



# Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program

Five-Year Plan: 2020-2024

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## Five-Year Plan: 2020-2024

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# I. Forward

## a. Acronyms and Definitions:

ARBEST: Arkansas Building Effective Services for Trauma is a state funded program at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences, Psychiatric Research Institute.

CACD: Crimes Against Children Division – A division of the Arkansas State Police that investigates most Priority 1 (generally severe maltreatment) investigations.

CEBC: California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse

CHRIS: our current SACWIS system

DCFS: Division of Children and Family Services

D.R.: Differential Response is an alternative response to allegations of child maltreatment. There is no investigation or investigative finding. D.R. is designed to engage families in order to connect them to formal and informal community supports and services. D.R. aims to safely reduce the number of children entering foster care and prevent future occurrence of child maltreatment.

EBP: Evidence-Based Practice

FSW: Family Service Worker – The FSW is the frontline DCFS staff. They can work ps cases, ss cases, fc cases, and investigations; however, DCFS often refers to FSW's who work investigations as investigators. FSW and caseworker are used interchangeably.

FFPSA: Family First Prevention Services Act (also referred to below as “the Act” or Family First)

The Hotline: The Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline receives all allegations of child abuse/neglect and decides if they meet the requirements for an investigation, a DR, or are screened out (screened out referrals are documented, but not sent to anyone). The hotline also determines if the allegations are a Priority 1 or 2 and if they go to DCFS or CACD. The Hotline is run by the State Police.

Priority 1: certain allegations of child abuse/neglect that require a 24-hour response time to see the victim children face to face.

Priority 2: certain allegations of child abuse/neglect that require a 72-hour response time to see the victim children face to face.

PS Case: Protective Services Case – A case opened due to an investigation with a true finding. These are in-home cases with no removal.

SS Case: Supportive Services Case – A case opened through an avenue other than a true finding on an investigation. These cases are “voluntary” on the part of the parents (examples: a parent requests services, a Judge orders DCFS to provide services through a FINS case, an investigation is unsubstantiated, but the family agrees to services, a family involved with DR needs services past the DR time frame.)

True Finding: An investigation has been completed, and it is determined there is a preponderance of evidence to support the allegation of child abuse/neglect.

Unsubstantiated: An investigation has been completed, and it is determined there is not a preponderance of evidence to support the allegation of child abuse/neglect.

## b. Introduction

Four years ago, Arkansas was in crisis. There were alarmingly high numbers of children in care, unmanageable caseloads, and a lack of fundamental supports for our families and workers. The Division set out on an aggressive but strategic plan to tackle a growing crisis in its child welfare and foster care system.

First, Paul Vincent, the Director of the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group, was asked to complete a review of the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services. His report was released in July 2015 and included 10 recommendations to help the Division respond to the crisis and create a stronger child welfare system. Then, the Department of Human Services (DHS) pulled together staff from across the agency in addition to child welfare experts and stakeholders to help DCFS address the foster care crisis and how to implement the recommended changes.

In Phase One, outlined in the division's first annual report *Moving Beyond the Crisis*, DCFS identified the key systemic issues and a plan for triage. By September 2017, the number of children in foster care had stopped rising, caseloads had declined, and families felt more supported. It seemed that the crisis had peaked, but there was still more work to be done.

Phase Two began with the release of a report called *Renewed Hope*. This report focused on three key areas of improvement: (1) Strengthening families so children can remain safely at home and families are more resilient, (2) Improving the foster care system so that it is stable for those who need it, and (3) Building, supporting, and empowering a strong DCFS workforce. *Renewed Hope* was designed to begin laying the groundwork for long-term, positive, and sustainable improvements.

Over the past year, DCFS began Phase Three with a continued focus on the three overarching buckets of focus. Though not all goals have been achieved, the Division is healthier and has a stronger foundation on which to complete the next phase of work. Below are just some of the gains DCFS has made since 2016.

- The average caseload for a frontline worker decreased from 28 cases in 2016 to 18.7 in June 2019.
- The number of overdue child maltreatment investigations is down from 721 in 2016 to 112 in June 2019.
- The number of children in foster care in Arkansas dropped from 5,196 in late 2016 to 4,327 today, a 17-percent decline and the lowest since the crisis response began.
- The percentage of children who are placed with relatives is up from 23 percent in 2016 to 30 percent today.
- The percentage of children placed in family-like settings is up from 78 percent in 2016 to 87 percent today.
- The ratio of foster home beds to children in care is up from 0.69 in 2016 to 0.81 today.

All the work the Division has been undergoing is underpinned by our value that children do best in families, and every child deserves a safe, stable, and nurturing family every day. Due to the hard work over the last three years, the Division is in a strong position to implement Family First Prevention Services Act ("Family First" or FFPSA) as it is already in line with our vision and goals.

One of the lessons learned over the past three years is that DCFS leadership must help workers think critically about the work that needs to be done to support children and families. To do that, DCFS established a central office Prevention and Reunification Unit. By 2018, DCFS was able to fully staff the new unit through more positions and funding approved by Governor Asa Hutchinson and the State Legislature. These positions are in addition to many other new positions all across the state that help support prevention and reunification efforts. There is now an Assistant Director to oversee the unit as well as a manager and program specialist for each program area. The unit provides support, training, coaching, and technical assistance to field staff for D.R., Investigations, and In-Home cases. The unit also

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focuses on family reunification once a child is in foster care. This unit places an intense focus on building families up so that their children never need to come into foster care.

In order to truly strengthen families, we must know what families need. DCFS created the Parent Advisory Council in June 2018 to help the Prevention and Reunification Unit with the following:

- Build partnerships between parents and staff;
- Promote parent leadership development and
- Help expand the meaningful roles of parents throughout the system.

The creation of the council strong parent voices are included in the shaping of programs, services, and strategies.

To reach our goal of strengthening families, DCFS has focused on giving parents the tools and knowledge that would both help prevent abuse/neglect, as well as providing them with the skills necessary to get their children back and keep them safe. As part of this effort, DCFS expanded some of the services rolled out in 2016 and increased access and quality of existing services.

#### Expanding Programs and Services:

In recent years, DCFS started several programs that use a team-based approach to determine the safety and permanency of children who interact with the child welfare system that engage families in ways that were not common in the state's system prior. To ensure these programs would result in stronger families and be better for Arkansas children, we limited the scope or reach of these programs to certain areas or types of cases. Now DCFS is ready to expand those programs with the overall goal of preventing future maltreatment and increasing the family's capacity to care for children safely at home (and thereby preventing the need for foster care intervention). Those programs include: Team Decision Making, SafeCare, and Nurturing the Families of Arkansas.

#### Creating new programs to ensure parents have access to services:

DCFS continues to see a need for more intensive and one-on-one programs that can provide parents with concrete steps and information that will lead to thriving parents and long-term family stability. DCFS launched two new programs at the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019.

Baby and Me WIC clinic project is a new pilot program that launched October 1, 2018. The Director of the Children's Trust Fund, which is part of the Prevention and Reunification Unit, worked with the Arkansas Department of Health to develop this program for pregnant women and new moms who are getting services through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). When the women visit a WIC clinic to receive or renew their benefits, a trained parent support mentor will provide one-on-one sessions that will include a brief health and safety lesson, a check of the baby's developmental milestones, and activities that promote parent-child bonding. The topics covered in the curriculum were selected because they are closely related to the leading causes of infant death and injuries in the state. The seven modules of the program include:

- Safe Sleep Practices
- Dealing with Infant Crying
- Importance of Routines
- Handling Stress and Depression
- Home Safety
- Preparing for Discipline
- Understanding Developmental Milestones

Parents are also connected to community services and supports as needed and receive diapers and wipes for each module of the program they complete.

