

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Exploration and Design Forum

Summary Report



*Developed by the Institute for Human Service
for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Collaborative Visioning Activity	3
FFPSA Components Open World Café	8
Considerations, Concerns, and Connections	16

Introduction

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) of 2018 was passed and signed into law (P.L. 115-123) as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act on February 9, 2018. The FFPSA is the largest child welfare reform initiative in over a decade. The foundational goals of the FFPSA include the emphasis of preventative services to assist children in remaining safely in their homes, ensuring children in care are placed in the least restrictive setting and augmentation of the quality of care for children and their families while involved in the child welfare system. The FFPSA allows states to use Title IV-E funding for preventative services. In order for states to receive reimbursement for preventative services for up to 12 months, a trauma-informed evidence-based prevention plan must be developed and implemented. In addition, FFPSA establishes new requirements for the use of residential treatment facilities. These new requirements are intended to reduce reliance on congregate care and ensure that when youth come into care, they are placed in the least restrictive setting possible based on the youths' specific needs. FFPSA also recognizes the importance of supporting kin placements and provides funding for the use of evidence-based Kinship Navigator Services. Other important provisions of the FFPSA include changes in Independent Living services for youth up to age 23, implementation and utilization of the new National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE), documentation and tracking of prevention related to child fatalities as well as new foster care licensing standards.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) along with the Casey Family Programs, Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), Ohio Children Alliance (OCA) and Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) recognize the importance of seeking input and guidance from key stakeholders in the state to ensure successful development and implementation of FFPSA in Ohio. Ohio has a long-standing history of embracing innovation and enacting practice change to better serve the children and families in the state. Ohio's success in leading innovation and practice change is due largely in part to the continued commitment and determination to the three key principles of child welfare: safety, permanency, and well-being.

Engagement of community partners and key stakeholders is paramount to gathering insight, input and opportunities for success. Over the course of a two-week period, five Exploration and Design Regional Forums were held across the state. Participants included upper level management staff from Public Children Services Agencies, Residential Treatment Facility representatives, Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug service providers, Managed Care Providers, Foster parents, Family and Children First (FCFC) members, Ohio CASA/GAL association, the Supreme Court as well as various other service providers and family members who utilize these services. They were clearly interested in the potential for transformational change in serving children and families. They provided thoughtful insight and recommendations to inform the FFPSA Leadership Council's work to implement FFPSA requirements.

The Institute for Human Services was asked to help design the facilitation process for the forums and to write a summary report. This report is a synthesis of ideas generated verbally, and in written form during the forums.

Collaborative Visioning Activity

The Collaborative Visioning Activity consisted of three questions to assist in establishing a common vision related to the systematic transformation for children and families. Participants were encouraged to provide recommendations, strengths and opportunities as well as systematic barriers as it relates to the development and implementation of Ohio's plan. During the process, five categories were identified as areas of importance necessary for systematic change. The top responses from the five Regional forums in each area are provided below.

Vision Question #1: If we were to paint a picture of true system transformation for children and families in Ohio, what would it look like? Consider partnerships, systems, resources, and outcomes.

Workforce

- Reduction in work requirements for children services staff.
- Increased salaries for social service staff
- Identification of ways to maintain a qualified, well-trained workforce
- Identification and implementation of mentors to assist newly hired staff

Statewide System

- Develop a centralized resource system and statewide referral system
- Streamline the processes across the state for easier collaboration and implementation
- Implement universal releases of information forms
- Create a list of services available statewide in SACWIS accessible to both public and private agencies
- Develop a statewide model for continuum of care

Collaboration

- Recruit and develop family and community support to serve as parent mentors during reunification
- Early identification and engagement of kinship for purposes of concurrent planning
- Make case decisions from a family-focused perspective
- Services and funding follow the youth regardless of system
- Timely availability of service providers especially during crisis situations

Resources

- Prevention services will be affordable and accessible
- Provide community resources to support and stabilize families before involvement with children service agencies
- Allow children services agencies to do prevention services prior to responding to abuse and neglect referrals
- Uniform case management/non-medical model of care coordination
- Increase supportive services to kinship providers as well as educating kinship providers on the resources available including funding and community resources

Funding

- Financial support for kinship providers including daycare costs
- Provide financial supports for parents to assist in allowing children to remain in the home
- 100% state funding for the cost of PCSAO membership and cost of care for private agency services
- Pool funding to all service providers to meet the needs of the family
- Equity in funding; streamline funding for maximization

Vision Question #2: What strengths and opportunities can we build upon to successfully achieve true system transformation?

