



Family First Act: Implementation in Kentucky

Children and teens involved in the child welfare system do best in families, where they can live in a safe and loving environment that supports their growth and well-being. Kentucky is currently undergoing a transformation to improve the child welfare system to promote better outcomes for children and families, and the state can propel those efforts through the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

What is Family First?

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was adopted in 2018. The name of the law reflects its vision: A *family first* for children and teens through quality *prevention services*. Kids can thrive when they have the support of a safe, stable family, and parents can best care for their families with the support of a strong community.

The new federal law realigns federal funding and recognizes that growing up in a home with a family is essential for all kids, especially those who have experienced abuse or neglect. It also recognizes that too many children are unnecessarily separated from parents who could provide safe and loving care if given access to needed mental health services, substance abuse treatment, or strengthened parenting skills. The law creates these changes through key reforms:

- Supports prevention and early intervention services to keep children safe, strengthen families, and reduce the need for foster care whenever it is safe to do so.
- Provides support for kinship (relative) caregivers.
- Establishes requirements for placement of children in non-family settings and improves quality and oversight of services.
- Improves services to older youth who are aging out of foster care.

What is Kentucky doing to implement Family First?

Leadership of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) and Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) has made a commitment for Kentucky to be among the first states to implement Family First beginning in October 2019. The state is engaging the entire community in planning and gathering ongoing feedback on improving Kentucky's prevention services and practice models to better support kids and families.

What is your role in the implementation of Family First in Kentucky?

Now is the time to begin understanding Family First and talking about how it will improve outcomes for kids and families in Kentucky. Here are some things you can do in your community during the Family First implementation to keep kids safe and strengthen families:

- Learn more about Family First and share information on implementation and other resources with local leaders and community members who care about kids
- Advocate to the Kentucky legislature for child welfare investments in the state budget
- Promote positive messages around Family First implementation in Kentucky on social media using #FamilyFirstAct and #FamilyFirstActKY
- Help connect parents, especially those struggling with addiction, to prevention and treatment resources in your community
- Offer a helping hand or shoulder to lean on for parents going through tough times
- Become or recruit foster parents
- Support relative and fictive kin families

Please email familyfirst@kyyouth.org if you have questions about the Family First Act. Questions will be compiled, and additional information will be released based on those questions.