The pilot started in 6 counties and has now grown to 14 counties. The project is being evaluated through a contract with the Department of Family and Preventative Medicine, Research, and Evaluation Division at UAMS.

Intensive In-home Services is a new program to help prevent placing kids in foster care or get them back home quickly and safely. These new services, which will be offered by DHS contractors, will focus on helping stabilize families for the long-term instead on the immediate crisis of the moment. The goal is to safely reduce the number of children in care by providing in-home services.

Phase One of the effort to improve Arkansas's child welfare system was largely successful at stabilizing the system and preventing a breakdown of the system. Phase Two built upon those efforts and focused on putting initiatives, programs, and practices in place to ensure that the system and the people within and around it are stronger, stable, supported, and empowered to make smarter, more effective decisions. That work built the foundation for this past year of Phase Three and the future of child welfare in Arkansas. This solid footing, grounded in a continued emphasis on safety, permanency, and well-being for the children and families served, will allow us to push forward with programs and partnerships that have shown success. It also allows us to try new initiatives that hold real promise for the future. With the continued support of the Governor, the Legislature, and community partners, as well as the amazing dedication and passion of our frontline and support staff, DCFS is poised to make a real difference in the lives of the people we serve every day. While the Division has been making a concerted effort to increase prevention services, Family First creates an exciting opportunity for DCFS to leverage resources and expand access to evidence-based practices that would otherwise not be achievable.

## II. Title IV-E Prevention Services Description and Oversight

### *Pre-Print Section 1*

Arkansas has worked hard the past several years to build our prevention services and In-Home program prioritizing evidence-based services that meet the needs of our families and help to keep kids safely in their homes. Family First offers us an opportunity to continue and expand some of our existing services and expand our array of evidence-based services. Below are the programs Arkansas has identified to best meet the needs of our clients. DCFS has started this transformation with our in-home parenting programs but will include Mental Health and Substance Abuse services and programs in the future as we expand implementation of Family First. Arkansas is working with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to complete the independent systematic review of each service as necessary to claim transitional payments.

#### **a. In-Home Parenting**

**SafeCare** – SafeCare is a home visiting program with more than 30 years of research supporting its effectiveness at reducing child abuse and neglect and strengthening positive parenting skills. The parent-skill based intervention is for parents or caretakers of children ages zero to five. SafeCare is module based and delivered over 18-22 sessions. The three modules address three risk factors that can lead to child abuse and neglect: 1) The parent-child relationship, 2) home safety, and 3) caring for the health of young children. Each module includes a baseline assessment, intervention (training sessions), and a follow-up assessment to monitor progress over the course of the program. SafeCare is trauma informed and is a clearly defined and replicable program.

DCFS has a partnership with Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH). ACH is responsible for the provision of SafeCare in central Arkansas and through subcontracts with local providers across the state. They are supported by the National SafeCare Training and Research Center, which monitors fidelity and grants accreditation. Arkansas's SafeCare received accreditation in April 2019.

SafeCare is under the umbrella of the Arkansas Home Visiting Network; unlike other home visiting programs in the network, it is exclusively for DCFS clients. It is currently in three of the division's ten geographic areas, with a plan of Statewide implementation by Jan. 1, 2020.<sup>1</sup> SafeCare is currently funded by Medicaid, but DCFS will provide a 15% match starting Oct. 1, 2019. DCFS will assume full responsibility for payments on Oct. 1, 2020. As such, DCFS will not be asking for reimbursement on SafeCare until FFY 2021. However, DCFS is requesting that the 15% state match spent on SafeCare in FFY 2020 count towards the 50% state expenditures on well-supported programs.

Current referral criteria for SafeCare includes a child who is the subject of a Garrett's Law investigation or a protective services case is open due to a true finding of medical neglect, failure to thrive, Munchausen by Proxy, or other neglect categories. As Safecare started prior to the passage of Family First, candidacy and/or Family First eligibility was not initially included in the eligibility criteria; however, this will be a requirement starting Oct. 1, 2019. This should not have a negative impact on referrals as a review of SafeCare clients showed that 96% of referrals met Arkansas's definition of candidacy. Once, DCFS assumes payment the PIs will be changed so that SafeCare can also be provided to parenting foster youth who do not have a true determination of maltreatment. SafeCare has not been rated by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse at this time but is scheduled to be reviewed. DCFS believes that SafeCare meets the standards set forth in the Family First Services and Prevention Act<sup>2</sup> as a well-supported practice. Below are 4 relevant studies.<sup>3</sup>

- 1) Chaffin, M., Hecht, D., Bard, D., Silovsky, J. F., & Beasley, W. H. (2012). A statewide trial of the SafeCare home-based services model with parents in child protective services. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 509-515. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-1840.
- 2) Gershater-Molko, R. M., Lutzker, J. R., & Wesch, D. (2002). Using recidivism data to evaluate Project Safecare: Teaching bonding, safety and healthcare skills to parents. *Child Maltreatment*, 7(3), 277-285.
- 3) Beachy-Quick, K., Lee, C., McConnell, L., Orsi, R., Timpe, Z., & Winokur, M. (2018). SafeCare Colorado program evaluation report 2014-2017. Unpublished report, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.
- 4) Burke, J., Bigelow, K., Carta, J., Borkowski, J., Grandfield, E., McCune, L., Irvin, D., et al. (2017). Long-term impact of a cell phone-enhanced parenting intervention. *Child Maltreatment*, 22(4), 305-314.

**Nurturing Parenting Program** – NPP is an evidence-based, trauma-informed in-home parenting program. *Nurturing the Families of Arkansas* (NFA) is Arkansas's version of the Nurturing Parenting Program, a program for parents and caregivers involved in in-home cases with children between the ages of 5-18, though exceptions can be made for children 0-4. The 16-week program is administered in groups and/or individually and is designed to build and strengthen positive parenting skills. By providing parents with improved parenting techniques, NFA aims to safely reduce the number of children entering the foster care system and decrease future involvement with DCFS.

As part of Arkansas's IV-E waiver initiative, NFA was Arkansas's first evidence-based prevention program. The evaluation of the program concluded that NFA had positive outcomes for children and families in Arkansas including reducing future maltreatment and removal into foster care. Arkansas saw the best outcomes for families who had a D.R. and then subsequently had a protective services (PS) case where NFA was provided. After seeing these results, referral criteria was changed to allow for NFA to be provided through a supportive services case. This allows NFA to be provided to appropriate families

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a map showing SafeCare Coverage and anticipated roll out.

<sup>2</sup> 42 U.S.C. §671(e)(4)(C)(v)

<sup>3</sup> For a complete list of SafeCare Publications: <https://safecare.publichealth.gsu.edu/safecare/safecare-research/publications/>  
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from a DR/supportive services case and hopefully prevent a true finding from ever occurring. Arkansas also updated referral criteria to allow a parenting foster care youth who is placed with their child to participate in NFA. Due to this change, NFA trained their staff on NPP curriculum for the 0-4 age group in the winter of 2019. The evaluation also showed that parents who completed the program consistently had positive feedback regarding the program and the staff. Because of the positive feedback received and the measurable outcomes for our families, Arkansas plans to continue this EBP. NFA is already available in all 75 counties.

NPP was developed in 1983 and based around the 6 protective factors: Nurturing and Attachment, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Concrete Support Services for Parents, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children. The lessons provided address inappropriate parenting expectations, lack of empathy, strong belief in use of corporal punishment, inappropriate family roles, and oppressing children's power and independence. Assessments are completed pre, during, and post services to measure differences in a parent's knowledge, skills, and parenting beliefs.

