



Valued Los Angeles County Staff,

In recent months, the Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Probation, and Mental Health (DMH), in partnership with other county agencies and community partners, have collaborated to lay the foundation for the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA or Family First).

As Los Angeles County staff, your role is critical in the implementation of Family First for the children and families that you serve. It is our hope that you find the information contained in this document useful in preparing for Family First implementation.

Family First Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)?

Signed into law in February 2018, Family First is landmark legislation that has two key components. Part I allows federal dollars (Title IV-E funds) to be invested in children and families to prevent entry into the child welfare system, specifically focused on evidence-based and trauma-informed preventative mental health care and treatment, preventative substance use care and treatment, and in-home parent skill-based programs. Part IV limits federal reimbursement for congregate care and establishes new requirements for youth being placed in residential treatment programs. In addition to these provisions, Family First provides support for kinship (relative) caregivers and improves services to older and transition-age youth. More information about Family First may be found at <http://familyfirstact.org/about-law>.

States have the option of participating in Part I of Family First by submitting a five-year prevention plan that is approved by the federal government. The State of California submitted its [Five-Year State Prevention Plan for Family First Prevention Services Act \(Part I\)](#) to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in August 2021. We anticipate that the plan will be finalized and approved this year. Part IV of Family First is mandatory and went into effect on Oct. 1, 2021.

More information about California's Five-Year State Prevention Plan may be found on the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Family First website at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ffpsa>.

Family First is pivotal in strengthening our prevention-focused system and providing additional supports to keep children safely at home with their families and in their communities within Los Angeles County.

How will Family First benefit the children and families that I serve in Los Angeles County?

Family First provides new opportunities for you to strengthen engagement with the children and families you serve to keep children safely at home with their families. Family First also creates new opportunities to expand access to evidence-based prevention services for children, youth, and their families in Los Angeles County, including Tribal children and their families.

Who will be eligible for Family First prevention services?

Children and youth determined to be at imminent risk of entering foster care, including tribal children, as well as their parents, guardians, and caregivers will be eligible for Family First prevention services. There are no income eligibility requirements for these services.

In its Five-Year State Prevention Plan, California has proposed several categories of children and youth who may be eligible for Family First services if they are determined to be at imminent risk of entering foster care, including children in families receiving voluntary or court-ordered family maintenance (FM/VFM), probation youth subject to a 602 petition, and children whose guardianship or adoption arrangement is at risk of disruption.

California's Five-Year State Prevention Plan also envisions a community pathway that, if approved, would allow families with children who are determined to be at imminent risk of entering foster care to be eligible to receive approved prevention services in their communities, without child welfare system involvement.

In addition, all expectant or parenting youth in foster care will be eligible for Family First prevention services to help break the cycle of system involvement.

What types of Family First prevention services will be available to eligible children and families in LA County? And what types of placement resources will be available?

The prevention services that are proposed for implementation in the first year of California's Five-Year State Prevention Plan include:

- [Healthy Families America](#) (parenting program)
- [Nurse-Family Partnership](#) (parenting program)
- [Parents as Teachers](#) (parenting program)
- [Functional Family Therapy](#) (mental health program)
- [Brief Strategic Family Therapy](#) (parenting, substance use and mental health program)
- [Multisystemic Therapy](#) (mental health and substance use program)
- [Parent-Child Interaction Therapy](#) (mental health program)

California's Five-Year State Prevention Plan also includes [Motivational Interviewing](#), with the intention that it be used to strengthen family engagement.

With respect to placement resources, Family First prioritizes and builds on existing local practices and policies of placing children in the least restrictive, most family-like environment. Family First limits federal reimbursement for congregate care. Starting Oct. 1, 2021, it restricted

the use of Title IV-E funds for children and youth placed in congregate care settings if the placement exceeds 14 days, with four exceptions:

1. Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs or what California refers to as Short Term Residential Treatment Programs/STRTPs), that are determined to be appropriate, effective, and least restrictive placements for youth
2. Specialized settings for pregnant and parenting youth
3. Transitional housing for youth 18 and older, and
4. Programs providing support to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) youth.

How will I access Family First prevention services for the children and families that I serve?

Most of these services are already available to children and families in Los Angeles County through our Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). We will continue working with community-based providers to expand access to these services. In addition, children and families will continue to receive prevention services that meet their needs.

Will Family First impact eligibility for DCFS's Alternative Response Services (ARS)?

Family First will not impact the eligibility for this program. Families with substantiated referrals with low to moderate risk and those who have inconclusive and unsubstantiated referrals will still be eligible for ARS. DCFS has made adjustments to the ARS service timeframes to allow ARS to be open for up to 12 months so families who meet the eligibility requirements for Family First services may receive prevention services for a longer period.

What is the timeline for implementation of Family First prevention services in Los Angeles County?

While we wait for California's Five-Year Prevention Plan to be approved by ACF, Los Angeles County is already starting to build the infrastructure and processes needed for successful Family First implementation. We have established a Family First learning site in Service Planning Area 2, which includes the DCFS Van Nuys, Santa Clarita and West San Fernando Valley Regional Offices as well as the Probation Department's Van Nuys Area office. These learning sites will initially focus on providing Motivational Interviewing during casework visits to families who have FM/VFM cases, to youth subject to 602 petitions, and to expectant and parenting youth in foster care. Initial training for DCFS and Probation staff at the learning sites began in late October 2021. We look forward to sharing updates on our progress.

Will staff be getting training on Family First?

Yes, staff will receive training on Family First by both CDSS and LA County. Implementation phases are still being finalized.

Will there be new policies and directives issued with regard to Family First?

Yes, once California's First-Year State Prevention Plan is approved by the federal government, new policies and directives will be issued for Family First implementation.

For more information and details, please see the CDSS Family First website at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ffpsa>, which includes a link to Family First Part IV FAQs.

How will I receive updates on the status of Family First in Los Angeles County?

You may go onto the CDSS website at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ffpsa>. In addition, we encourage you to visit www.dcfs.lacounty.gov/help-for-families to learn more about Family First in Los Angeles County.