



TESTIMONY REGARDING THE FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT

**PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE**

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We have the pleasure of offering this testimony on behalf of Casey Family Programs regarding Pennsylvania's implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Founded in 1966, Casey Family Programs, works in all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and with tribal nations across North America to influence long-lasting improvements to the well-being of children, families and the communities where they live.

We believe:

- Every child deserves a safe, supportive and permanent family.
- Every family will thrive with the support of a caring community.
- Every community can create hope and opportunities for its children and families.
- Every one of us has a role to play in Building Communities of Hope.

Ultimately, our mission is to provide and improve – and ultimately prevent the need for – foster care.

My name is Carl Ayers and I am a Sr. Director of Strategic Consulting with the Casey Family Programs. I have had the wonderful opportunity to work in the child and family field beginning in 1997. Throughout my career, I have held numerous direct practice and leadership roles within the child welfare field. Included in those roles were serving as the Director of a local department of social services for 10+ years and then immediately prior to joining Casey Family Programs, I spent the previous six (6) years as the Director of the Division of Family Services for the Commonwealth of Virginia. As you may be aware, like Pennsylvania, Virginia is a state-supervised/county-administered system. Additionally, I served as the lead for the Virginia's implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and the filing of Virginia's Prevention Services Plan in late 2019.

My name is Christine Calpin and I'm the Managing Director of Public at Casey Family Programs. I've worked for Casey Family Programs for the last 10 years. Prior to joining Casey Family Programs, I worked at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, first as the Associate Director of the Child Care Bureau and then as the Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau. I also worked for the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means and for the Congressional Research Services, specializing in welfare, child care and child welfare policies and programs.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump in February 2018. This landmark legislation fundamentally shifted how the federal government partners with states, territories and tribes in the protection of children in two ways:

- 1) Unlike federal support provided to states, territories, and tribes, for Title IV-E foster care, there is no income eligibility requirement for reimbursements. States will decide who is eligible for prevention services.
- 2) Unlike federal support provided to state, territories, and tribes for Title IV-E foster care, eligibility for reimbursement is not only for the child but also for services provided to a parent or relative caregiver.

Family First provides numerous opportunities for states and tribes to better serve children and families by preventing the need for foster care and supporting better outcomes for children in care. While still providing support to states for foster care, Family First will provide additional, new resources to states who choose to provide preventive services to families who are at risk of entering foster care. The goal is to safely allow children to remain at home with their parents in lieu of foster care placement for support states by providing open-ended, entitlement funding for federal reimbursement for:

1. Mental health prevention and treatment services
2. Substance abuse prevention and treatment services
3. In-home parent skill training, including programs such as home visiting

New Policies in Family First include:

Prevention Activities using Title IV-E and Title IV-B

- States have the option to receive reimbursement for preventive services of 50% of costs for up to 12 months of mental health services, substance abuse treatment and in-home parenting training to families at risk of entry into the child welfare system.
- States must determine children to be a "Reasonable Candidate" for entering foster care, and the state will define what it means to be a "reasonable candidate".
- As this is an option for states, to qualify for reimbursement they must have a Family

First prevention plan approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Only evidence-based prevention services seen as promising, supported, or well-supported are reimbursable. The services must be trauma-informed and either have been reviewed by the Prevention Services Clearinghouse, or the state may do its own review of services they believe meet eligibility requirements.
- Eliminates the time limit for family reunification services under Title IV-B.

Congregate Care Changes

- Creates the designation of a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) as an eligible placement setting for Title IV-E foster care reimbursement.
- A QRTP must include a trauma-informed model designed to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of children as identified by an assessment within 30-days of the child's placement.
- Federal Title IV-E reimbursement for placement in a group home will only be available for two weeks unless the child is placed in a QRTP or one of several other excluded categories.
- It is our understanding that Pennsylvania has chosen to forgo the QRTP designation and to develop a Specialized Setting Certification.
- Pennsylvania chose to delay implementation of these provisions, as many other states also have done, so the congregate care changes in reimbursement will take effect October 1, 2021. Because the state has chosen to delay implementation of the QRTP provisions, any reimbursement for prevention funding also is delayed for the same period of time.

Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 Child Welfare Provisions

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump in December 2020 provides significant funding to states, territories, and tribes to support children and families involved with the overall child welfare system. This includes temporarily increasing the federal reimbursement rate for prevention services provided through the state's Family First plan from 50 percent to 100 percent for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency period (April 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021). This also includes temporarily increase the federal reimbursement rate for kinship navigator services from 50 percent to 100 percent for the same period of time.

Additionally, states now have additional dollars through other federal funding streams to support older youth in foster care. These resources, alongside funding provided through the Family First Transition Act of 2019 to support implementation of Family First, provide numerous opportunities to support efforts to engage and support families to safely remain with their children at home, in their communities.

Other State-Supervised County-Administered States

As of the offering of this testimony, two state-supervised/county-administered states have

submitted their Family First Prevention Plans to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau for approval. Those two states are Colorado and Virginia. Neither of these plans have been approved as of this date. Ten states have approved plans, and eleven states and tribes have submitted their prevention plans. You can obtain the listing by going to the following website:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data/status-submitted-title-iv-e-prevention-program-five-year-plans>

The following is a list of those states which currently operate under with a similar structure to Pennsylvania:

1. California
2. Colorado
3. Minnesota
4. New York
5. North Carolina
6. North Dakota
7. Ohio
8. Pennsylvania
9. Virginia

We want to thank you for holding this hearing and asking Casey Family Programs to participate and provide technical assistance to the committee. The opportunities which started with the passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act are critically important to improving the well-being of children and families who interact with or have the potential of becoming involved with the child welfare system. The work Pennsylvania is currently doing to implement the provisions of FFPSA is laying the groundwork for improving the overall child welfare system.

Here in support.

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