NPP has 30 years of research supporting its effectiveness in the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. NPP has not been rated by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse at this time; however, it is scheduled to be reviewed. Despite it being on the list for review, Arkansas has decided to continue with an independent systematic review as receiving transitional payments for this service will assist DCFS in implementing Family First by Oct. 1, 2019. The following are 7 relevant studies demonstrating the effectiveness of NPP.<sup>4</sup>

- 1) Hodnett, R.H., Faulk, K., Dellinger, A., Maher, E, [Evaluation of the Statewide Implementation of a Parent Education Program in Louisiana's Child Welfare Agency](#), 2009
- 2) Maher, E. J., Marcynyszyn, L. A., Corwin, T. W., & Hodnett, R. (2011). [Dosage matters: The relationship between participation in the Nurturing Parenting Program for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers and subsequent child maltreatment](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 1426-1434. DOI: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.04.014
- 3) Wagner, K.F., "[Parenting Education and Child Welfare Recidivism: A Comparative Study of the Nurturing Parenting Program Graduates and Non-Graduates of Fresno County](#)" Abstract, May 2001
- 4) Broyles, G., Easter, L., Primak, K., Shackford, L., "[Nurturing Program Follow-Up Study: Boulder County Department of Social Services Nurturing Program](#)" Research Report, 1992
- 5) Bavolek, S.J., Keene, R., Weikert, P., "[The Florida Study: A Comparative Examination of the Effectiveness of the Nurturing Parenting Programs](#)" Research Report, 2005
- 6) Cherry, K, Cooper, C, Cross-Hemmer, A, Duong, T, Furrer, C, Green, B, Rockhill, A, Rodgers, A, "Oregon's IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project: Final Evaluation Report." Relationship-Based Visitation & Parent Mentor Evaluations. Center for the Improvement of Child and Family Services Portland State University. December 2015
- 7) Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc., "Arkansas IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project: Final Report." June 2019.

**Intensive In-Home** – Arkansas implemented Intensive In-Home Services in February 2019. This is a pilot program in 37 counties.<sup>5</sup> Arkansas identified a gap in our service array, for families that needed intensive services for longer than four to six weeks to help them achieve stability and maintain gains. Arkansas wanted a program that was similar to our Intensive Family Services<sup>6</sup>, but in addition to crisis intervention, provided longer-term support to help families achieve the necessary skills and social support network to maintain long-term stabilization. Arkansas put out an RFQ with the parameters that needed to

<sup>4</sup> For a complete list of NPP Publications: [NurturingProgramResearch.com](http://NurturingProgramResearch.com)

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for a map of IIHS services.

<sup>6</sup> See page 9 regarding Intensive Family Services in Arkansas.



be met including length of service and expected outcomes, but requested the providers propose the evidence-based intervention used to deliver the service. Arkansas chose three different providers that presented different intervention models. Below are the interventions (additional information on Intensive In-Home Services can also be found in Arkansas's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Goal 2, Strategy 4. For a family to be eligible for Intensive In-Home Services they must have an open in-home case where at least one child is a candidate for foster care or an open foster care case where intensive services is needed for reunification to be successful. While not the target population, any of the Intensive In-Home programs may be appropriate for a parenting foster youth, if their needs cannot be met by NFA or SafeCare once available.

### ***YVIntercept™***

YVIntercept™ is the model used by Youth Villages. It is an integrated approach to in-home parenting skill development that offers a variety of evidence-based practices to meet the individualized needs of a family and young person. Specifically, it employs the following evidence-based practices, as clinically indicated: Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA), Community Advocacy Project (CAP), Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), and Motivational Interviewing. This program is a trauma informed in-home services program providing family-centered treatment with strength-based interventions. This comprehensive intervention takes a therapeutic approach to parenting skills education, educational interventions, development of positive peer groups, and extensive help for families and children in accessing community resources and long-term, ongoing support.

Family intervention specialists work with both the child and the caregivers to address issues that are impacting the stability of the family, meeting with children and caregivers a minimum of two-three times weekly depending on family need and providing families with access to 24-hour on-call support. Services are tailored to meet each family's needs, ongoing assessments and reviews measure progress throughout the intervention.

The goals of the program are to reduce subsequent maltreatment, prevent foster care placement, and reduce time in state custody by successfully reuniting children with their families in a timelier manner. Diversion services generally last four to six months, while reunification services generally last six to nine months.

YVIntercept™ is currently available in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee. YVIntercept™ is currently the subject of a rigorous evaluation by an independent third party that examines whether YVIntercept™ (1) reduces the risk of placement into foster care among children who are at risk of placement having never been in out of home care previously, and (2) affects the rate of permanency, time to permanency, and re-entry into care for children referred to the program while in foster care. At this time, YVIntercept™ has two quasi-experimental studies underway that should be completed fall of 2019. Youth Villages is confident that it will meet the standard for a promising practice as defined by Family First.<sup>7</sup> Arkansas is contracting with NCCD to complete an independent systematic review in order to receive transitional payments for this service.

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<sup>7</sup> 42 U.S.C. §671(e)(4)(C)(iii)

### **Family Centered Treatment**

St. Francis Ministries has implemented Family Centered Treatment (FCT) in 15 counties in Arkansas. FCT is a strength-based, trauma-informed, and evidence-based family preservation model that provides services to families directly in their homes. FCT is designed to find simple, practical, and common-sense solutions for families faced with disruption or dissolution of their family.

This program follows a four-stage process of Joining and Assessment, Restructuring, Valuing Changes, and Generalization. The length of treatment is determined by the family's needs and progress, but the average length of treatment is six months. The foundations of FCT are grounded in Eco-Structural Family Therapy and Emotionally Focused Therapy. FCT is clearly defined and replicable. The Family Centered Treatment Foundation has a best practice implementation process that allows prospective and current licensed FCT providers to identify and plan for sustainable implementation. FCT has not been evaluated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse. Arkansas is contracting with NCCD to complete an independent systematic review in order to receive transitional payments for this service.

The following are relevant studies which demonstrate the effectiveness of FCT.

- 1) Bright, C. L., Betsinger, S., Farrell, J., et al. (2015). *Youth Outcomes Following Family Centered Treatment® in Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland School of Social Work.
- 2) Bright, C. L., Farrell, J., Winters, A. M., Betsinger, S., & Lee, B. R. (2018). Family Centered Treatment, juvenile justice, and the grand challenge of smart decarceration. *Research on Social Work Practice, 28*(5), 638-645.
- 3) The Indiana University Evaluation Team & The Department of Child Services. (2018) Indiana Department of Child Services Child Welfare Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project Final Report. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University School of Social Work and Indiana Department of Child Services.
- 4) Sullivan, J. P. (2006). *Family Centered Treatment: A unique alternative*. *Corrections Today, 68*(3).

### **Strengthening Families**

Youth Advocate Program (YAP) has implemented Strengthening Families in 13 counties in Arkansas. Strengthening Families is a strengths-based, trauma informed, and evidence-based program designed for parents and their children ages 0-17 who are at risk of abuse or neglect or have high conflict within the family. These include parents with substance abuse issues, families where there is already substantiated child abuse or neglect, and families where parents or caregivers need the skills necessary to meet the needs of a child who has behavioral or mental health issues. Strengthening Families works with parents to teach parenting skills and enhance family relationships. The goals of the program are to reduce child maltreatment, improve parenting skills, reduce delinquency and alcohol or drug abuse, improve school performance, and decrease children's problematic behaviors. YAP integrates Strengthening Families with their wrap around services and their "no reject, no eject" policy. Arkansas is contracting with NCCD to complete an independent systematic review in order to receive transitional payments for this service.

**Intensive Family Services** – Arkansas currently provides Intensive Family Services (IFS) in 23 counties. IFS is a four to six-week intensive in-home service to improve parenting skills, parent-child relationships, and prevent children from coming into foster care. IFS is delivered by six different providers. Our current model is similar to Homebuilders®, but providers are not required to be accredited by Homebuilders® or to use an evidence-based model.

