

Family First Prevention Services Act Update

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA or Family First), signed into law Feb. 9, 2018, focuses on creating new opportunities for states to receive federal reimbursements for services that aide in preventing children from entering foster care and improving the well-being of children already in the system.

FFPSA has multiple changes and all of the provisions have different effective dates. Below are some of the key changes in Washington State as a result of FFPSA:

Prevention Plan

Family First gives states and tribes the ability to target their existing federal resources into an array of qualifying 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.

On December 20, 2019, DCYF submitted the Prevention Plan to the federal Children's Bureau to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act. Washington is one of a small handful of states to do so. The Prevention plan can be found on our DCYF website.

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) embraces Family First Prevention Services Act implementation as an opportunity to expand the choices and support we provide to children, youth and families. Through Family First, DCYF will create a culture of community participation in child safety and family well-being, thereby reducing the stigma of seeking help.

In building this plan, DCYF actively engaged with stakeholders, partners and tribes statewide. Community feedback and FFPSA webinar sessions are posted on the DCYF Prevention webpage.

The plan must be approved by the Children's Bureau before we can access the Title IV-E funds. As of late February 2020, we had not yet received feedback from the federal government on our plan.

DCYF has begun planning for implementation and working to secure funding to support implementation. Multiple workgroups will be developed to focus on developing project plans. These workgroups will include staff from across DCYF, providers, tribes, external partners and stakeholders. Partnership across systems will be critical to bring this to life in Washington.

Licensing Standards

FFPSA requires alignment with the national standards for foster care licensing. The primary purpose of establishing national model standards is to help ensure children in foster care are safe while also establishing a reasonable, common-sense pathway to enable more relatives and nonrelatives to become licensed foster parents. Eliminating barriers caused by state licensing standards will assist relatives caring for children in foster care to become licensed and receive ongoing monthly financial assistance, supports and pathways to exit the system with monthly assistance.



Family First Prevention Services Act Policy and WAC Revisions for the Licensing Requirements for Child Foster Homes took effect February 1, 2020.

The revised **5110 Completing Home Studies** and **5120 Licensing State Foster Homes**, in the Child Welfare Practices and Procedures, are posted on the DCYF intranet page. These policies were updated to reflect the new requirements in the FFPSA regarding immunizations for household members in licensed foster homes.

These policies:

- Allows for medical exemptions for pertussis, for both unlicensed and licensed caregivers.
- Requires licensed foster parents caring for children under the age of two years and medically fragile children, to have documentation of current pertussis and the annual influenza vaccinations for all household members, unless there is a medical exemption.
- Requires licensed foster parents to provide documentation that all household member children meet the Recommended Child & Adolescent Immunization Schedule (RCAIS), unless there is a medical exemption for a specific child and vaccination.

The Licensing Requirements for Child Foster Homes WAC 110-148 were updated to reflect the new FFPSA requirements.

Here is a summary of the changes:

- All individuals who are at least 16 years old and living on the property (including those not living in the family home) to pass a background check.
- Licensee and all household members to have pertussis and influenza immunizations if a child in care is medically fragile, unless exempted by a licensed health care provider.
- At least one applicant for licensure in the home must have functional literacy and be able to communicate with the child, DCYF, health care providers, and other service providers.
- Overcapacity exceptions were established.
- Requirements were clarified for a properly operating kitchen.
- Recycling disposal service is now required, if available.
- Safety requirements for swimming pools were further established.
- Evacuation plans are required to be reviewed with children in care and posted in licensed foster homes.
- Co-sleeping and bed-sharing with children in care is prohibited.
- Smoking in vehicles transporting children is prohibited.
- Proof of registration of a vehicle used to transport children is required.

Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP)

FFPSA establishes requirements for placement in residential treatment programs and improves the quality and oversight of services. It allows federal reimbursement for care in certain Behavior Residential Services (BRS) treatment programs, known as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP), for children with

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emotional and behavioral disturbance disorders requiring special treatment. There is more information on our website about QRTP.

In October 2019, child welfare practices and procedures policies were updated to reflect the FFPSA requirements related to the QRTP.

A QRTP is a specific category of non-foster family home setting, for which public child welfare agencies must meet detailed assessment, case planning, documentation, judicial determinations and ongoing review and permanency hearing requirements for a child to be placed in and continue to receive federal Title IV-E funding for the placement. QRTPs are a subset of licensed group care facilities; they do not wholly replace them.

Facility must also be licensed and comply with criminal records check and child abuse and neglect registry check requirements, and must also be accredited. As of February 21, 2020, 20 out of the 21 facilities were accredited. The remaining two facilities are in the process of accreditation.

Kinship (relative) caregivers

FFPSA provides federal funds for evidence-based Kinship Navigator programs that link relative caregivers to a broad range of services and supports to help children remain safely with them. Through FFPSA, states can receive Title IV-E reimbursement for up to 50 percent of the state's expenditures on kinship navigator programs that meet the evidence-base requirements defined by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

DCYF is partnering with the Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (ALISA) and the University of Washington (UW) to evaluate and further develop Washington State's current Kinship Navigator program for submission to the clearinghouse. The evaluation will be a multi-year effort in order to meet the minimum evidence-based standards defined by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

The long-term goal of this work is to build program infrastructure and consistency in order to develop a promising practice that will qualify for sustainable, federal funding.

Improved services to older youth

Financial, housing, employment, education and other appropriate supports, counseling and services for former foster care youth (John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program) are extended to age 23. It also ensures that youth who age out of foster care are provided official documentation that proves they were previously in foster care and adds flexibility to the Education & Training Voucher (ETV) program. The changes regarding documentation went into effect July 2018. The changes to policies and procedures regarding Chafee were effective Oct. 1, 2019.

Electronic Interstate Case-Processing System

FFPSA requires that by no later than Oct. 1, 2027, states will need to use an electronic interstate case-processing system for exchanging data and documents to help expedite the interstate placement of children in foster care, adoption or guardianship.

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DCYF's goal is to connect to the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) system and make changes to our Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). This project is anticipated to be a multi-year effort and the implementation date is dependent on funding.

Background checks

FFPSA requires all group care staff, including those not working directly with children, to complete a fingerprint-based background check before they can work in a group care facility. DCYF implemented this requirement effective July 1, 2018 and allowed a provision for group care staff to work for up to 120 days while fingerprint background check was pending. However, effective July 1, 2019, DCYF no longer allows the provisional hire background check process. All group care staff must complete the fingerprint-based background check before they can work in a facility.

For more information, visit www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/practice-improvement/ffpsa
or contact FFPSA Administrator Rachel Mercer at 360-902-8109 or
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