Strengths

- Additional funding through Medicaid expansion
- Continual development and expansion of databases
- Utilization of interventions implemented through ProtectOHIO waivers in children services agencies, including family team meetings (FTMs), evidence-based practices, evaluation programs, and kinship supportive services
- Commitment to keeping families together in the home
- History of demonstrated coordination across all systems

Opportunities

- Current utilization of evidence-based and/or promising practices including In-home Based Therapy (IHBT), Multi-Systematic Treatment (MST), Nurturing Parenting, Evidence-based Treatment (EBT), Ohio START, etc.
- Utilization of knowledge related to neuroscience and brain development
- Continued expansion of SACWIS capabilities including Title IV-E, public and private access
- Utilization of seasoned workers to train new staff; utilization of seasoned foster parents to train new foster parents
- Development of regionalized forums and collaboration amongst Ohio Partnership agencies working together early in the process to develop solutions

Vision Question #3: What systematic barriers do we need to tackle in order to successfully achieve true system transformation?

Workforce

- Standardization regarding training for staff beyond Caseworker Core classes
- Issues in workforce including qualified workforce, staff retention, burnout, lack of interest, poor pay, media involvement, dangerous occupation and limited training

Statewide Systems

- Consolidated kinship training to support kinship providers
- Training for evidence-based practices (EBP) and establishment of responsible parties for maintaining fidelity
- Systematic changes to U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Ensure accountability of juvenile court systems to follow FFPSA requirements
- Elimination of duplication of services

Collaboration

- Department of Education is not part of the process
- Adopt a universal standard for acceptable parenting practices
- Increased education and understanding among juvenile court staff especially related to new changes
- Enhance systematic collaboration
- Develop closer relationships between Family & Children First (FCFC) and Service coordination to increase the capacity to serve children

Resources

- Lack of community based mental health services for children and families
- Foster home recruitment/licensing varies county to county creating competition and limited resources
- Gaps in housing and/or placement options for children who have significant behavioral issues
- Lack of providers/resources in isolated areas including transportation needs
- Increased utilization of managed care plan staff
- Lack of treatment options for children with severe behavioral issues

Funding

- Lack of funding to adhere to the accreditation requirements by both residential treatment centers as well as group homes
- Funding shortage; need flexible funding
- Lack of financial support for kinship providers
- County financed system is a challenge; difficulties for some counties to have funding required to meet match requirements

FFPSA Components Open World Café

The FFPSA Components Open World Café provided all participants with the opportunity to discuss specific questions regarding strengths, opportunities and barriers related to implementing FFPSA in Ohio. The ideas, suggestions, tips and recommendations were collected to assist the Leadership Council in implementing FFPSA. The following highlights illustrate the cumulative information gathered for each question from all five regional forums.

1. How would you like to see the Office of Families and Children proceed with this work? Consider timeframes, planning and implementation efforts, resources, partners and involvement outside of OFC, etc.

Considerations

- Development of a statewide public awareness campaign
- Development of a recruitment campaign to increase the number of foster homes across the state
- Application of outside of the box concepts including the use of mentors and respite services for biological parents, foster parents, and kinship providers
- Development of engagement strategies to include outreach, collaboration, and building trust among all providers

Implementation

- Ensure implementation structure, timelines and transition of stakeholder involvement is included in the development of the plan
- Recommend rolling out the FFPSA plan for Ohio in phases and including benchmarks and target dates at the outset

Stakeholder Participation

- Develop an FFPSA Advisory Council separate from the Leadership Council to provide additional oversight
- Ensure Ohio Association of Health Plans (OAHP), Office of Family & Children (OFC), and Ohio Family and Children First Council (FCFC), families, kinship providers, and juvenile court staff are involved in the Leadership Council
- Hold meetings at more accessible times for all key stakeholders to participate in the Leadership Council and workgroups

Communication

- Ensure consistent and frequent communication throughout the planning, implementation and tracking phases
- Coordinate the communication of information on training, accreditation and other requirements across all systems

Training

- Provide training to partners and agencies on lessons learned, accreditation, evidence-based programs and how to put programs through the Clearinghouse

Evidence-Based Programs (EBP)