The current contract for IFS ends June 30, 2019. Arkansas plans on re-procuring IFS; however, the new contract will specify that providers must provide an evidence-based model such as Homebuilders® or Teaching Family Model. Providers may choose to submit a proposal for a different model. Only providers whose proposals include a treatment model with sufficient evidence showing the model's effectiveness at either the well-supported, supported, or promising level in addition to being trauma informed will be considered, and proposals for well-supported will be given priority within the context of what will fit best for our families.

Arkansas has looked at current models and the two listed below appear to be a good fit for our clients and providers. As our current IFS is not a specified model, Arkansas will not be claiming reimbursement for IFS until July 2020, or such time that an evidence-based model, as defined by Family First, is in place. However, IFS will already be an option in the family's prevention plan. As the population IFS serves will remain the same, this will help DCFS plan for cost and refining candidacy and referral criteria.

#### **Homebuilders®**

Homebuilders® is a home and community-based intensive family preservation service designed to avoid unnecessary placement of children in foster care, group care, psychiatric hospitals, or juvenile justice facilities. When working with families involved in child welfare due to neglect, activities focus on improving the physical condition of the home, improving supervision, decreasing parental depression and/or alcohol and substance abuse, and helping families access needed community supports. This program is typically delivered in a four to six-week time frame and serves families with children ages 0-17. Homebuilders® is clearly defined, replicable, and formal support is available for implementation. Homebuilders® is set to be reviewed by the Title IV-E clearinghouse Arkansas believes that Homebuilders® will meet the criteria for a well-supported practice. DCFS did not include this service to be in our independent systematic review because it should be rated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse prior to our implementation of the service. The following are relevant studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of Homebuilders®.

- 1) Fraser, M. W., Walton, E., Lewis, R. E., Pecora, P. J., & Walton, W. K. (1996). An experiment in family reunification: Correlates of outcomes at one-year follow-up. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18*(4/5), 335-361.
- 2) Fraser, M. W., Pecora, P.J., and Haapala, D.A. (Eds.) (1991), *Families in Crisis: The Impact of Intensive Family Preservation Services*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- 3) Fraser, M., Walton, E., Lewis, R., Pecora, P., Walton, W., (1996), *An Experiment in Family Reunification Services: Correlates of Outcomes at One Year Follow Up*. *Children and Youth Services Review, Vol. 18, Nos. 4/5 pp. 335-361*.
- 4) Kirk, R.S. & Griffith, D.P., (2004), *Intensive family preservation services: Demonstrating placement prevention using event history analysis*. *Social Work Research, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 5-15*.
- 5) Blythe, B. & Jayaratne, S., (2002), *Michigan Families First Effectiveness Study*.

#### **Teaching Family Model (TFM)**

TFM is a unique approach to human services that uses "teaching parents" to model positive healthy parenting, living, and interpersonal interaction skills. This program is designed to be

provided in any residential setting. When implementing TFM as a home-based diversion program, the model calls for 10-15 sessions a week for 6-10 weeks. TFM is trauma informed, clearly defined, and replicable with formal support for implementation. There are providers in Arkansas who currently provide TFM in residential settings and are interested in providing TFM as a diversion program in partnership with DCFS. TFM is currently not rated by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, but Arkansas believes that it meets the definition of a well-supported practice under Family First.<sup>8</sup> The following shows relevant research demonstrating the effectiveness of TFM.

- 1) Lewis, R. E. (2005). The effectiveness of Families First services: An experimental study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27, 499-509.
- 2) Lee, B. R., & Thompson, R. (2008). Comparing outcomes for youth in treatment foster care and family-style group care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 746-757.
- 3) Hess, J.Z., Arner, W., Skyes, E., Price, A.G., & Tanana, M. (2012). Helping juvenile offenders on their own turf: Tracking the recidivism outcomes of a home-based intervention. *OJDDP Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 2(1).

**Table 1 Chosen In-Home Parenting EBP's, with proximal outcomes, and selection reason<sup>9</sup>**

| <b>EBP Interventions</b>   | <b>Target Population</b>  | <b>Expected Proximal Outcomes</b>   | <b>Reason for Selection</b>  | <b>Evaluation Plan</b>       | <b>Trauma Informed<sup>10</sup></b> |
|--|---|---|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>SafeCare</b>  | Children ages 0-5 and their caregivers  | Reduce future incidents of maltreatment; increase positive parent child interaction; improvement in parents' care of child's health; enhance home safety  | SafeCare is an evidenced based practice with successful outcomes for the population DCFS serves that filled a service gap for a vulnerable age group.  | Formal Contracted Evaluation | ✓                                   |
| <b>Nurturing Families of Arkansas (Nurturing Parent Program)</b> | Children ages 5-18 and their caregivers, and parenting foster youth regardless of the child's age | Measurable gains in the individual self-worth of parents and children and parental empathy in meeting their children's and their own needs in healthy ways; increase in utilization of dignified, non-violent | Nurturing Parent Program is an evidence-based parenting program with results in preventing child abuse and neglect. NFA was implemented as part of our | Formal Contracted Evaluation | ✓                                   |

<sup>8</sup> 42 U.S.C. §671(e)(4)(C)(v)

<sup>9</sup> Table 1 only references those programs that are currently in place

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix C, Attachment III: State Assurance of Trauma-Informed Service Delivery  
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disciplinary strategies and practices; increase in nurturing parenting beliefs, knowledge, and utilization of skills and strategies; reduction in rates of recidivism of program graduates.

IV-E Waiver Initiative in an effort to build up our prevention services. As it was a successful intervention, DCFS has continued to increase access to NFA.

|                                  |   |   |   |                              |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| <b>YVIntercept™</b>              | Children ages 0-18 and their caregivers | Reduce utilization of foster care placements by diverting children from foster care placements by helping their families safely maintain them in the home; decrease in length of time spent in residential, psychiatric or other out-of-home placement; decrease in emotional and behavioral problems in youth, decrease in substance abuse and involvement with the juvenile justice system. | YVIntercept™ has a proven track record of helping to reduce the number of children in foster care in Tennessee and has experience providing prevention services in multiple states. YVIntercept™ uses evidence-based interventions with a stringent supervision model. Youth Villages model met a gap in our service array. | Formal Contracted Evaluation | ✓ |
| <b>Family Centered Treatment</b> | Children 0-18 and their caregivers      | Enable family stability via preservation of a family placement; enable the necessary changes in the critical areas of family functioning that are the underlying  | St. Francis has had success in providing Family Centered Treatment in two other states. This model addresses the  | Formal Contracted Evaluation | ✓ |

causes for the risk of family dissolution; bring a reduction in hurtful and harmful behaviors affecting family functioning; develop an emotional and functioning balance in the family so that the family system can cope effectively with any individual member's intrinsic or unresolvable challenges; enable changes in referred client behavior to include family system involvement so that changes are not dependent upon the therapist; enable discovery and effective use of the intrinsic strengths necessary for sustaining the changes made and enabling stability.

needs of our families with a trauma - informed and evidence-based service. St. Francis included in their proposal an understanding of the challenges and impact of community poverty which is important as some of the counties where they provide services are some of the poorest areas in the nation.

|                               |                                  |   |   |                              |   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Strengthening Families</b> | Children 0-18 and their families | Reduce child maltreatment; reduce costs of foster care and kinship care; reduce parent and child substance abuse; reduce child development and behavior problems; reduce academic and school failure; | YAP has experience in providing prevention services in 12 other states. Their staff are trauma-informed, and their model of Strengthening Families is | Formal Contracted Evaluation | ✓ |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|---|

increase parent/child attachment and bonding; increase positive parenting and parenting skills; reduce family conflict and violence; reduce children's and parent's depression and stress; increase children's positive behaviors. evidence-based.

