Advancing Equity through Policy Implementation: Seizing the Opportunity within the Family First Prevention Services Act

Alexandra Citrin, MSW, MPP
Pronouns: she, her, hers
Senior Associate
alexandra.citrin@cssp.org
Objectives

• Understand how intentional implementation can address existing disparities and prevent hardwiring in of policies that perpetuate existing disparities

• Learn about opportunities and challenges to advancing equity specifically within Family First

*Implementation: "A specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions"*
The Family First Act: A Tool for Advancing Equity
The Family First Prevention Services Act

- Family First does not advance equity on its own
- States must be intentional about reducing existing disproportionalities and disparities
- States can prevent the hardwiring of new policy and processes that reinforce existing inequities
- Creates an opportunity to undo existing systemic and institutional racism
- This must be an iterative process with continuous quality improvement strategies built in
Overview

• Supports keeping children at home with their families when safe

• New Title IV-E prevention funding must support and not supplant existing investments in prevention (available FY2020)

• Promotes appropriate placements for youth who must enter foster care

• Prioritizes family-based placements and provides new model foster home licensing standards

• Creates safeguards against placing children unnecessarily in congregate care

• Extends Chafee services for youth in care
Prevention Services

• **Eligibility:**
  o Children who are candidates for foster care
  o Parents and caregivers of children who are candidates
  o Pregnant and parenting youth in foster care

• **Services:**
  o Mental health, substance abuse, in-home parent skill-based programs, and kinship navigator programs

• **Evidence Criteria:**
  o Well-supported, supported, promising
  o Clearinghouse guidance recently released; waiting for initial program ratings
  o Guidance for tribes operating IV-E systems

• **Requires states to submit a Title IV-E Prevention Plan**
## Prevention Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implement an Array of Available Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Over Surveillance of Families of Candidates and Pregnant and Parenting Youth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invest in Growing the Evidence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Broad Definition of Candidacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contribute to a Continuum of Prevention Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Restrictive Services</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Family First Advances Equity

- Engage the broader **community**
- Responsibly defining **candidacy**
- Develop an **array** of prevention services
- Invest in growing the **evidence**
Engage the Broader Community

- **Engage families** – those who have and have not participated in prevention services
- Meaningfully include **youth voice**
- Include **partner agencies** and **community stakeholders** to gain multiple perspectives about the needs of children and families
- Go beyond the usual suspects – engage child welfare staff at the **county and local** level
Engage the Broader Community

- **Promote a shared investment** in developing the plan will also lead to shared accountability — ensuring that quality services are effectively implemented.

- Create mechanisms for and **commit to continuous** engagement and feedback.
Responsibly Defining Candidacy

• Evaluate state and local data to understand the needs of children and families

• Extreme care and attention must be taken so that the definition of candidacy does not further structural and institutional racism.

• States should not define candidacy so broadly that the potential of federal funds results in children and families becoming involved with child welfare unnecessarily.
Developing an Array of Prevention Services

Develop a broad range of prevention services that can meet the unique needs of families.

1. Analyze data and disaggregate by race, sexual orientation, gender identity, other needs.

2. Consider promising approaches that have a strong fit for your children and families.

3. Include targeted services for pregnant and parenting youth, post-reunification, guardianship and adoption.
Developing an Array of Prevention Services

- Utilize the **Hexagon tool** as part of request for proposals
- Increase mechanisms for transparency and continuous quality learning
- **Contracting** for equity
Ensuring a Shared Prevention Vision

Financing Streams to Support Prevention Programs for Families
Invest in Growing the Evidence

Only a small number of evidence-based programs have been normed on children and families disproportionately involved with child welfare – and for whom the greatest disparities exist

• Identify local interventions that work to achieve positive outcomes for children and families

• Utilize maintenance of effort dollars (MOE) to support innovation

• Identify public-private partnerships

• Invest in communities of color implementing promising and effective approaches

• Look to tribes operating Title IV-E systems

• Look to National Quality Improvement Centers

• Document adaptations and share this information
Ensuring Appropriate Placements in Care
Ensuring Appropriate Placements

• Promoting appropriate placements:
  o Array of placements
  o Recruitment and retention of foster parents
  o Support for kin
  o Assessments of need
  o Judicial oversight

• Qualified Residential Treatment Program requirements:
  o Case planning, family engagement, accreditation, needs-based

• Exclusions:
  o Pregnant and parenting youth, Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and independent living programs
Ensuring Appropriate Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Disproportionality and Disparities</td>
<td>Increase in Disproportionality and Disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Standards Inclusive of SOGIE Principles</td>
<td>Pathologizing Older Youth Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require Non-Discrimination and SOGIE Principles in Contracts</td>
<td>Youth Placed in Overly Restrictive Settings (at-risk of CSEC, PPY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded and Targeted Recruitment and Retention</td>
<td>Faith-Based Providers who Discriminate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Family First Advances Equity

Reduce disparities in congregate care through:

• Focus on targeted foster parent recruitment and retention

• Implement policies to prevent unintended placements
Foster parent recruitment and retention

- Implement foster parent **recruitment and retention strategies** for youth who are over-represented in congregate care, including LGBTQ youth, teenagers, youth with behavioral health needs and those who are expectant or parenting.
- Invest in **targeted training** for foster parents.
- Provide **in-home support** for foster parents.
Policies to promote positive placements

- Develop guidance to reduce unintended consequences of placement of youth in more restrictive settings.
- Ensure appropriate assessments of all youth in care to ensure safety while preventing bias from influencing placement decisions.
- Review your current foster family licensing standards and compare to the national standards.
Key Takeaways and Resources
1. **Implementation is key** to actively ensuring equity and preventing unintended consequences.

2. **Equity isn’t just an “add on.”** It must be core to implementation.

3. **Intentionally focusing on equity** should help states better meet the mandates of Family First.
Q&A
Resources from CSSP

• 10 Ways to Advance Equity and Well-Being through FFPSA: https://cssp.org/resource/seizing-the-opportunity/

• Responsibly Defining Candidacy within the Context of FFPSA: Five Principles to Consider: https://cssp.org/resource/responsibly-defining-candidacy/


• Opportunities for Progress: Better Serving Families with Domestic Violence through FFPSA: https://cssp.org/resource/opportunities-for-progress-domestic-violence-ffpsa/
Resources from CSSP


• Placing Equity Concerns at the center of Knowledge Development: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Putting-Equity-at-the-Center-of-Knowledge-Development.pdf