- Implement evidence-based practices in each community designed around peer support and wrap around services
- Identify which evidence-based practices are Medicaid eligible
- Develop a system to track evidence-based practices and whether these practices fall under one of the three categories: promising, supported, and well-supported
- Implement ongoing forums for all partners to evaluate effectiveness of evidence-based programs

Accreditation

- Provide increased understanding of qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) requirements and ensure organizations are prepared for QRTP accreditation
- Develop a survey to determine how many QRTP service providers will move forward with accreditation

2. What information is needed to determine the optimal timeframe for implementation of FFPSA in Ohio?

- Obtain a complete list of all residential treatment facilities including QRTPs, number of foster homes, family-based substance abuse treatment facilities, evidence-based programs, and service providers by geographical areas
- Establish key performance indicators that are consistent statewide and with federal, state, and accreditation requirements
- Identify evidence-based programs currently available

3. What planning efforts are occurring at the local level related to FFPSA, and how can we support these efforts?

- Local Public Children Services Agencies (PCSAs) have been sharing information regarding the FFPSA during community advisory network meetings
- Reaching out to non-traditional audiences as resources
- Ensuring children are not placed in residential treatment facilities if children do not need that level of care
- Ohio Children's Alliance (OCA) has been meeting with providers to discuss implementation and changing rules and regulations

- Ohio Family Care Associations (OFCA) meet monthly with Foster and Adoptive parents on the statewide advisory council to discuss FFPSA implementation and opportunities.

4. What services or practices are working well in your agency and community that could be replicated statewide?

- ACE/Trauma screening – multidisciplinary approach to treatment and service planning
- Bellfaire afterschool program, SUCCEED, in-house 501-C3, community respite beds for developmentally disabled youth, independent living units in PCSAs
- Permanency Roundtables (PRTs), Intensive Home-Based services, Kinship Navigator Program, after school programs through Juvenile Court and Trauma-informed training for staff, community members and families
- Cuyahoga DCFS utilizing evidence-based programs including school-based program with family, school, mental health, parenting SUD and youth groups as well as community-based collaboration
- First Step in Hamilton County, Building Bridges Initiative, Family Preservation Services, Safe Families, and Family Dependency Treatment Courts

5. How can we best engage courts and other key stakeholders to support provisions of FFPSA, such as those around QRTP?

- Utilization of Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) for all cases and provide education regarding the impact on placement options and QRTP recommendations

- Initiate required meetings between Children Service Agencies and Judges to discuss child specific issues and trends
- Provide incentives for key stakeholders from the state as opposed to billing county agencies
- Identify champions in each discipline to support FFPSA
- Build a system to include quality improvement, feedback, revisions, monitoring data and statistics as well as celebrating successes

6. For Quality Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) consider:

Resources needed for successful implementation

- Clarification related to the roles and responsibilities of children services agencies, juvenile court and service providers
- Identification of residential treatment facilities including those facilities who qualify as a QRTP facility
- Development of standards/guidelines for assessments and reviews of QRTP placements

Opportunities and strengths already in place to support implementation

- Ohio standards for licensure for residential treatment facilities and foster homes already meet accreditation requirements
- Expand on relationships between residential treatment facilities, Children Services agencies and managed care stakeholders to successfully plan for discharge services and aftercare for youth
- Gather data from states who implement the FFPSA plan early – utilize the data obtained while developing the plan for Ohio

Barriers and challenges to supporting successful implementation

- Concerns for limited housing for placement of youth especially older youth

- Lack of specific requirements and collaboration between Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Children Services when working with youth who qualify for both services
- Staff have not received information related to trauma-informed programming as well as clearinghouse information and guidelines
- Capacity issues – there are not enough qualified residential treatment facilities especially for older youth and younger youth with multi-system involvement

7. For Prevention of Placement Services consider...

Resources needed for successful implementation

- Develop and implement a referral process for involvement of Family and Children First Council (FCFC) and provide additional funding to FCFC to assist in prevention
- Develop and implement In-home Services with intensive practical skills
- Identify service providers that are able to implement evidence-based programs (EBP)
- Establish preventative services for families with generational cycles of abuse
- Implement outreach for early intervention

Opportunities and strengths already in place to support implementation

- Consider linking receipt of JFS benefits to participating in prevention services related to involvement in Children Services
- Provide incentives for parents participating in prevention services including FCFC
- Build upon existing programs and services
- Engage medical community in early prevention opportunities

