

The Family First Prevention Services Act (P.L. 115-123)

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Casey Family Programs

- A partner working with Vermont, and throughout the nation, focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children & families.
- We believe that every child, in every family, in every community in this nation must be given the opportunity to be surrounded by the life-affirming embrace of hope.

What do we know about children who grow up in foster care?

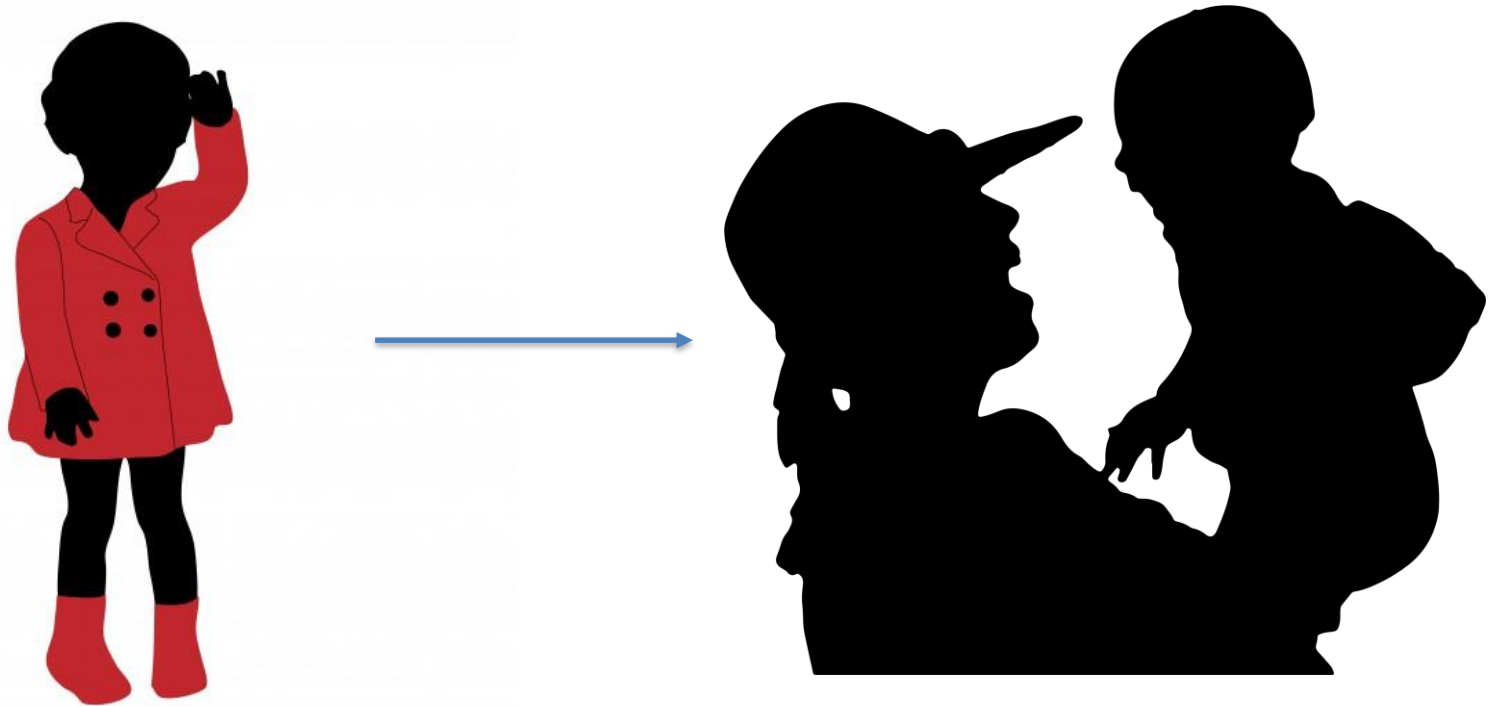
- 39.0% have at least one past-year mental health diagnosis
- 44.1% have had any substance abuse or dependence
- Less than half have a high school diploma (48.4%)
- 46.9% are currently employed
- 37.7% have been homeless since leaving foster care
- 9.9% of those who have had a child have had a child placed in foster care
- 68.0% of males and 40.5% of females have been arrested since leaving foster care

Source: Casey Family Programs Foster Youth Alumni Study

What do we know from the research and from listening to families?

