



Family First Transition Act funding

A catalyst for innovation in service delivery

Issue brief | March 2020

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First or FFPSA), which was signed into law in February 2018, is the most significant child welfare legislation in decades. Family First increases the focus on prevention and decreases the unnecessary use of congregate care facilities. While there have been a few early adopters of Family First, most jurisdictions have opted to delay for the allowable two years, with implementations scheduled in 2021.

To support implementation of FFPSA, Congress passed the Family First Transition Act (FFTA) as part of Public Law 116-94, signed into law on December 20, 2019. Among other provisions, the FFTA authorized \$500 million for FFPSA Transition Grants.

On February 27, 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) Children's Bureau released Program Instruction (PI) ACYF-CB-PI-20-04 providing guidance to states, territories, and Indian tribes on how to obtain FFPSA transition grants. This funding opportunity was developed as a way to support the significant work needed to help states effectively plan, transition to, and implement Family First. All eligible grantees who apply by the deadline will receive the identified allotments to their jurisdictions. If, however, eligible grantees choose not to apply, the remaining funds will be divided and allocated to the approved grantees.

Challenge areas with FFPSA implementations

As with any transformational opportunity, Family First is complex and implementation comes with challenges. Some early observations include:

- **Fiscal impacts** – Given the Evidence-based Program and Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) aspects of Family First, there will be fiscal impacts. This is further compounded for states that were operating under IV-E waivers. Understanding the impacts and opportunities is essential to developing

an effective plan and identifying the appropriate funds to support it.

- **Policy and process decisions** – New legislative requirements may conflict with agency policies. Where necessary, new policies will need to be developed and approved, or modified as appropriate. These changes ultimately inform process changes. With a broader focus on prevention, there may be broader stakeholder considerations.
- **Claiming** – New requirements (e.g., candidacy definitions) affect the ability for providers to claim for eligible services. Addressing these up front in process and technology is necessary to mitigate post-service-delivery fiscal impacts for providers and the agency.
- **Service management** – Many states were already offering prevention services, some of which may not be included in the federal clearing house. There will be necessary activities related to identifying, certifying, and contracting with providers who meet the federal requirements, allowing for claiming.
- **Provider capacity** – Given the reduction of reliance on QRTP placements, there is a heightened need to focus on foster care recruitment and retention. Additionally, there are new requirements associated with foster group care and shelters that can impact licensing, and therefore placement capacity (at least initially).
- **Culture** – Family First is a great first step in moving toward primary prevention in child welfare. As a historically reactive and insular program, it will take strong leadership and some time to implement a culture of prevention that expands into the community and across programs. Culture ultimately drives what happens in organizations, but is often overlooked.

- **Convergence with Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) plans and implementations** – Current technology may not support the new policies and processes, but

implementing these changes may take too long to meet the deadlines. Defining the needs and assessing various of solution options before diving into big technology investments is advised.

Potential ways to use FFTA funds

The PI identifies four categories of “approved activities” for which the funds can be used:

- Allowable activities related to Title IV-B, Subpart 1, Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program Title IV-B, Subpart 1 Child Welfare Services
- Allowable activities related to Subpart 2 – MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program activities
- Activities directly related to the implementation of FFPSA
- For jurisdictions previously functioning under a Title IV-E Waiver, use of funds to offset fiscal impacts related to the transition.

This guidance offers flexibility for state agencies to use the funds in the way that is the most beneficial to their organization. When considering how to use the funds, it is always wise to assess all of the funding streams available for the necessary activities to fully maximize the potential federal partner match across related programs. Some common uses for the funds may include provider and service array assessments, staff training and development, policy analysis, business process redesign, and program evaluation and design.

The Children’s Bureau, however, is encouraging states to think more strategically in considering the best use of the funds. While there are short-term or tactical implementation needs, there may also be solutions that move the needle further in prevention and ultimately strengthening families. Stepping back from how you do things today and broadening the lens beyond compliance brings an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine child welfare. Using human-centered design and including a broader universe of stakeholders (for example) can open up a world of possibilities that can have significant impacts on children and families. These visioning and design activities can inform policies, processes, and technology needs that are vastly different than what is in place today. The time is now for bringing a fresh perspective to child welfare.

