

Support Prevention Services through the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act

Statement/Position: The Coalition supports expanding mental health and substance abuse services through the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), a new federal law that provides additional resources to improve outcomes for children and families who are struggling with substance abuse, mental health challenges, or other stressors that can lead to child maltreatment.

The Problem: The number of youth in the Kansas child welfare system has expanded by almost 50% over the last six years. Many children could benefit from targeted family supports to prevent the trauma of being removed from the home. As early as October 1, 2019, the FFPSA allows the use of federal Title IV-E child welfare funds – previously limited only to youth placed in foster care - to safely prevent foster care placements. The FFPSA will fund mental health, substance use, and parent skill-building services to children, their families, and pregnant and parenting foster youth.

Why this matters: Nationally, the numbers of children placed in foster care are rising, but Kansas has exceeded the national trend. The per capita rate of youth placed in foster care is almost double the national average. 76% of youth placed in foster care are referred for reasons of neglect, and 46% of families have substance use as a contributing factor. Removals of children from the home for placement in foster care continue to rise while our State's investment in prevention has not kept pace.

FFPSA Title IV-E prevention funding will expand the availability of trauma-informed, evidence-based interventions specifically targeted to prevent the placement of children in foster care. Many Kansas providers across multiple disciplines – child welfare, juvenile offender, mental health, substance use, and home-visiting – already provide the type of evidence-based services permitted under the FFPSA. Using FFPSA can expand the reach of well-supported, supported, and promising interventions for the most vulnerable children and families. In addition, the FFPSA can create sustainability for various programs and services currently limited to grant and research funding. FFPSA prevention funding can strengthen child and family wellbeing, reduce the strain on the state's foster care system capacity, and reduce the costs of foster care placements.

The FFPSA strengthens families and protects children by funding services to prevent out-of-home-placement for all identified “candidates for foster care.” The FFPSA will match 50% of Kansas' administration, training, and program investment for FFPSA prevention services. In 2026, the 50% federal match will increase to the Kansas FMAP rate, currently 56%.

The bottom line: The FFPSA will allow Kansas to expand and build proven interventions for children, pregnant and parenting youth, and families and caregivers through mental health, substance use, and parent skills training. These services can reduce trauma and adverse childhood experiences for children. The opportunity for FFPSA prevention funding could not be more timely for youth and families needing effective and innovative mental health supports in Kansas.

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