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The brightest minds in social work agree that the safety of children and the well-being of families is a shared responsibility. Children’s social workers cannot do this work alone.

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) relies on other county departments, community and faith-based organizations, advocates and engaged community members to help social workers achieve their highest purpose of keeping families safely together.

To that end, DCFS is observing National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. This annual public education effort is rooted in the idea of communities working together to serve children and families in meaningful ways that enhance resiliency.

“When a child may safely remain in their home, social workers offer the family resources to respond to current needs and connect them with community-based supports to strengthen the family and prevent DCFS involvement in the future,” explained Rob Woolridge, a 21-year DCFS veteran who now serves in the Community-Based Services Division.

While not well known to those outside of child welfare, prevention work is nothing new for DCFS. For decades, the department has invested millions into contracts with community agencies that offer front-end prevention services intended to keep children and families safely together and out of the child welfare system. Last fiscal year, DCFS invested \$55 million in these services.

This paradigm shift has, in recent years, been adopted more widely across the country, with an increasing number of child welfare jurisdictions now focused on implementing proactive prevention strategies.

Landmark legislation called the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) passed in 2018, further paved the way for this change. One of the key components of this legislation allows child welfare jurisdictions to utilize previously inaccessible federal funds to invest in mental health, substance abuse and in-home parenting programs intended to prevent children and families from entering the child welfare system.

“FFPSA is the intentional, coordinated investment in a full continuum of prevention and robust community-based networks of support that will promote overall child and family well-being, equity and other positive outcomes for children, families and communities,” said Woolridge, who also serves as the department’s interim FFPSA manager.

The State of California submitted its Five-Year State Prevention Plan for FFPSA implementation to the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services in 2021 for review. Approval of the plan is expected later this year.



DCFS and the Departments of Probation and Mental Health are jointly leading the charge to implement FFPSA in Los Angeles County with extensive input and collaboration from other county departments and a variety of stakeholders, including individuals with lived experience, community-based providers, faith-based organizations, philanthropy partners, advocates and others.

As the state awaits approval of the plan, DCFS continues to promote free and low-cost preventative resources available across the county. Families and other members of the community may learn more about these services, as well as FFPSA, through the new DCFS prevention services webpage titled [Help for Families](#). All children deserve to grow up in safe, supportive environments. This National Child Abuse Prevention Month, help make this possible by supporting families and spreading the word about [the importance of child abuse prevention](#) and the supportive services available for families in need.

Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to 800-540-4000

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