In addition to DCFS' contracted evaluation, many of these services also have fidelity measures to which they must adhere in order to administer the program. SafeCare is a model that requires oversight and accreditation from the national SafeCare office. Strengthening Families, Intercept, and Family Centered Treatment (FCT) are our current models for Intensive In-Home. FCT requires licensure through the Family Centered Treatment Foundation which provides training, coaching, and certification to allow agencies to implement this model. Intercept was created by Youth Villages which has strong fidelity measures to ensure appropriate implementation. Strengthening Families also accredits Youth Advocate Program. Our proposed IFS services are Home Builders and Teaching Family Model. Homebuilders requires certification through the Institute for Family Development and has fidelity measures. Teaching Family Model also requires accreditation. Lastly, NFA is accredited through the Nurturing Parenting.

#### **b. Mental Health**

Arkansas recognizes that evidence-based mental health services are critical to the populations we serve, and we want to continue to improve the quality of mental health services available to our clients. Mental health treatment for adults and children involved with child welfare are mainly covered through Medicaid and private insurance. Many of our clients already have Medicaid and workers can help eligible clients apply if they do not have coverage or their coverage has lapsed. DCFS does have small contracts for counseling services for those children and caregivers who do not have coverage. These contracts are for counseling agencies and/or private licensed providers.

Our current counseling contracts do not specify that therapists must be certified to provide specific therapies. While DCFS will not amend our contracts to require certification in the below therapeutic modalities, as that would be too limiting on our providers and our clients, the contract PIs will be revised to encourage providers to be trained in these approaches. DCFS is also changing the format of the providers' monthly reports. Providers will now report not only which clients they see and whether or not the payor source is Medicaid, DCFS contract, or other, but also if they are using one of the specified trauma-informed, evidence-based therapies listed in our IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan, and if the client is eligible under Family First. DCFS recognizes that not all of our clients will be appropriate for one of these therapies, that not all mental health diagnoses have a corresponding evidence-based therapy as a best practice standard of care, and that some of our clients may need an evidence-based therapy that is currently not included in our plan. For these reasons, DCFS is not limiting our therapists to

these treatment modalities. In addition, providers may choose to add to their monthly report other evidence-based therapies they are providing which may lead to other evidence-based therapies added to Arkansas's IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan.

In the past, DCFS has partnered with ARBest to help educate DCFS staff on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and increase the use of this therapy for our foster children. ARBest is a state-funded program through the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences, Psychiatric Research Institute which aims to improve outcomes for traumatized children and families through excellence in clinical care, training, advocacy, and evaluation. In addition to the work ARBest has done in regards to TF-CBT, they also provide training for therapists in the evidence-based, trauma-informed practices of Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Parent Child Psychotherapy (CPP). ARBest keeps an up-to-date register of therapists in Arkansas who are able to provide each of these therapies. Because of the respected work ARBest is already doing in the state and our strong relationship with them, DCFS included these therapies in its IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan. DCFS also chose Functional Family Therapy (FFT) to include in our plan. While ARBest does not provide training for this intervention, FFT is well-supported and specifically addresses the needs of our older youth and their families.

**Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)** – TF-CBT is a trauma informed evidence-based mental health treatment for children and adolescents who have experienced trauma from events such as sexual or physical abuse. TF-CBT is considered the gold-standard in treatment for child trauma. TF-CBT aims to reduce trauma symptoms while strengthening the parent-child relationship. The Title IV-E Clearinghouse has rated TF-CBT as a promising practice. As such, Arkansas will not be requesting reimbursement for this service until such a time as it becomes well-supported according to the federal clearinghouse or Arkansas is able to do an independent evaluation.

**Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)** – PCIT is an evidence-based dyadic behavioral intervention for children ages two through seven and their parents or caregivers. The treatment focuses on decreasing externalized disruptive behavior in young children with a history of trauma. This treatment has been shown to improve parent-child attachment, reducing symptoms of trauma in children, and improvements in children's behavior. PCIT is currently rated as Well-Supported on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. Arkansas will be requesting reimbursement for this service.

**Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)** – CPT is a trauma-informed cognitive behavioral treatment for PTSD in adults. It has shown to be effective in reducing PTSD symptoms to a variety of traumatic events such as rape, abuse, and events of war. CPT is endorsed by the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense as a best practice for the treatment of PTSD. In order to increase the number of CPT-trained therapists in Arkansas, ARBest began providing CPT training in 2019. The Title IV-E Clearinghouse has not yet rated CPT. As such, Arkansas will not be requesting reimbursement for this service until such a time as it becomes well-supported according to the federal clearinghouse or Arkansas is able to do an independent evaluation.

**Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)** - CPP is a trauma-informed, evidence-based treatment for young children (ages zero through five) who have experienced trauma. It has been shown to be effective at reducing emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with trauma, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and enhance safe caregiving practices. The Title IV-E Clearinghouse has not yet rated CPP. As such, Arkansas will not be requesting reimbursement for this service until such a time as it becomes well-supported according to the federal clearinghouse or Arkansas is able to do an independent evaluation.



**Functional Family Therapy (FFT)** – FFT is a trauma-informed evidence-based therapeutic intervention for at-risk families and juvenile justice involved youth. The FFT model is for families with children ages 10-18 to help develop better family relationships, learn to control anger and problem solve without fighting, improve positive communication skills, build trusting and respectful family relationships, and prevent involvement in the juvenile and legal system. FFT is currently rated as Well-Supported on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. Arkansas will be requesting reimbursement for this service.

**Table 2 Chosen Mental Health EBP's, with proximal outcomes, and selection reason**

| <b>EBP Interventions</b> | <b>Target Population</b>                | <b>Expected Proximal Outcomes<sup>11</sup></b>   | <b>Reason for Selection</b>  | <b>Title IV-E Clearinghouse Rating</b> | <b>Evaluation Waiver Request</b> | <b>Trauma Informed<sup>12</sup></b> |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>TF-CBT</b>            | Children ages 3-18 and their caregivers | Improved PTSD, depression, and anxiety symptoms; reduced behavior problems; reduce parenting distress; improved adaptive functioning, and improved parenting skills.                                       | TF-CBT is an evidence-based and considered the gold standard in trauma treatment for children. Arkansas has a good support and training system for TF-CBT therapists through ARBest. | Promising                              | No                               | ✓                                   |
| <b>PCIT</b>              | Children ages 2-6 and their caregivers  | Increased parent-child closeness; decreased anger and frustration; increased self-esteem; increased parental ability to comfort child; improved parenting skills in behavior management and communication. | PCIT is a well-supported evidence-based model that addresses many of the needs of our children and families. ARBest also trains therapists across Arkansas in PCIT.                  | Well-Supported                         | Yes                              | ✓                                   |
| <b>CPT</b>               | Adults                                  | Decrease symptoms of PTSD and depression; help clients feel emotions about the traumatic event and reduce avoidance; develop balanced  | CPT is an evidence-based treatment for adults with trauma. Many of the adults that we serve  | Not yet rated                          | No                               | ✓                                   |

<sup>11</sup> Proximal outcomes from program goals profiles on the CEBC: <http://www.cebc4cw.org/>

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix C, Attachment III: State Assurance of Trauma-Informed Service Delivery  
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|            |                                   |   |  |                |     |   |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|----------------|-----|---|
|            |                                   | and realistic beliefs about the event, oneself, others and the world; decrease the emotions that result from maladaptive beliefs (guilt/shame/anger).       | have unaddressed trauma that is a complicating factor in their lives. ARBest is currently training therapists in this modality. Arkansas expects CPT to be well-supported when it is rated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse.                                    |                |     |   |
| <b>CPP</b> | Children 0-5 and their caregivers | Support and strengthen the caregiver-child relationship; reduce emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with trauma.                               | CPP is a trauma informed evidence-based model that addresses many of the needs of our children and families. ARBest also trains therapists across Arkansas in CPP. Arkansas expects CPP to be well-supported when it is rated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse. | Not yet rated  | No  | ✓ |
| <b>FFT</b> | Children 11-18 and their families | Eliminate behavior problems, delinquency, and substance abuse; improve prosocial behavior for the youth; and improve overall family functioning and skills. | FFT is a well-supported evidence-based model that addresses many of the needs of our older youth and families we serve.  | Well-Supported | Yes | ✓ |

