



Planning Title IV-E Prevention Services: A Toolkit for States

Introduction to the Toolkit



March 2020

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This document was prepared by Mathematica for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation under contract HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337015T (Mathematica reference number 50295). Jessica Heeringa was Mathematica's Project Director and Laura Radel was the Federal Project Officer.

It is part of "Planning Title IV-E Prevention Services: A Toolkit for States," which can be accessed at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/IV-E-prevention-toolkit>.

Suggested Citation: Weiser, R., J. Spielfogel, and K. Liao. "Planning Title IV-E Prevention Services: A Toolkit for States. Introduction to the Toolkit." Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, March 2020. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/IV-E-prevention-toolkit-intro>.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

The Family First Prevention Services Act marks an important shift in federal funding for child welfare services. The act offers opportunities for states to receive Title IV-E reimbursement to fund some mental health services, substance use disorder services, and in-home parent skill-based programs to help prevent children's entry into foster care.^{1,2} With the introduction of this reimbursement, states are considering the best ways to combine multiple funding mechanisms to pay for services and related supports for parents and children.

This toolkit aims to assist states in planning a comprehensive array of services that help prevent the need for foster care placement (prevention services) by braiding Title IV-E prevention services reimbursement with Medicaid and other funding mechanisms.³

A. Parameters of Title IV-E prevention services

States that seek reimbursement for Title IV-E prevention services must submit a five-year prevention program plan detailing how they plan to offer prevention services, including details such as the specific evidence-based practices selected, which populations can receive services, and how the services will be implemented and monitored. For example, in relation to eligibility for services, states must determine whom they will consider to be candidates for foster care, consistent with the definition in section 475(13) of the Social Security Act. They will assess whether a child is at imminent risk of entering foster care but able to remain safely in the home with the help of Title IV-E prevention services. Those who are eligible for services include (1) children who are candidates for foster care (including children whose adoption or guardianship arrangement is at risk of a disruption or dissolution that would result in a foster care placement), (2) children in foster care who are pregnant or parenting, and (3) parents or kin caregivers of the children previously described.

For more information about parameters of Title IV-E prevention services, see the Administration for Children and Families guidance (such as [ACYF-CB-PI-18-09](#), [ACYF-CB-](#)

¹ Title IV-E prevention services reimbursement can also be used to fund evidence-based kinship navigator programs, but this toolkit does not focus on kinship navigator programs (which are discussed in ACF 2018a [\[ACYF-CB-PI-18-11\]](#)).

² Title IV-E of the Social Security Act is the largest federal funding source for child welfare activities and supports, including foster care programming, adoption and guardianship assistance, Chafee Foster Care Program Successful Transition to Adulthood education and training vouchers, and waiver demonstration projects. In state fiscal year 2016, child welfare agencies reported spending \$7.5 billion in Title IV-E funds on child welfare services (Child Trends 2018).

³ Although this toolkit focuses on states, many of the coverage and funding mechanisms also apply to territories, and some apply to tribal communities. Some of the rules for these mechanisms, however, vary for territories or tribal communities. Regarding tribal agencies and Title IV-E prevention services reimbursement, see ACF 2018b ([ACYF-CB-PI-18-10](#)). Regarding Medicaid and territories, see MACPAC (2019).

[PI-18-10](#), [ACYF-CB-PI-19-06](#), and the [Child Welfare Policy Manual](#)) and Appendix A of this toolkit.

B. Braiding and blending funding

Reimbursement for Title IV-E prevention services can fund some types of prevention services for some populations. To maximize financial resources for providing services to families with children at risk of entering foster care, states can braid or blend funds in addition to using reimbursement for Title IV-E prevention services. This toolkit defines braiding and blending as follows:

- *Braiding funds* is when states coordinate funding from multiple funding streams but each stream maintains its ties to the original funding source, allowing funds to be braided into a comprehensive service package. Although funds might be indistinguishable at the service level, the way the funds are administered maintains the accountability and the constraints of each funding stream. For instance, a comprehensive drug treatment program may have one funding stream pay for counseling services, another for child care for the client's children, a third for an employment component, and a fourth for a parenting component in ways that are indistinguishable to observers, but which can be appropriately accounted for to the different funding streams. Different funding streams could pay for different activities, different clients, or different time periods as necessitated by the rules of each funding stream. Braiding funds can be helpful to expand effective programs and practices and limit duplication in infrastructure and workforce development.
- *Blending funds* is when states pool funds together from multiple funding streams into one fund that is then allocated for services. Blended funds allow states to be more flexible in their plans but do not allow for specificity in tracking, management, and reporting in the same way that braided funds do.⁴

The requirements of reimbursement for Title IV-E prevention services and other mechanisms, such as Medicaid, are very specific (for example, regarding cost allocation requirements and which populations and services are eligible). Therefore, braiding funds will be more feasible for states than blending funds when they combine funding sources for prevention services.⁵

C. How to use this toolkit

Broad vision. When navigating this toolkit, it will be helpful for you to have a sense of the broad vision and goals of your planning efforts. Although each part of this toolkit offers questions to consider during the planning process, an overall vision will aid you when

⁴ The definitions are adapted from Cabello and Ballard (2018) and FRIENDS National Center for CBCAP (2018).

