

Modernizes the Chafee program to emphasize more successful transitions to adulthood.

Including:

- Allows states that have extended foster care to age 21 the choice to offer services to youth who have aged out of foster care up to age 23.
- Provides for 5 years of eligibility for education and training vouchers (ETV) up to age 26. The 5 years of ETVs do not have to be consecutive. For example, a youth can take a break from college and go back without losing eligibility.
- Allows the redistribution of unused Chafee grants to states who have applied for more funds rather than returning funding back to the U.S. Treasury.

For more information about the Family First Prevention Services Act, or to follow other legislation impacting young people in foster care, visit www.fosterclub.org. Remember to follow FosterClub on Facebook, too!

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