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RI DCYF Receives Approval for Family First Prevention Services Plan

Plan will enhance the Department's ongoing efforts by strengthening prevention services available

Providence, R.I. (October 17, 2022) – The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) today announced the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) has approved its five-year Family First Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan. This plan will allow the Department to build upon its focus and mission of strengthening the capabilities and expanding the capacity of parents and caregivers to effectively care for their children and safely reduce the need for foster care where possible, keeping children and youth safe and healthy at home. In addition, it will continue to drive forward the goal of eliminating disproportionality and disparity in our child welfare system and create equitable access to services and programming within DCYF ensuring culturally appropriate options are available.

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), enacted by Congress on February 9, 2018, is landmark federal legislation that offers a major opportunity for states to strengthen prevention services by allowing Title IV-E funding reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parent skill-based programs for children or youth who are at risk of entering foster care, pregnant or parenting youth in foster care, and the parents or relative caregivers of those children and youth.

“We believe – and local advocates, policymakers and community stakeholders agree – that passage of Family First is an opportunity that offers exciting possibilities for Rhode Island to be responsive to the specific needs of children, teens, and families,” says Governor Daniel McKee.

“Family First provides additional resources to promote innovations and flexibility in our efforts thanks to federal reimbursement for prevention services. This is an important opportunity for us to engage the entire community in planning and implementation and gather ongoing feedback on improving our preventive services and practice models. This includes engaging with community-based organizations, private providers, the community, and other stakeholders. I am grateful for the collaborative efforts taken by DCYF to lead this effort and I’m confident Rhode Island’s Family First plan will greatly improve the future of children, youth, and families in our state,” McKee adds.

Family First is based on several core principles shared by DCYF and its parent agency the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). These principles are reflected in DCYF’s vision, mission, and

guiding principles. DCYF's mission is to partner with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth in a caring environment.

"A strong federal-state-community collaboration is the foundation for Family First," says EOHHS Acting Secretary Ana Novais. "We believe that the family, community, and government share responsibility for children's safety, protection, and well-being through a family- and child-centered wraparound model of care. Systems should work to keep families together whenever possible by providing access to prevention services so children and teens can grow up in their own home and caregivers who need access to treatments and support can improve their ability to care safely for their kids. The Family First plan will serve to help DCYF build on its ongoing efforts."

Through Family First, DCYF will have the ability to enhance its efforts with respect to prevention and early intervention services to keep children safe, strengthen families and reduce the need for foster care whenever it is safe to do so. This five-year plan will give the state the option to use these federal Title IV-E funding for evidence-based prevention services and programs (EBPs).

"DCYF is excited to receive confirmation its Family First Prevention Services Plan has been approved by the Administration for Children & Families," says Acting Director Kevin Aucoin. "This five-year plan was created through a partnership with our colleagues in our sister health and human service agencies, as well as the input from our community stakeholders. The Department's plan codifies its efforts to work with stakeholders and the local communities to connect children, youth and families with services aimed at preventing child maltreatment. The plan emphasizes the value of child safety and well-being and strong families through collaboration with local communities and program providers."

In Rhode Island, Family First will build upon the Department's focus and mission by:

- Strengthening the capabilities and expanding the capacity of parents and caregivers to care for their children effectively and safely at home
- Reducing the need for foster care by partnering with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth in a caring environment.
- Expanding the home-based service array that supports future procurements
- Continuation of work to shift the focus from out-of-home care to prevention and increased family stability and well-being.
- Investing in evidence-based interventions and applying a trauma-responsive lens to the continuum of prevention services.
- Partnering across systems (mental health, substance use disorder, juvenile justice, early childhood, health, etc.) to align prevention efforts.

For more information about DCYF's Family First Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan visit the [DCYF Family First webpage](#) to review the Executive Summary for Family First Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan.

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