

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrator's (MACSSA) support implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act that meets the core tenets of the federal policy and ensures equitable access to services to each of Minnesota's 87 counties, while avoiding unfunded mandates and cost shifts to counties.

Background

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) is a federal act that became law in 2018. The intent of the act is to better support children who are at risk of out of home placement due to experiencing abuse or neglect by broadening access to community-based programs and services that support children remaining safely at home with their families. A complete continuum of services is what's needed to support strong and healthy families. Examples of these programs include prevention services that are available to vulnerable children and families before serious risk has developed or harm has occurred; therapeutic, trauma informed, mental and behavioral health and other individualized services that improve well-being; and post-permanency supports to provide ongoing assistance to vulnerable families.

While the law provides significant opportunity for systemic and programmatic service improvements to better support children and their families, including the ability to leverage new federal funding for the delivery of prevention and kinship programming, Minnesota and other states have faced difficulties in operationalizing the details of the law. As Family First is implemented in Minnesota, our 87 counties urge the legislature and Department of Human Services (DHS) to support a framework for implementation of FFPSA that focuses on the following aspects:

- Ensures equitable access to prevention and kinship services throughout Minnesota, regardless of the size or location of the county.
- Allocates state resources to swiftly implement the FFPSA and in a manner that avoids shifting costs to counties. Counties urge state investment and attention in these specific areas of the law: qualified residential treatment program services (including the qualified individual and after care provisions), prevention services, kinship services, and transition age youth.
- Recognizes that unintended consequences of initial implementation have and may continue to result in lost Title IVE funding and cost shifts to counties.
- Recognizes that implementing federal, Clearinghouse approved prevention and kinship programs will require state investments in the areas of continuous quality improvement, evaluation, fidelity monitoring, program scaling and technology supports.
- Provides opportunities for the Department of Human Services, Tribes and Counties to thoughtfully and consistently collaborate together in implementing FFPSA strategies.
- Thoughtfully recognizes the current workforce challenges impacting frontline workers and their staff by emphasizing administrative simplification and supporting robust training and education needs.

For more information, please contact:

Angie Thies, AMC Child Wellbeing Policy Analyst

Direct: 651-789-4321

athies@mncounties.org

February 2022