



## **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](https://jfs.ohio.gov) and click on “Protective Services” and then “Family First.”