

Setting the Stage: A New Era for Child Welfare

NCSL Child Welfare Fellows
June 28, 2022

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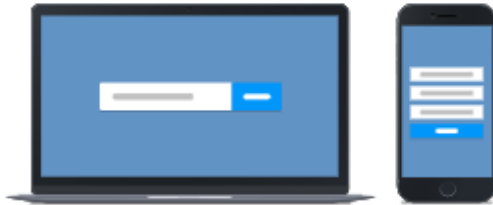
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Child Trends



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When you think about child welfare and maltreatment prevention, what goals or hopes come to mind? Keep your answer to 1 or 2 words.

When you think about child welfare and maltreatment prevention, what challenges come to mind? Keep your answer to 1 or 2 words.

Policy Milestones:

Bifurcation of Concrete and Social Supports

Mother's Pensions

Provided aid via cash payments primarily for White widows with young children.

Flemming Rule (FR)

Implemented in response to states denying ADC benefits to families, mostly Black, because their homes were deemed "unsuitable." It required states to either 1) provide supports to these families OR 2) remove the children and place them in foster care.

CAPTA

First major federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. Required states to establish reporting and investigation procedures. Resulted in many unsubstantiated reports and an increase in children in foster care.

Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act

Landmark legislation establishing federal oversight responsibilities and required states to make reasonable efforts to keep families together and reunify timely if separation occurred.

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act

Designed to promote permanency by establishing the option of subsidized guardianship for kin caregivers, provide option for states to extend foster care to age 21, increased supports for older youth, and allowed Tribal title IV-E programs.

1935

1961

1978

1997

2018

Early 1900s

1960

1974

1980

2008

Social Security Act

Authorized the first federal grants for child welfare purposes.

Social Security Act Amendments

Enabled states to receive federal matching funds for costs associated with foster care placements.

Indian Child Welfare Act

Enacted in response to Native children being removed from their homes at higher rates than non-Native children. Governs the removal and out-of-home placement of Native children and requires "active efforts" to prevent removal.

Adoption and Safe Families Act

Encouraged innovative efforts by states to focus on safety, permanency, and well-being. A specific focus was placed on expediting permanency decisions.

Family First Prevention Services Act

Landmark legislation that made federal reimbursement possible for the cost of evidence-based prevention services for identified candidates and their families, implemented congregate care restrictions, and invested in kinship navigation services.

State level data (FY 2020)

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states>

Child maltreatment

- Abuse and neglect referrals and investigations
- Number and rates of children found to be victims
- Race/ethnicity, age
- Child fatalities

Foster care

- Numbers and rates, length of time in care
- Caseload by race/ethnicity, age, gender
- Foster care entry reason
- Case plan, placement type, outcomes

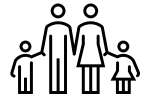
Adoption from foster care

- Numbers and rates, length of time in care before adoption
- Age, gender, race/ethnicity of those adopted and waiting to be adopted
- Relationship to adoptive parent (relative, foster parent)

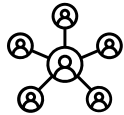
Kinship caregiving

- Numbers and placement rates, funding context
- Race/ethnicity, age of children in a relative foster family
- Children exiting care to guardianship or living with a relative
- Age and race/ethnicity comparisons with adoption by relatives

Areas of policy opportunities



Leveraging the Family First Act



Connecting families to economic supports



Exploring Community Pathways



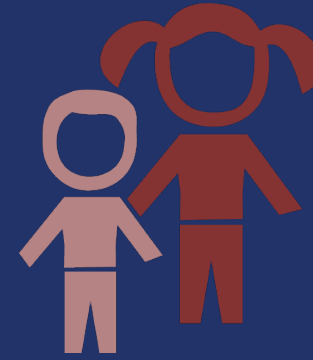
Supporting youth in foster care



Providing supports for kinship care



Investing in the child welfare workforce



Family First

Transforming child welfare
to achieve better outcomes
for children and families



Leveraging Family First to Promote Child Welfare System Transformation

Prevention

Evidence Based Programs

Reducing Congregate Care

Supporting Kin Caregivers

Family First: Tensions in Prevention

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ **Transform** the child welfare focus from family separation to prevention, increased family stability, and well-being
- ✓ **Invest** in evidence-based interventions
- ✓ **Apply** a trauma-responsive lens to the continuum of prevention services
- ✓ **Partner** across systems to align prevention efforts
- ✓ **Scale** up prevention services and de-scale foster care, while supporting children, youth, and families

