



the MONTANA MINUTE

Addressing the Complex Needs of Children & Families

Issue 23, November 2019

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 is a game changer in the world of child protective services. The goal is to keep children safely within families and out of foster care. To reach that goal, the act will restructure many aspects of existing child welfare systems – including major changes to federal funding. The act allows states to use federal funds to pay for prevention services to keep children safely with their families. It also creates new standards for group home providers, requiring them to ensure that children receive appropriate treatment and stay connected to their families.

By law, states must adopt Family First practices no later than October of 2021. Montana, like most states, chose to delay implementation until that date. Getting to implementation will require input from many stakeholders. Foster youth, foster families, child welfare providers, tribal governments, lawmakers, state officials, and community partners will all weigh in on the many changes Family First will bring to state systems to care for the most vulnerable children and young people in our state.

New Family First News!

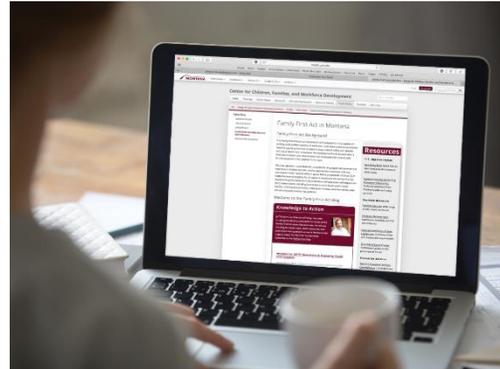
The Family First Act has complex impacts on multiple programs and funding streams, which has made the roll-out slower than expected at all levels. This fall two major steps were employed nation-wide and include:

- In September the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse announced it had completed its review of 12 programs and services. This review was a crucial step for state planning, as programs must be approved to be eligible for federal reimbursement. The [Center's Clearinghouse policy brief](#) describes the services.

- The first states to adopt Family First completed their plans. The [Center's Implementation Across the U.S. policy brief](#) provides links to these plans and to work under way in other states.

The Center's Family First Web Page

The Center recently updated its [Family First Act web page](#) to reflect this recent upswing of activity in Family First work at the federal and state levels. The page includes policy briefs to provide more detailed information on specific topics, as well as links to other resources.



Family First Blog

As of last month, the web page also includes a new blog. Jeff Folsom, the Center's Director of Policy, will be blogging any and all news of the Family First Act, at the local, state, and federal levels. Contact Jeff at familyfirst@umontana.edu to get the blog by email. Joining the email list also makes it easy for you to contact Jeff directly with questions or ideas.

Stay Tuned! The Center's web page will be updated frequently as new Family First guidance and information becomes available. As we get more information, we will be sure to update this resource.

Youth and Family Voice in Family First – and Beyond

Seeking out family and youth input is a best practice in all social services, and especially so in the child welfare system. Family First planning and operations must include working with families and youth to incorporate their knowledge and needs into all services. Changing agency culture to include youth and family voice is not usually an easy or quick process. Some resources to jump-start our thinking on this issue:

- The [National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council](#) provides powerful feedback on federal policy that affects children and families in the child welfare system. The Council has drafted several policy priorities on issues related to Family First.
- The Center has collected stories from foster care alumni. The [foster care video series](#) provides unique insight into the experiences of foster youth living right here in Montana.

For More Information

FamilyFirstAct.org is a collaborative effort of many national organizations, including the Children's Defense Fund, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and the Annie E. Casey Family Foundation. The site provides a thorough overview of the law, resource links, and communication toolkits.

Check It Out! New Projects

The Center is partnering with the University of Missouri to evaluate implementation of the PAX Good Behavior Game in Montana. Learn more about [PAX on our website](#).

Open Aid Alliance worked with the Center on an evaluation of their Uncovery program, which provides treatment for substance use disorder using a harm reduction model and peer support services. The [program evaluation report](#) describes the Uncovery program.

The University of Montana's Center for Children, Families & Workforce Development partners with the child protection, health, educational, and judicial systems to develop and deliver educational and training resources to professionals and caregivers statewide. The Center also conducts research that focuses on solving problems that impact children and families. Support for these efforts comes from the University of Montana, College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences, and School of Social Work.

Visit our website



CENTER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES
AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Center for Children, Families
& Workforce Development

Website | Email | 406-243-5465

Connect with us