- To support family well-being, it is important to intervene as early as possible.
- Removing children from their families and homes creates emotional distress and trauma
- Many children can be better served by remaining **safely** at home.
- Federal funding hasn't recognized this; for every \$7 spent on foster care, only \$1 is spent on helping to prevent children being removed from their own homes.

Family First Prevention Services Act



*An opportunity to enhance policies in Vermont
that build family well-being*

Major Components of the Family First Act

- **Prevention Services:** New option for states and tribes to receive 50% federal reimbursement for services to strengthen families and prevent unnecessary placement of children in foster care.
- **Improved Quality of Foster Care:** For those children who cannot remain safely at home, new federal policies to
 - Encourage and support kinship care
 - Decrease the use of unnecessary congregate care
 - Improve the quality of care for children for whom congregate care is appropriate

How might Family First help Vermont families?

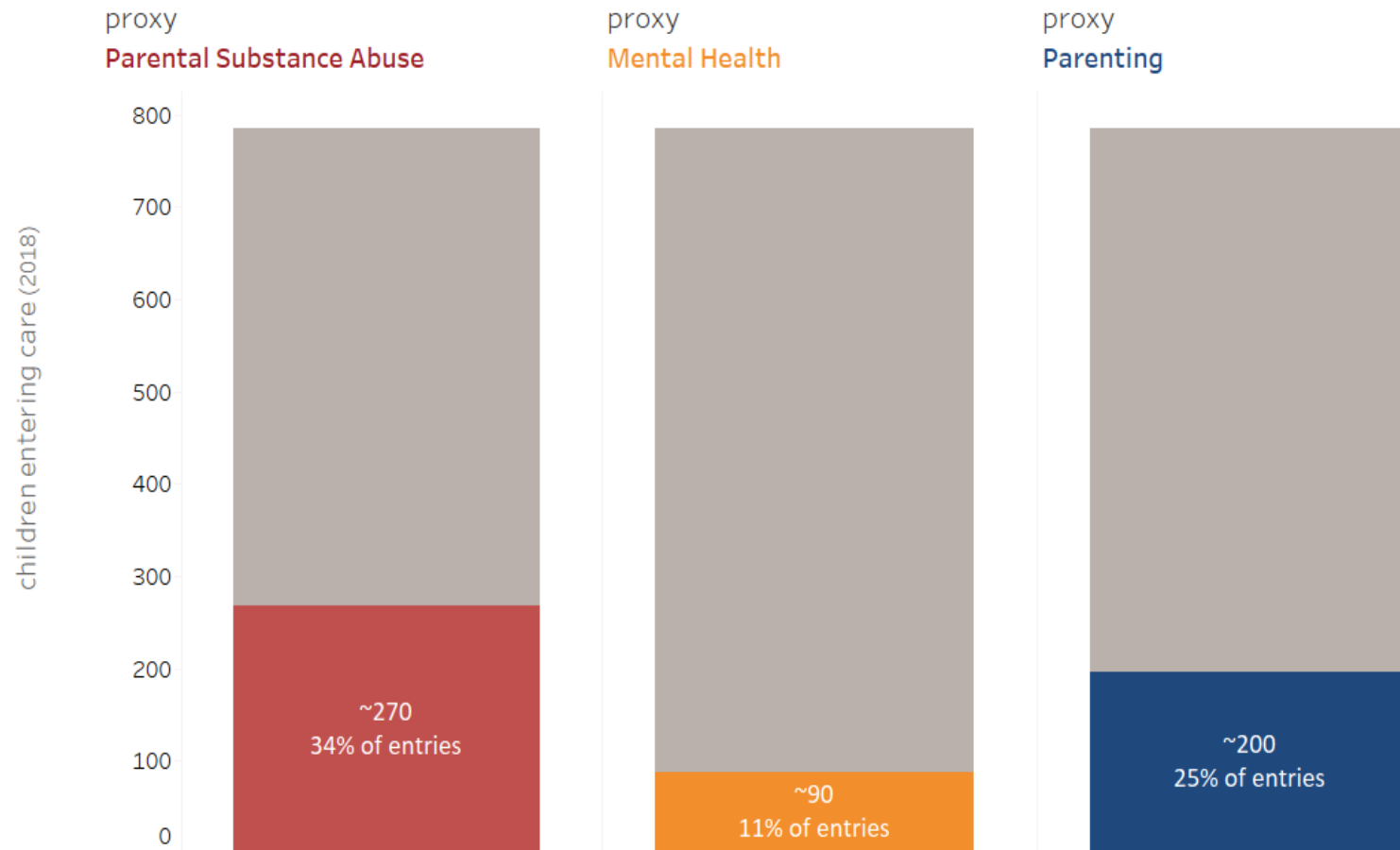
- New, increased federal resources to enhance Vermont's efforts to address the challenges at-risk families face.
- Prevention services eligible for up to 12 months of federal reimbursement at a 50% match rate are:
 - evidence-based substance abuse prevention services
 - evidence-based mental health services
 - evidence-based in-home parenting skills

