



## **The Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA):**

### ***Making Historic Reforms to the Nation's Children's Services System***

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First, or FFPSA) was adopted in 2018 and will be implemented nationwide by October 1, 2021. The name of the law reflects its vision: A **family first** for children and teens through quality **prevention services**.

- Through dramatic funding changes, Family First puts the focus on prevention and – to the extent possible – keeping children out of foster care and with their families or relatives. It recognizes that often families can provide safe and loving care if given access to needed mental health services, substance abuse treatment or improved parenting skills.
- Family First is an excellent opportunity to increase some of the best practices that are already being implemented around the state, such as 30 Days to Family, Ohio START, and Team Decision Making.
- **Foster Care:** When foster care is necessary, Family First helps ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for their needs. It also provides new model standards for foster home licensing to improve the quality of care.
- **Residential Treatment:** For children for whom residential care remains the best option, it seeks to improve the quality and oversight of that care and ensure that residential facilities provide quality, trauma-informed supports.
- **Kinship Care:** Family First provides resources for Kinship Navigator Programs, which link kinship caregivers to a broad range of services and supports to help children remain safely with them. It also requires states to document how their foster care licensing standards accommodate kinship caregivers.
- **Emancipated Youth:** Family First provides opportunities to improve services for youth who age out of care. It also adds flexibility to the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, which provides up to \$5,000 a year for qualified school-related expenses.
- **Opioid Crisis:** Family First seeks to offer more supportive services to families challenged by drug addiction since the opioid epidemic has taken an enormous toll on families and created unprecedented challenges for children services.

### **What is Ohio Doing to Implement Family First?**

- To plan for the implementation, Ohio has several decisions to make. For example, how will we define candidacy for foster care? What will be our criteria for residential treatment programs? How will our kinship navigator program be structured?
- Ohio is working hard to involve as many people as possible in these decisions. Our Family First Leadership Advisory Committee, subcommittees, and workgroups are actively discussing these topics at monthly meetings. Members include leaders from public and private child serving agencies, state departments, the Supreme Court of Ohio, partner agencies, parents, foster care alumni, and caregivers.
- Ultimately, we must submit an implementation plan to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Once approved, any changes in practice must take effect no later than October 1, 2021.

### **More Information**

- Email [FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov)
- Visit [jfs.ohio.gov](http://jfs.ohio.gov) and click on “Protective Services” and then “Family First.”

## Ohio's Family First Leadership Advisory Committee, Subcommittees and Workgroups

Ohio's Family First Leadership Advisory Committee is comprised of public and private organizations, advocacy groups, and former youth and families with lived experience. Together, they are informing Ohio's implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. The following subcommittees and workgroups are conducting research and making recommendations to the Leadership Committee for further consideration.

- **Prevention Subcommittee:** The Prevention Subcommittee's goal is to design a prevention services plan that aligns evidence-based programs with the needs of Ohio's families and children to keep children safe with their families whenever possible. This subcommittee has several workgroups:
  - In-Home Parenting Workgroup
  - Mental Health Workgroup
  - Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Workgroup
- **Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) Subcommittee:** The QRTP Subcommittee's goal is to examine the Family First QRTP requirements and discuss how Ohio's residential facilities can comply with those requirements. This subcommittee also has several workgroups:
  - Accreditation Workgroup
  - Agency Readiness Workgroup
  - Court Oversight Workgroup
  - Level of Care Workgroup
  - Licensing and Contracting Workgroup
  - Treatment Model Workgroup
- **Communications Workgroup:** The purpose of this workgroup is to consider and attempt to alleviate communication gaps within the Leadership Committee/Subcommittees and ensure bidirectional communication about FFPSA with the larger community.
- **Model Licensing Standards Workgroup:** This workgroup reviews all model standards and makes recommendations regarding alignment of Ohio's licensing standards with the federally proposed standards.
- **Steering Committee:** This committee is comprised of state and stakeholder representatives who are responsible for creating the agendas and discussion points for Leadership Committee Meetings.
- **Executive Committee:** This Committee works with executive-level leadership from state departments throughout the planning and implementation of FFPSA to ensure effective cross-departmental partnership and guidance.

**WORK HAPPENING OUTSIDE THE FFPSA LEADERSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

- **IL/Post Emancipation:** Prospective changes to independent living and post-emancipation services under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program will be reviewed by the Bridges Advisory Council as well as youth and young adults currently or formerly in care.
- **Kinship Adoption Navigator (OhioKAN):** OhioKAN is tasked with developing a statewide Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program. This includes facilitating a stakeholder workgroup, researching and developing program content, creating a program website, and establishing communications products.
- **Prevention of Child Maltreatment Fatalities:** A leadership team will be convened in conjunction with Ohio's Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP) project. Among its responsibilities will be reviewing various high-risk safety identification models, both nationally and internationally; discussing key programmatic and structural elements that could promote overall risk reduction regarding fatalities, near fatalities, and serious child injuries.