At this time, DCFS is not able to provide an evaluation for each therapeutic intervention listed. Therefore, while we will begin work on teaching our family service workers about these therapies, changing the PIs in our counseling contracts, and implementing the new provider monthly reports in January 2020; DCFS will not request claimability on all of these services until such time as they are on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse as well-supported or it becomes feasible for DCFS to conduct its own evaluation. The exceptions are Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and Functional Family Therapy as they have a plethora of research showing their effectiveness and have been rated as Well-Supported by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

### c. **Substance Abuse**

DCFS is not currently requesting any substance abuse programs or treatment be a part of its Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan. There are no approved substance abuse treatment models on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse that are currently being used in Arkansas, nor does Arkansas have the resources at this time to do an independent evaluation of substance abuse treatment modalities. However, DCFS is looking at the following programs/services to explore for expansion of FFPSA implementation at a later date.

**Methadone Maintenance Therapy** – Methadone Maintenance Therapy combines therapy with methadone medication for the treatment of opiate addiction. There are currently five Methadone Maintenance Clinics in Arkansas. The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse has rated Methadone Maintenance Therapy as a promising practice. DCFS does not have the resources at this time to do an independent evaluation of our clients in this treatment but will be exploring this as a possibility for expansion of FFPSA implementation.

**Arkansas Center for Addictions Research, Education, and Services (Arkansas Cares)** – Arkansas Cares is a program of Methodist Family Health. It is a 3-month residential treatment program for parenting mothers with children 12 years old and younger. It is a dual diagnosis program that treats substance abuse and mental illness simultaneously. The family centered approach used is based on the Teaching Family Model. Additional services include parent training, vocational and educational training, children's mental health services, early education services, and transitional housing. The program aims to decrease maternal substance abuse and promote healthy families. Arkansas Cares is currently rated as a promising practice on the CEBC. As the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse has not rated the program and DCFS does not currently have the ability to do an independent evaluation, DCFS is not requesting transitional payments for this service at this time. However, DCFS will be working with Methodist Family Health to explore how we can partner to expand service availability and make this an official part of Family First in Arkansas.

### d. **Cross Sectional**

**Motivational Interviewing (MI)** - Motivational interviewing is a client-centered method used to help increase clients' intrinsic motivation to change. MI can be used by itself or in combination with other treatments. It is often used in pre-treatment work to help engage and motivate clients for other treatment modalities as it helps clients explore and resolve their ambivalence to change. MI is currently being reviewed by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse under substance abuse interventions; however, DCFS is encouraging the Children's Bureau to take a broader look at MI as a beneficial piece in multiple disciplines. Such an expansion might then warrant all front-line child welfare staff being trained in

MI. DCFS is exploring the costs associated with MI training, the logistics of training and coaching staff, and the feasibility of implementing an independent evaluation.

**Table 3 Chosen Substance Abuse and Cross-sectional EBP's, with proximal outcomes, and selection reason**

| <b>EBP Interventions</b>         | <b>Target Population</b>                                    | <b>Expected Proximal Outcomes</b>  | <b>Reason for Selection</b>  | <b>Evaluation Plan</b> | <b>Trauma Informed<sup>13</sup></b> |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Methadone Maintenance</b>     | Adults with opioid addiction                                | Reduction in the use of other opioids; mortality; injection drug-related risk behaviors, criminal activity; improvement in physical and mental health, social functioning, quality of life; retention in treatment programs. | Methadone Maintenance Therapy is evidence-based and is available in Arkansas. Methadone Maintenance Clinics could be a vital support to our parents with opioid addiction. | To be determined       | ✓                                   |
| <b>AR Cares</b>                  | Mothers with dual diagnosis (children must be 12 and under) | Decrease maternal substance abuse; promote healthy families; reduce foster care placements.  | AR Cares is a successful residential program where mothers can keep their children with them. There is a lack of services available in the state.                          | To be determined       | ✓                                   |
| <b>Motivational Interviewing</b> | All clients as a support for other interventions            | Higher rates of active participation in services including drug treatment  | MI is appropriate for use with youth and adults. It is evidence-based, but does not require a Master's level education enabling all our front line                         | To be determined       | ✓                                   |

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix C, Attachment III: State Assurance of Trauma-Informed Service Delivery Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan | August 2019

staff to be able to provide this service. Being trained in MI would give our staff another tool and resource to help build their skills and ability to work with clients.

**Table 4 Timeline of Services<sup>14</sup>**

| In-Home Parenting           | Service                          | DCFS Contract | Provider  | Coverage                | Payment Source    | Expected Clearinghouse Rating | Expected FFPSA IV-E Match |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                             | SafeCare                         | ✓             | Arkansas Children's Hospital and subcontractors | Statewide <sup>15</sup> | Medicaid          | Well-Supported                | Oct. 1, 2019              |
|                             | NFA                              | ✓             | MidSouth University Partners                    | Statewide               | Waiver funded     | Supported                     | Oct. 1, 2019              |
|                             | YVInterceptTM (IIHS)             | ✓             | Youth Villages                                  | 9 Counties              | DCFS              | Promising                     | Oct. 1, 2019              |
|                             | Family Centered Treatment (IIHS) | ✓             | St. Francis                                     | 15 Counties             | DCFS              | Well-Supported                | Oct. 1, 2019              |
|                             | Strengthening Families (IIHS)    | ✓             | Youth Advocate Programs                         | 13 Counties             | DCFS              | Well-Supported                | Oct. 1, 2019              |
|                             | Homebuilders ® (IFS)             | ✓             | To be determined                                | To be determined        | DCFS and Medicaid | Well-Supported                | July 1, 2020              |
|                             | Teaching Family Model (IFS)      | ✓             | To be determined                                | To be determined        | DCFS              | Well-Supported                | July 1, 2020              |
| Mental Health <sup>16</sup> | TF-CBT                           |               | Multiple Providers                              | Statewide               | Medicaid/DCFS     | Promising                     | Jan. 1, 2019              |
|                             | Parent Child Interaction Therapy |               | Multiple Providers                              | Statewide               | Medicaid/DCFS     | Well-Supported                | Jan. 1, 2019              |
|                             | Cognitive Processing Therapy     |               | Multiple Providers                              | Statewide               | Medicaid/DCFS     | Well-Supported                | Jan. 1, 2019              |

<sup>14</sup> No services will be claimed until an approved prevention plan, including the transitional payment requirements

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix A for SafeCare rollout schedule

<sup>16</sup> DCFS has contracts with mental health providers, but not specific contracts for each therapy modality

|                 |                               |  |                    |            |                                    |                |              |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
|                 | Child Parent Psychotherapy    |  | Multiple Providers | Statewide  | Medicaid/DCFS                      | Well-Supported | Jan. 1, 2019 |
|                 | Functional Family Therapy     |  | Multiple Providers | Statewide  | Medicaid/DCFS                      | Well-Supported | Jan. 1, 2019 |
| Substance Abuse | Methadone Maintenance Therapy |  | Multiple Providers | 5 Counties | Medicaid/private pay <sup>17</sup> | Promising      | TBD          |
|                 | Arkansas Cares                |  | Methodist          | Pulaski    | Medicaid/DCFS                      | Promising      | TBD          |
| Cross-Sectional | Motivational Interviewing     |  | DCFS               | Statewide  | DCFS                               | Well-Supported | TBD          |

### III. Child and Family Eligibility for the Title IV-E Prevention Program

*Pre-Print Section 9*

**a. Defining Candidacy in Arkansas**

The DCFS definition of candidacy took into consideration several factors that affect the Arkansas child welfare system including the legal definition of candidacy, who and how we already serve clients, and prioritizing how to best serve our clients. By taking all these factors into account, pulling data from CHRIS, and looking at known risk factors, the Division determined that the factors outlined in Table 5 below qualify a child as a foster care candidate in Arkansas. Only one factor has to be present for a child to be determined a candidate; however, multiple reasons may apply. Additional descriptions of each factor follow Table 5.