⁵ Blending is often not allowed with federal funds, and states should consult with the appropriate federal agency or agencies before considering blending funding. In addition, when combining funding sources, states should consider maintenance of effort requirements related to Title IV-E prevention services (see ACF 2018c [[ACYF-CB-PI-18-09](#)]).

engaging partners and developing a plan. Similarly, although you will want to think through your priorities before beginning work with partners, partners' input about their goals and how to implement change will also be helpful for creating a shared vision and goals for prevention services planning efforts. Each state's vision should guide its partner mapping process, in which it identifies systems, partners, and services that can contribute to the collective impact toward achieving prevention goals. States can then create actionable and realistic engagement plans.

State examples. Some of the information included in this toolkit is based on conversations with states, counties, and other stakeholders who are engaged in planning Title IV-E prevention services. Mathematica conducted 16 stakeholder discussions with 10 states or counties and 6 other stakeholders who were working with states to support their planning efforts. The project team collected information from April to July 2019, and this toolkit contains examples of ideas and challenges that these states experienced in relation to planning.

Sequential arrangement. The parts of this toolkit are arranged sequentially to highlight key steps, associated questions, and resources to support planning. Because child welfare agencies vary in important ways, and each state has numerous contextual factors influencing the availability and accessibility of services (such as Medicaid eligibility and coverage), each state's considerations and prevention program plan is likely to be unique. To highlight key differences between jurisdictions, the toolkit discusses how state structure, policies, and service needs might affect the planning process.

Toolkit overview. This toolkit offers considerations for planning as well as many other resources. Its parts lead states through information and processes to help them assess needs, opportunities, and potential funding sources in order to comprehensively plan prevention services, including those reimbursed by Title IV-E. Figure 1 offers a roadmap of this toolkit. After this introduction, the toolkit continues as follows:

- **Identifying and engaging partners** reviews opportunities for cross-system collaboration and discusses partners and stakeholders who are likely to be helpful during planning. It also includes resources about engaging partners.
- **Assessing population, service needs, and service coverage** includes questions and information to consider about the current characteristics of your state's population, the landscape of services and providers, and insurance coverage and funding. A comprehensive assessment will enable you to consider the needs of your population and identify service gaps.
- **Determining priorities, goals, and actions** discusses factors to consider in prioritizing planning for prevention services (including those reimbursable as Title IV-E prevention services) to address the needs of families with children at risk of entering foster care.
- **Understanding roles of funding and decision points** reviews funding mechanisms and key decision points for relevant services.

- **Developing a plan for Title IV-E prevention services** reviews how states can translate information from earlier parts of this toolkit into developing a Title IV-E prevention program plan. It also reviews the contents of the Administration for Children and Families pre-print. (Appendix D of this toolkit contains text from the pre-print.) Although this toolkit focuses on helping states plan which services they will deliver and to whom, states will also have to consider additional operational details about how they will implement and monitor prevention services.
- **Appendices** to this toolkit include information about parameters for Title IV-E prevention services (Appendix A), comprehensive arrays of substance use disorder and mental health services (Appendix B), background on Medicaid (Appendix C), and text from the Title IV-E prevention program five-year plan pre-print (Appendix D).

Figure 1. Roadmap of toolkit



D. Acknowledgements and disclaimers

This brief is a product under contract HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337015T, sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). The views and opinions expressed in this toolkit are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of ASPE. In addition, the services, products, and resources mentioned in the toolkit are not promoted by ASPE or the authors.

ASPE and the authors would like to thank the people who reviewed and provided input on drafts of this toolkit, including those from the Administration for Children and Families, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Additional review was provided by the National Technical Assistance Network for Children’s Behavioral Health, operated and led by the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. We also wish to thank the states and stakeholders with whom we spoke in order to understand states’ planning efforts. Further, we appreciate the contributions of those at Mathematica who supported various parts of this work: Michela Garber, Nellie Garlow, Amy Overcash, Matthew Stagner, Elizabeth Weigensberg, and Allison Wishon Siegwarth.

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