CHALLENGES

- **Foster care “Candidacy” language** pathologizes children and their families
- **Imminent risk** language can be prohibitive to upstream engagement of families
- Eligible prevention services focus solely on **perceived family deficits** and not necessarily the root causes of family stressors and risk of maltreatment
- Defaults to the **traditional child welfare paradigm** (though there are opportunities to think beyond it!)

Connecting families to economic supports

The need

- Documented **relationship between poverty and child welfare involvement**. Families living below the poverty line are 3x more likely to have a substantiated maltreatment case.
- **State policy creates a link** between neglect and economic-related factors, including clothing, food, shelter, and nutrition.

Opportunities

- Invest in addressing child and family poverty and concrete supports
- Consider research-based solutions:
 - EITC: A \$1,000 increase was associated with an 8-10% reduction in new foster care cases
 - Medicaid: States with expanded Medicaid reported a decrease in neglect reports
- Support cross-systems collaboration between other family-serving systems

Building Community Pathways



- **Flexibilities exist** around defining candidates for prevention services and the context in which they receive and are connected to evidence-based prevention services (EBPs)
- A growing number of states are **reconceptualizing** their prevention continuum, the role of community agencies, and the family service experience

Benefits and Opportunities

- **Increased investment** in community capacity to engage and serve families, leveraging state and federal funds
- Prevention services provided to families through **trusted community entities**
- Family prevention service experience **outside** of the traditional child welfare paradigm
- **Flexibility** in how community pathways can be conceptualized and implemented toward a reduction in the CPS footprint in families' lives
- **Stronger partnerships** between child welfare agencies, community entities, and providers of evidence-based services

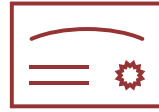
Challenges and Tensions

- **Optimizing flexibility** within the Family First legislative framework
- Increasing access to prevention services **without increasing surveillance** or facilitating unnecessary child welfare system involvement
- **Balancing** data reporting requirements and family consent and privacy
- **Maximizing community agency** while maintaining required functions of the state title IV-E agency
- **Building community infrastructure and capacity** to perform required care, coordination and data functions

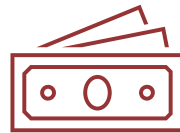


Invest in young people with foster care experience

The need



Youth in foster care or who age out of foster care face a myriad of obstacles in achieving the same **education, employment, and housing outcomes** as their peers who do not experience foster care.



Significant **return on investment** for improving outcomes:

“For example, with the right resources, 5,290 more young people would graduate from high school each year, leading to \$2.17 billion in economic gains through increased lifetime income. Additionally, 2,866 fewer young women would experience early parenthood by the age of 19, resulting in avoided societal and taxpayer costs of \$295 million for the first 15 years of the child’s life.” (AECF, 2019)

Invest in young people with foster care experience

Opportunities



Include young people in policy development and their own planning



Invest in permanent relationships and connections to caring and supportive adults, thinking beyond just adoption and guardianship



Extend foster care beyond age 18 and monitor implementation



Build on existing services and supports provided through federal fundings sources and state funds: housing, education, and workforce



Invest in pregnancy prevention and parenting support services

Family First Elevates Kin Caregivers

- Identifies kin caregivers as eligible recipients of prevention services
- Allows federal reimbursement for evidence-based kinship navigator services
- Calls for increased foster care placements with families and reduced reliance on congregate care



Well-Supported Kinship Caregivers...