**Table 5 Candidacy<sup>18</sup>**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Garrett’s Law investigation that did not result in removal. *All children in the home will be considered a candidate. | 2) A Protection Plan was put in place.   |
| 3) A TDM was held that did not result in removal.  | 4) High or intensive risk assessment.  |
| 5) Risk of adoption or guardianship disruption.  | 6) SS case opened to prevent removal.  |
| 7) A less than custody has been filed.   | 8) A 30-day petition has been filed.   |
| 9) Child is living with a relative caregiver (Does not include provisional or relative foster care)                      | 10) A CACD investigation with a true finding and an in-home or out of home offender. |
| 11) Reunification has occurred, and the case remains open.   | 12) A sibling is in foster care.   |
| 13) The parent or caregiver was in foster care as a child.   | 14) Failure to Thrive  |

<sup>17</sup> Current payment structure

<sup>18</sup> Categories 14-17 will have to be added in a CHRIS enhancement and will not be available for selection on Oct. 1, 2019  
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|  |   |
|--|---|
| 15) Medical Neglect if the child is 5 or under | 16) Inadequate Supervision with a child in the home 5 and under |
| 17) Domestic Violence is a risk factor         |   |

- 1) Garrett’s Law (Front Door) - In SFY 2018, DCFS received 1,280 Garrett’s Law reports. Statewide, DCFS substantiated 92% of these referrals, opened a case on 94%<sup>19</sup>, and removed 15% at the time of the investigation. However, this rate fluctuates widely, and in some counties, they remove approximately half of all Garrett’s Law babies during the investigation. Furthermore, we remove another 7% within 12 months, and in SFY 2018, 4% were cited in a subsequent true maltreatment report over the same time period. This equated to approximately 282 newborns removed from their home due to substance abuse, these figures only capture the newborn and no siblings that are also removed as a result of the drug use. Arkansas has chosen to include this population in our definition of candidacy, due to the vulnerable age of the child, the inconsistency with which DCFS handles these cases across areas, and the frequency with which they come into care or are subsequently abused.
- 2) Protection Plan in place (Front Door and Tertiary Prevention) - By definition, these children are at imminent risk of coming into care. Protection plans are only completed when a safety factor has been identified and the only options are a protection plan or bringing the child into care.
- 3) Team Decision Meetings (Front Door and Tertiary Prevention) are only in 30 out of 75 counties at this time. In these counties they are held with every Garrett’s law and any time a protection plan is put in place. However, a pilot is being done in Area 8 with triggers for TDM that align to model fidelity. These TDMs are held when a worker is considering or has done a removal. When this goes statewide, the candidacy reason would read that a TDM was held that did not result in removal or the children were returned home. For more information regarding the statewide expansion of Considered Removal TDMs, please see Arkansas’s 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Goal 2, Strategy 3.
- 4) High or Intensive Risk (Front Door and Secondary or Tertiary Prevention) - These families are at a greater danger of coming into care or experiencing subsequent maltreatment without intense intervention. In SFY 2018, 65% of children removed from the home had a current risk assessment of moderate, high, or intensive. There was missing data for approximately 15.5% of removals.<sup>20</sup> A risk assessment will be completed at the time of determining candidacy. While subsequent risk assessments will be completed through the life of the case, candidacy status will not change due to a lower risk score. As the law states the risk should go down as services are being provided. At any point during a case if a child goes from a low-risk assessment to a high-risk assessment they will then be designated as a candidate.<sup>21</sup>
- 5) Failed Adoption/Guardianship – Due to restrictions of our CHRIS system, DCFS was unable to pull how many children came into care for this reason in SFY 2018; however, Arkansas plans to include this population within its definition of foster care candidates as allowed under Family First.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> This figure includes ps cases and fc cases.

<sup>20</sup> The ones with missing data more than likely had their risk assessment entered after the removal screen was completed and therefore were not captured in the data request.

<sup>21</sup> The state is not satisfied with our current risk assessment. We are currently working with NCCD to implement Structured Decision Making with fidelity. NCCD will be doing a risk analysis in the fall of 2019 and the new risk assessment should be in place by the end of 2020. Until that time, we will use our current risk assessment.

<sup>22</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 675(13)

- 6) In SFY 2018, 502 families were served through a supportive services case, and 3% of these children were taken into foster care. While this is a low number of our overall cases and removals, it is important to capture this population because
  - A. When judges open up a DCFS case to prevent removal, the children are at high risk of coming into care due to the court oversight component.
  - B. While this data is not able to be pulled from CHRIS, there are cases opened because a caregiver is at a breaking point and voluntarily requests services. The caregiver normally does not want to give us custody but does also not know how to access the help they need. These children are certainly at imminent risk of coming into care, but if we can help support the caregiver and provide services immediately, we can keep that child from coming into care and prevent maltreatment from ever occurring.
  - C. We want to be able to provide Family First services to families that become involved through a DR but need more intensive and longer involvement than a normal DR, which lasts between 30-60 days. As an example, our families who had a DR and then a subsequent true maltreatment investigation that were then able to participate in NFA had the lowest number of subsequent maltreatment and removals. This group of families had the best outcomes from all our waiver initiatives. We suspect that providing them with NFA by opening a supportive services case to continue after the DR is closed will prevent removals and maltreatment from ever occurring.
- 7) Less than Custody Petitions - Our current system does not have the capability of tracking how many less than custody petitions DCFS files in a year nor the outcomes of those. However, this subpopulation was included because we are restricting the rights of one or both parents, while saying that we can safely leave the child in the home while providing services. When there is a safety factor related to the parent, less than custody petitions also allow us to leave a child in the home of a relative, if they have been in the relative's home for six months.
- 8) 30-day Petitions - Our current system does not have the capability of tracking how many 30-day petitions have been filed. However, these are filed when a child is at substantial risk of harm or removal without intervention and the Division feels the risk level is high enough to warrant court oversight.
- 9) Children living with a relative/caregiver - Of the 3,289 children that entered care in SFY 2018, 244 were removed from a relative caregiver and not a biological/legal/or step parent. This category will overlap with the supportive services to prevent removal, but it will also capture those families that are using their informal support systems, allowing us to provide services to both the current caregiver and the parent as needed.
- 10) CACD investigations with a true finding and in-home/unknown offender - CACD investigates our Priority 1 investigations. These allegations are more severe (e.g., babies with broken bones, subdural hematomas, sexual abuse, etc.).
- 11) Reunification has occurred – The period immediately following reunification is a vulnerable time for families. In SFY 2018, 7.3% of children who were discharged to their families re-entered foster care within 12 months. However, in SFY 2017 and SFY 2016, those rates were 8.7% and 9.9%, respectively. Families deserve to have support during this transition, and DCFS needs to do everything it can to help reunification be successful. The DCFS Parent Advisory Council has also recommended that strategies be put in place to help after reunification. In addition, categorizing this as a candidacy reason will allow for some children to return home earlier than they traditionally could by opening up an avenue to provide intensive in-home services.
- 12) A sibling is in foster care - If there is a safety factor that caused the removal of one child, this indicates the remaining children may be at greater risk of coming into care.