Considerations

As with all federally matched initiatives, there are some important items to note:

- Although initially required in the Act, the Children’s Bureau has decided to forego the requirement for submission of a separate funding application. ACF will proceed with allocating funds to all eligible grantees.
- Grants will be awarded in fiscal year (FY) 2020, but will remain available to grantees for expenditure through the end of FY 2025.
- This is a 100-percent grant, with no state match required. However, grantees cannot use the grant as a base for any other programs with federal match.
- Grantees are required to submit financial reports (SF-425) at the end of each year.
- Unused/unreported funds, as of December 30, 2025, will be recouped by the federal government.
- If you are unsure about how to use the funds, agencies should contact their Children’s Bureau regional program managers for guidance regarding specific scenarios.



Allocation amounts

As part of the FFTA, Congress appropriated \$500 million to support the transition to Family First. These funds are available to all states and territories and to all tribes participating in the title IV-B, subpart 1 program. As identified in Attachment A of the PI, the allocation amounts (determined by formula) are as follows:

STATE	ALLOCATION	STATE	ALLOCATION
Alabama	\$8,564,571	Nevada	\$4,837,382
Alaska	\$1,070,922	New Hampshire	\$1,540,802
Arizona	\$12,604,187	New Jersey	\$9,494,254
Arkansas	\$5,489,255	New Mexico	\$3,854,266
California	\$49,100,433	New York	\$20,448,939
Colorado	\$7,723,580	North Carolina	\$17,161,273
Connecticut	\$3,021,860	North Dakota	\$1,168,347
Delaware	\$1,432,430	Ohio	\$18,358,246
District of Columbia	\$593,681	Oklahoma	\$6,989,328
Florida	\$29,233,082	Oregon	\$6,072,633
Georgia	\$18,555,327	Pennsylvania	\$16,860,874
Hawaii	\$1,955,441	Rhode Island	\$1,442,887
Idaho	\$3,431,402	South Carolina	\$8,621,729
Illinois	\$17,448,847	South Dakota	\$1,498,852
Indiana	\$11,501,613	Tennessee	\$10,864,453
Iowa	\$5,173,229	Texas	\$50,265,902
Kansas	\$4,837,702	Utah	\$6,889,477
Kentucky	\$7,906,202	Vermont	\$869,431
Louisiana	\$8,012,943	Virginia	\$11,310,773
Maine	\$1,869,129	Washington	\$9,453,025
Maryland	\$7,175,450	West Virginia	\$3,022,270
Massachusetts	\$6,454,645	Wisconsin	\$8,757,470
Michigan	\$15,621,987	Wyoming	\$816,400
Minnesota	\$7,890,161	American Samoa	\$274,161
Mississippi	\$5,928,340	Guam	\$533,350
Missouri	\$10,029,006	North Mariana Islands	\$216,986
Montana	\$1,713,897	Puerto Rico	\$5,611,745
Nebraska	\$3,117,606	Virgin Islands	\$307,816

Final thoughts

There's arguably no single more important service that a government agency provides than protecting its vulnerable children. Serving abused, neglected, and exploited children is tireless, emotional, painful, and downright difficult. New challenges, such as societal impacts and changing policies, arise every day, making the job even tougher. Family First is an unprecedented opportunity to move upstream in preventing abuse and neglect. The funding provided through FFTA and the encouragement of the Children's Bureau to be strategic in the use of the funds can empower state agencies to redesign how they interact with parents, youth, community partners, and other agencies in a fresh way. With the right perspective and a design for the future, these changes will yield positive impacts on the outcomes for children and families in our communities.



Supporting materials and websites

Family First Webpage:

<https://familyfirstact.org/>

Program Instruction:

<https://familyfirstact.org/sites/default/files/ACYF-CB-PI-20-04%20-%20FFPSA%20Transition%20Grants.pdf>

Attachment A – Eligible Applicants and Allotments: <https://familyfirstact.org/sites/default/files/Attachment%20A%20-%20Eligible%20Applicants%20and%20Estimated%20Allotments.pdf>

Attachment B – Transition Grant Request Form: <https://familyfirstact.org/sites/default/files/Attachment%20B%20-%20Transition%20Funds%20-%20Request%20Form.pdf>

Title IV-B, Subpart 1 – Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program Title IV-B, Subpart 1 Child Welfare Services:

https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0421.htm

Title IV-B, Subpart 2 – MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program:

https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0430.htm

SF-425 Federal Financial Report:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/sf-425-federal-financial-report>

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