



Supporting States and Counties on the Path to Implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), signed into federal law in 2018, offers an important new opportunity for child welfare agencies to strengthen families and prevent foster care placements. For the first time, the federal government will reimburse up to 12 months of prevention services to families with children who are at risk of entering foster care. FFPSA's requirement that Title IV-E reimbursable prevention programs have research evidence of effectiveness also represents a key opportunity for child welfare systems to deepen their capacity to identify, implement, and adapt evidence-based programs. In addition, FFPSA limits federal reimbursement of residential placements, which must be approved as qualified residential treatment programs and use a trauma-informed treatment model. FFPSA emphasizes placing children in family foster homes and reducing the use of group homes or congregate care.

But new opportunities often pose challenges. Child welfare agencies might struggle to figure out where to start or how to determine the best pathway forward given the potential obstacles.

Mathematica can help

Mathematica's approach to supporting child welfare agencies in implementing FFPSA starts with collaboration and lays the groundwork for agencies to build evidence and refine program implementation in subsequent years. The primary goals are to position agencies to become eligible for FFPSA reimbursement for prevention services, consider the best way to pay for new services, implement evidence-based programs that are a good fit for families and the agency, and reduce the use of congregate care and group homes.

Mathematica is your partner in:



Implementing and evaluating evidence-based programs to improve services



Using innovative analytic methods to provide actionable insights



Conducting systematic reviews of prevention programs

Mathematica FFPSA offerings



Why Mathematica?

Mathematica works with you to understand your goals, address concerns, and co-develop solutions to meet FFPSA requirements.

Identify your population at risk of entering foster care

Understanding the population most at risk in your jurisdiction is critical to targeting services toward those who need them the most. Mathematica analyzes administrative and other sources of data to provide insights including understanding the children most at risk of entering foster care (i.e., candidates for foster care), the needs of children and families in your region, and other information that is critical to making informed decisions.

Assess gaps in mental health, substance use, or parenting programs

Mathematica applies multiple methods for assessing gaps in prevention services. Gaps might include prevention service areas in which little or no programs are offered, or areas in which programs are offered but the programs are not evidence-based at the well-supported level on the Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse). By conducting an environmental scan and interviewing key informants, we identify services that are currently offered, those that are candidates for modification to meet the well-supported category, and those that are needed. We can also analyze data to help inform priorities for change or expansion.

Systematically review and align evidence-based programs that fit the needs of your population

Drawing on the identified needs of your population, Mathematica synthesizes information and uses logic models to recommend ways to proceed with existing and new evidence-based programs for federal reimbursement. If you currently use a mental health, substance use, parenting, or kinship navigator program that has not been reviewed by the Clearinghouse, Mathematica can systematically review the evidence to help determine the level of effectiveness that your program meets using Clearinghouse standards.

Implement new programs or adapt current programs

Several factors improve program implementation, including staffing, supervision, and organizational structures for support. Mathematica offers technical assistance with program implementation to optimize uptake and your ability to spread and sustain new practices. We help you use data to inform and adapt implementation, and support ongoing monitoring of process and outcome measures. Mathematica is uniquely positioned to share our deep knowledge of both child welfare and Medicaid to help child welfare agencies navigate the new landscape of requirements for services and residential placements.

Evaluate new or existing programs

FFPSA requires evaluation of all reimbursable prevention services. Mathematica brings over 50 years of rigorous evaluation experience to assist states with their evaluation needs, including conducting evaluations of program implementation and outcomes, and helping states develop their own internal capacity for evaluation. From performing quick-turnaround effectiveness studies using administrative data, to developing a research plan for implementation studies, as well as conducting rigorous evidence-building impact studies, we are your partner for evaluation.

Let's Progress Together on your path to implementing FFPSA. Contact Elizabeth Weigensberg, State and Local Child Welfare Lead, at 312-585-3297 or EWeigensberg@mathematica-mpr.com