- Promote maltreatment prevention and reduce entries into foster care
- Increase stability and well-being for children and youth when foster care is necessary
- Reduce the need for congregate care when responsive services and supports are available to kin caregivers and the children and youth in their care
- Provide permanency and family connections when reunification is not possible

Support the child welfare workforce

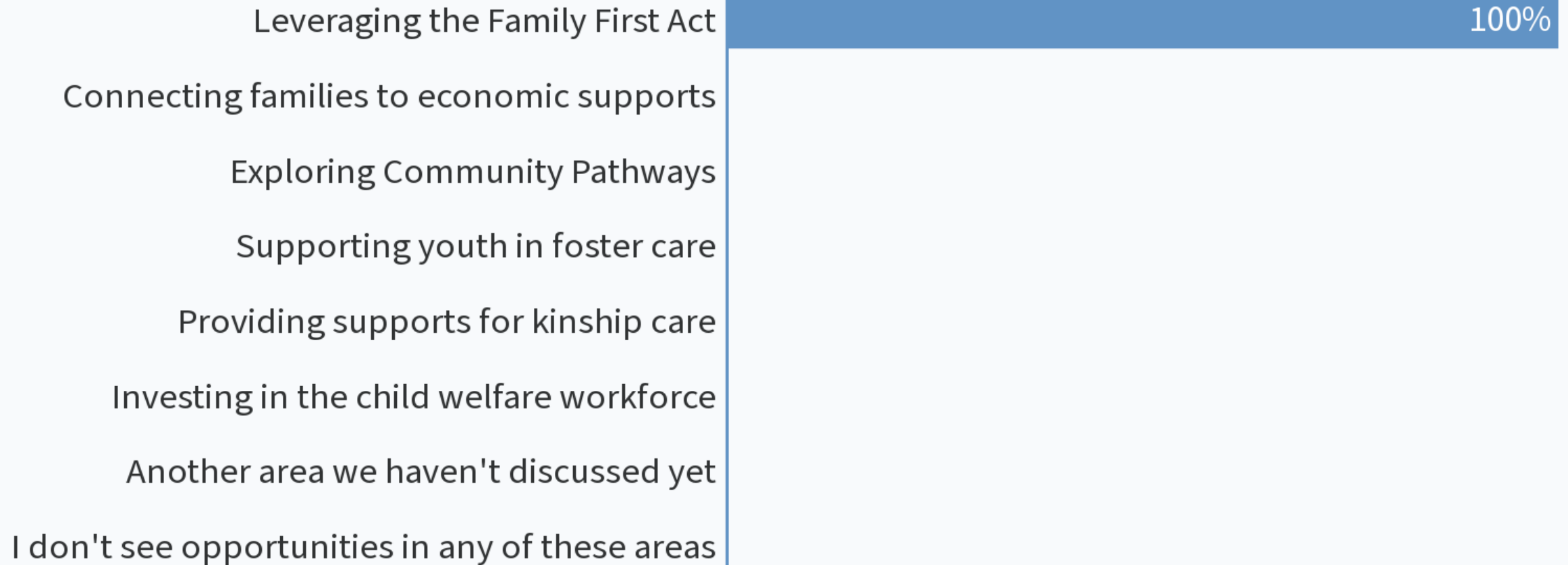
The need

- ❖ Time of great change for child welfare – adapting to new knowledge and priorities
- ❖ COVID-related challenges
- ❖ Secondary trauma and well-being
- ❖ Recruitment and retention – impacts on staff well-being and child outcomes

Opportunities

- ❖ Bringing in case workers and supervisors as real partners in creating change
- ❖ Workforce support trainings and tools, including peer learning within and across states
- ❖ Better data to support caseload management
- ❖ Workforce best practices: compensation, support, professional development opportunities, diversity/inclusion efforts

In which of the topic areas are you seeing energy and change in your state?



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Which topic would you like to discuss more during this session?

Leveraging the Family First Act

Connecting families to economic supports

Exploring Community Pathways

Supporting youth in foster care

Providing supports for kinship care

Investing in the child welfare workforce

Another area we haven't discussed yet

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Questions and discussion

