TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES & PROGRAMS UNDER THE FAMILY FIRST ACT

The overarching goal of the Family First Prevention Services Act is to prevent the need to remove children from their homes, and to limit the number of children in long-term congregate care settings (group homes).

Prevention Services
To prevent removal, the act allows Title IV-E funds to be used for prevention services for children who are “candidates for foster care”* and their families, as well as pregnant and parenting foster youth. (The act defines candidates as children “at imminent risk” of removal from their families. States will define candidacy for themselves.) Qualified clinicians or in-home programs must provide all prevention and treatment options, which will be eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement for up to 12 months. A trauma-informed prevention plan must be created for each child and family, and the services need to be evidence-based. The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse lists approved prevention services and programs.

Section 50711 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which includes the text of the Family First Prevention Services Act, defines “trauma-informed” prevention services in this way:

The programs or services provided to or on behalf of a child are provided under an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma and in accordance with recognized principles of a trauma-informed approach and trauma-specific interventions to address trauma’s consequences and facilitate healing.

Currently, there is no additional federal guidance on standards regarding the definition of trauma, leaving states to develop this structure and framework for themselves.

Qualified Residential Treatment Programs
To prevent inappropriate long-term housing in congregate care, the Family First Act outlines specific requirements for the designation of Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs).

* The Administration for Children and Families defines a candidate for foster care as, “. . . a child for whom the State agency is either seeking a removal or fulfilling the statutory requirements to attempt to prevent removal from the home.”

For more information on FFPSA, check out our website or contact our team at familyfirst@umontana.edu.
Among the requirements are formal placement assessments, employment of nursing and other clinical staff, family engagement throughout and after the child’s stay, and *trauma-informed treatment models*.

Section 50711 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 defines the trauma-informed requirement of QRTPs in this way:

QRTPs must have a “trauma-informed treatment model that is designed to address the needs, including clinical needs as appropriate, of children with serious emotional or behavioral disorders or disturbances and, with respect to a child, must be able to implement the treatment identified for the child by the assessment of the child require under section 475A(c)” of the Social Security Act (a child’s case plan assessment as defined by the Social Security Act).

As with prevention services, there is no additional federal guidance on standards regarding the definition of trauma, leaving states and QRTPs to develop this structure and framework for themselves.

**Trauma-Informed Workforce**

The Family First Act also includes a requirement that states include support and develop a child welfare workforce “to deliver trauma-informed and evidence-based services.” Again, there is no federal guidance.

The state must also include in the 5-year plan:

- A description of how the state will provide training and support for caseworkers in assessing what children and their families need, connecting to the families served, knowing how to access and deliver the needed trauma-informed and evidence-based services, and overseeing and evaluating the continuing appropriateness of the services.

- A description of how caseload size and type for prevention caseworkers will be determined, managed, and overseen.

- An assurance that the state will report to HHS that performance measures are in place to comply with the requirements to deliver trauma-informed and evidence-based services.

**Resources on Trauma-Informed Programs**

Tools for parents from the Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development:
- [Dealing with Trauma](#)
- [Administration for Children & Families trauma-informed links](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway trauma-informed links](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [SAMHSA trauma-informed approaches links](#)
- [SAMHSA trauma-informed services links](#)
- [Youth.gov trauma-informed resources links](#)