Barriers and challenges to supporting successful implementation

- Waitlists prevent families from receiving the services they need in a timely manner
- Inadequate amount of preventive services – not all communities have access to preventive services
- Lack of evidence-based services available in the state
- Lack of services in rural counties
- High rates of staff turnover
- Funding

8. For Kinship provisions consider...

Resources needed for successful implementation

- A network of churches to support families
- Relationships with service organizations to support kinship providers
- Early engagement strategies for kinship providers including education on needs of children, communication with biological parents, etc.
- A standardized package of support for kinship providers including resources such as beds, clothing, food, daycare, etc.
- Opportunities and strengths already in place to support implementation
- Utilize Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition (OGKC) to get input on kinship services and programs
- Replicate Foster Love program in Columbus that provides respite nights and welcome baskets for new foster families
- ODJFS could provide childcare subsidies and supplemental funding for kinship providers

- Provide mediation services between kinship providers and biological families including visitation, etc.
- 24 hr. emergency daycare

Barriers and challenges to supporting successful implementation

- Lack of understanding regarding normalcy and prudent parenting practices
- Changes to requirements related to placement of youth in kinship homes especially those who have criminal records or may live in unsafe neighborhoods
- Need for flexible guidelines regarding approval of Kinship Providers including background checks
- Lack of funding for placements

Considerations, Concerns, and Connections

All participants were invited to provide any additional thoughts regarding considerations, concerns and connections that may assist the Leadership Council in the development and implementation of the Ohio's plan for the FFPSA.

Considerations

Every county's juvenile court is different so it's going to be hard to get uniformity about residential approvals	Need to be a cap on residential level of care rates, concern that new changes will lead to higher placement costs for residential treatment
Daycare assistance for Kinship Providers regardless of income or work requirements	Trauma-informed definition and minimum guidelines are needed
Leadership Council should consider Funding obligations and resources for county children services agencies and providers when implementing FFPSAS	Statewide tools Create statewide service array
Educate foster parents about support services available through managed care providers	Link with Ohio Family and Children First Council (FCFC) for collaboration efforts and ideas for what the councils are doing currently for families & children
Consider creating a statewide menu of services in SACWIS that agencies can access to service children and families	Additional regional meetings would be helpful to report out on the Leadership Team and decisions that have been made
Leadership Council should consider staffing and workforce capacity as they are implementing FFPSA	Leadership Council should develop a realistic time frame for implementing FFPSA
Make sure all stakeholders have a seat at the table	Ensure frequent, timely, and complete communication among entities involved in implementing FFPSA
Must support kinship, they are the key for reducing number of children in care	Expand on the working relationship between the state, counties, and private agencies

Concerns

Limited placement resources	Variations of operating practices across the state
Lack of funding	Inadequate staffing
Inability to meet all of the needs of children and families served	Changes in mental health services should include reduction of the use of psychotropic medications
Concerns that decisions of juvenile courts will not be in compliance with FFPSA requirements (timeframes)	Many barriers, especially for families include funding resources, transportation, lack of wrap around services, service coordination, peer supports, etc.
Restrictions related to evidence-based programs and reimbursability of services available	Courts will not abide by the timelines regarding hearings for youth in residential treatment facilities (interfere with funding)
Cost of accreditation	Lack of evidence-based programs
Implementation timelines	Need to find ways to engage families in prevention services
Lack of resources in rural and small counties	

Connections

Establish collaboration between all service providers and county agencies	Connect with judges/juvenile courts and other key partners (i.e. FCFCs) for relationship building, communication, information sharing and education
Partner with second generation programs on infants/toddlers	Leverage Medicaid, connect with and build shared responsibility
Pool resources to offset cost associated with FFPSA compliance	Implement Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) – train foster and kinship homes on how to use it and use in treatment homes
Ensure that there is involvement of all stakeholders on the Leadership Council	Educate and engage legislators on FFPSA
Create community continuums of care	Identify ways to promote meaningful collaboration within and across systems and develop, implement, and cultivate that collaboration
Build connection with community partners	Contract with private agencies to provide services

The information provided during the Exploration and Design Regional Forums is very helpful and will be utilized during the Leadership Council meetings to create an FFPSA implementation plan to ensure that safety, permanency, and well-being of Ohio’s children and families.

Thank you to all of the key stakeholders who participated in the Regional Forums. The contribution, commitment and support of all of the attendees in each of the regional forums is a prime example of the Ohio’s dedication to protecting the most vulnerable population, children.