New Funding for Prevention Services

- Unlike federal support for foster care, federal support for prevention services does not require an income test for eligibility.
 - States and eligible tribes will determine who will receive services supported through these new federal funds.
- Unlike federal support for foster care, federal support for prevention services is not limited to the child.
 - Federal support is also available for their parent and/or a kin caregiver.

Why do most children come into care in Vermont and will these services make a difference?

Consider Family First Prevention Areas.....



Ensuring Appropriate Placements in Foster Care

- Beginning October 1, 2019 there will be new requirements on what placements in foster care receive federal reimbursement.
 - Goal is to encourage placement in family settings.
 - To address concerns around an overreliance on congregate care, the law creates “qualified residential treatment programs” with a number of requirements.

Ensuring Appropriate Placements in Foster Care

The following placement options already are allowable and will continue to be eligible to receive federal reimbursement:

- Facility for pregnant and parenting youth
- Supervised independent living for youth 18 years and older
- Specialized placements for youth who are victims of or at-risk of becoming victims of sex trafficking
- Foster Family Home (defined) – no more than 6 children in foster care, with some exceptions

Ensuring Appropriate Placements in Foster Care

- Beginning as early as October 1, 2019, after 2 weeks in care, Title IV-E federal support will be available for foster care maintenance payments for eligible youth placed in a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).
- States may opt to delay this provision for up to 2 years. However, no jurisdiction is permitted to claim Title IV-E support for prevention services before the date it makes these placement setting provisions effective.

What is a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP)?

- Has a trauma informed treatment model and a registered or licensed nursing and other licensed clinical staff onsite, consistent with the QRTP's treatment model.
- Facilitates outreach and engagement of the child's family in the child's treatment plan
- Provides discharge planning and family-based aftercare supports for at least 6 months
- Licensed by the state and accredited

There are no time limits on how long a child can be placed in a QRTP and receive federal support as long as the placement continues to meet his/her needs as determined by assessment.

How are states moving forward?

- To date, four jurisdictions have submitted plans to draw down federal prevention resources – Arkansas, Kentucky, Utah, and the District of Columbia
 - They are awaiting feedback and ultimately approval from the federal government to move forward.
- Many other states are actively drafting plans with intent to move forward as soon as appropriate.

What are states discussing?

- How do we ensure we have services that meet the needs of struggling families in our state?
 - All states, including rural states are looking at how to support providers who can deliver high-quality evidence-based services.
 - Family First is one important tool that can assist – but it won't be a resource for every family in your state.

What are states discussing?

- How do we provide these services in the most cost-effective way?
 - Smaller facilities may be challenged to develop the ability to provide an evidence-based intervention.
 - Providing evidence-based services will be costly and will require a trained workforce.
- How do we resource and ensure quality, family-like settings for our children in foster care?

Family First: The role of legislators

- Talk to your families and children who are involved with the child welfare system.
 - They are the experts and can best tell you what they need most to succeed and thrive.

States who have submitted plans engaged in robust discussions statewide.

- Kentucky, for example, hosted 9 regional stakeholder conversations.

Family First: The role of legislators

- It will be impossible to succeed without the agency, legislators and judges working together.
 - Each of you has a distinct, but important role.
 - It is important to work together to define what success will look like and hold each other accountable for progress.

Family First: The role of legislators

- Enhancing the well-being of families is not the sole responsibility of the state child welfare agency.
 - Helping to align all the good work underway in Vermont across various agencies and expect their partnership in this work will be critical.
 - Supporting robust, quality data collection activities across programs and agencies that serve families will help to improve outcomes.

Family First is just one piece

- How might Vermont leverage Family First's legislative and financial structure to help transform the vision of what you want your child welfare system to look like?
- How might Vermont build prevention plans focused on improving child outcomes and not based only on what is federally reimbursable?
- How might Vermont use Family First as one opportunity to build the desired system, and to partner with communities on a broader prevention vision?

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