Family First Implementation Progress

**Oct. 9, 2018** — The Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development (The Center) and the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) hosted a meeting to better understand the new federal law, the Family First Prevention Services Act. Attendees included budget office staff and DPHHS leadership.

U.S. Senate staff for the bill’s Senate co-authors, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch and Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, gave an overview of Congress’s intent with Family First.

Casey Family Programs’ Senior Director of Public Policy, Barbara Pryor, provided an overview of the law.

**Nov. 2, 2018** — The Center and DPHHS hosted an all-day meeting in Helena to provide more information about the Family First Act and solicit questions and feedback from stakeholders.

Governor Steve Bullock, Department of Public Health and Human Services Director Sheila Hogan, three legislative experts from Casey Family Programs and a panel of four former foster youth spoke.

More than 120 stakeholders - foster youth, former foster youth, foster families, child welfare providers, tribal governments, local lawmakers and state officials attended.

**Dec 2018** — DPHHS convened an interagency/cross-department project management team to oversee implementation of Family First. Integrating all aspects of the department including Medicaid, TANF, Home and Community Services and others will strengthen Montana’s implementation.

University ‘Center’ partners continue to review others states implementation plans, monitor federal guidance (Nov. and January with next expected in May). The Center is working with DPHHS, Casey Foundation, Children’s Defense Fund, and other policy experts to understand the nuances of implementation.

Stakeholder feedback and questions consolidated (attached) and ongoing efforts continue to answer the many questions raised at the meetings, through the stakeholder feedback survey and ongoing questions raised through direct discussions with providers.

Congregate care partners were identified throughout state (21 provider). The Center has been available and in communication with several providers. An
implementation plan has been drafted for review by DPHHS steering committee.

**Jan. 2019** — 66th Montana legislature convenes. The National Council for State Legislatures educational session for legislative body included Family first information from expert panelists as well as DPHHS.

Web-Site and communication link published for community partners and stakeholders to track implementation and to provide answers to frequently asked questions.


**Feb. 2019** — Casey Foundation and DPHHS presentation to sub-committee and other interested policy makers.

Update on other requirements of the Family First Prevention Services Act:

- **Child Fatality Review Teams**: These teams (required by FFPSA) and are up, running and reporting out for the past two years in Montana.

- **Licensing Standards for Kinship Care**: Policies and Standards for Care-givers are currently being updated. A new manual/guide for care-giver support has been developed.

- **Kinship Navigator Program**: Montana received a grant and is in the process of developing improved supports for kinship placements. Montana is one of the leaders nationally in the number of children placed in kinship care (greater than 50%)

- **Expanded background check requirements**: Policy has been developed to expand use of child abuse and neglect registries for employees of child serving agencies. Rules are currently being drafted with an anticipated implementation date of July 1, 2019.

- **Residential Family Based Treatment Homes for Substance Abuse**: DPHHS has designed a model for delivery of this service. Initial grant application to fund was denied.

**Next Steps** —

Finalize implementation planning document.

Assemble stakeholder workgroups to elicit feedback in key implementation areas including:

- Implementation with Tribal partners;
- Identifying and defining the population that will be eligible for prevention services;
- Identifying evidenced based services designed to meet the needs (avoid out of home placement) of the defined population;
- Meet new standards for Congregate Care (Qualified Residential Treatment Programs);
- And coordination with other benefits and programs (e.g. Medicaid, TANF).

**For more information, please contact** —

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