- 13) The parent or caregiver was in foster care as a child - While this is not data that DCFS has traditionally tracked, a pull from SFY 2018 showed that approximately 8% of children who were removed had a parent who was in foster care at some point during their childhood.<sup>23</sup> This designation also allows us to continue serving youth that have left care at either 18 or 21 with a child.
- 14) Failure to Thrive (FTT) – Failure to thrive is a clinical term used by pediatric clinicians to describe infants and young children, generally three years of age and younger, who fail to grow as expected based on established growth standards for age and gender. FTT can trigger an array of health problems including long-term impairments in growth, physical and cognitive development, and other problems. While FTT can have organic causes, for the hotline to accept a report of FTT the reporter must have reason to believe that the child has FTT as a result of the parent's or caretaker's neglect. For a report to be determined true, the diagnosis of FTT must be verified by a physician and there must be a preponderance of evidence that the diagnosis is at least partially a result of the parent's or caretaker's failure to provide for the needs of the child.<sup>24</sup> Due to the serious potential outcomes and the vulnerability of this population, Arkansas has determined it appropriate to include in our definition of candidacy.
- 15) Medical Neglect for a child 5 and under – Arkansas defines medical neglect as a lack of medical or mental health treatment for a condition that could cause serious or long-term harm to the child if left untreated, this includes lack of follow through with a prescribed treatment plan. These allegations must be verified by a physician, nurse, psychologist, dentist, or by direct admission from the alleged offender. Due to the serious or long-term harm to the child and the vulnerability of this age group, DCFS has determined that this child will be a candidate.
- 16) Inadequate Supervision for a child 5 and under – Inadequate supervision is defined as a parent or caretaker failing to supervise a child resulting in the child being left alone or in an inappropriate circumstance that creates a dangerous situation that puts the child at risk of harm. For DCFS to find true for inadequate supervision there must be a preponderance of evidence that inadequate supervision occurred and that it was a result of the parent or caretaker's neglect. Due to the vulnerability of children under the age of 5 DCFS is including this in our definition of candidacy so that we can serve these children in their home and prevent removal or serious harm.
- 17) Domestic Violence is a risk factor – Under the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act, Domestic Violence is not listed as child abuse. However, the link between domestic violence and child abuse is strong and is a complicating factor for our families. DCFS recognized that workers need more support in assessing for domestic violence and working with families where DV has occurred. DCFS is working on ways to increase workers knowledge of DV and increase appropriate services for this population.

#### **b. Identifying and Reassessing Candidacy**

FFSPA requires a prevention plan to be created for every child who is determined to be a candidate. The state is eligible for reimbursement for up to 12 months after a child is identified as a candidate in a prevention plan.<sup>25</sup>

DCFS created a FFPSA eligibility screen to ensure workers are correctly identifying children who are FFPSA eligible. This screen can be completed in an investigation or in a case and will be done on each child in the home ages 0 through 17. This screen will be mandatory in all investigations that end with opening a new case, reopening a closed case, or connecting to a new case. Once a child is designated

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<sup>23</sup> This information is limited in that data was only able to be pulled from Arkansas' DCFS and information is only reliable from approximately 2001 to current.

<sup>24</sup> Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act

<sup>25</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 671(e)(3)

as a candidate they remain a candidate for the length of the case, until 12 months has passed, or until the last day of the month in which the child turns 18. Therefore, this screen is only mandated to be completed once, but if a client is identified as a candidate and the case remains open past twelve months then candidacy will be end-dated, and the worker will receive an alert to complete this screen again, if necessary. While it is only mandatory at these times, a case worker may go in at any point during a case to complete this screen should changed circumstances then qualify a child as a foster care candidate. For example, this may occur when a child has been in foster care and returns home and a case remains open. Another example might be if three months into a case a protection plan must be put in place. This screen will also capture if a youth is FFPSA eligible due to being a youth in foster care who is pregnant or parenting, which adults in the family are eligible because they are a parent or caregiver of a candidate, and where a youth was residing at the time they were identified as a candidate.<sup>26</sup>

### **c. Connecting Candidacy to Appropriate EBP**

Once FFPSA eligibility (either through candidacy or as a pregnant or parenting foster youth) is established, a Prevention Plan will be accessible to complete in CHRIS.<sup>27</sup> While eligibility is determined separately and must be completed on each child, the Prevention Plan will be a family plan that only identifies those children and parents or caregivers who are eligible. While a small timeframe is allowable between identifying someone as eligible and completing the Prevention Plan screen, once the first prevention plan is completed, it will auto-populate a creation date of the date eligibility was approved.<sup>28</sup> The worker will be able to choose each client that is FFSPA eligible and pick a FFSPA-eligible service. At the appropriate time, the worker will put the begin date, the end-date, and whether or not the service was successfully completed. There is also a mandatory text box for the worker to state why this particular intervention was chosen and any pertinent notes. For pregnant and parenting foster youth, the worker will choose a service that will help ensure the youth is prepared or able to parent and describe in the narrative section the foster care prevention strategy for any child born to the youth. This screen can be updated at any time but will be mandatory to update with the case plan, every three months.

As discussed in section c of the Forward, Arkansas is aware that we will have eligible clients where no appropriate FFSPA eligible service is available, either because none of the FFSPA services in our plan are available in that county, or because none of the identified services are appropriate to meet the needs of the family at that time. There is a box on the prevention plan screen for a worker to check that states, “No Family First Eligible Services at this time.” The text box will still be mandatory.

This prevention plan will print along with the case plan that address all other services. Workers will not be expected to duplicate services from the prevention plan into the case plan, but rather the services in the prevention plan and the case plan should work in tandem. By allowing prevention plans to be completed on all FFSPA eligible clients even when a FFSPA service is not available, it will allow DCFS to identify what populations we are underserving and where to focus our attention when looking for new services or expanding services into other areas.

In addition to candidacy, most of the FFSPA services have specific eligibility requirements. These requirements are detailed in section II Title IV-E Prevention Services. DCFS staff will be trained through

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix B for a mockup of the current screen. Details may change prior to Oct. 1, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix B for a mockup of the current screen. Details may change prior to Oct. 1, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> This is because the ACT states eligibility for reimbursement starts the day a client is determined to be a candidate in a prevention plan, even though the date someone is identified and the date a prevention plan is created may not be the same date.

in-person and on-line trainings on FFSPA services and eligibility requirements as described in sections VII and VIII of this plan. By the end of the second year of FFSPA implementation, DCFS will have a flow chart available to help workers and supervisors ask the appropriate questions when looking for FFSPA eligible services. This flow chart, which will be updated as new services become available, will be developed from the established program eligibility guidelines, information gathered from the evaluation, and from input from providers across the FFSPA services spectrum.

**d. Reassessing Candidacy Definition Through Life of Family First**

DCFS recognizes that our Child Welfare System is constantly changing and evolving. With that in mind it is reasonable to expect that the current definition of candidacy is not set in stone, but rather should evolve along with the needs of DCFS and the families we serve. Throughout the first five years of implementation, DCFS will actively seek feedback from partners, providers, and parents, while also analyzing data to make changes to candidacy as needed.

## IV. Monitoring Child Safety and Risk

### *Pre-Print Section 3*

DCFS policy requires FSWs to assess and address risk and safety concerns for all children receiving services. As part of the root cause analysis completed for the CFSR, it was determined that assessing and addressing risk and safety concerns continues to be an area where Arkansas struggles. Round 3 of the CFSR found that lack of ongoing risk assessments is a greater problem in in-home cases than in foster care; however, steady improvements have been made in SFY 2018 and the first half of SFY2019. Improvements can be attributed to additional staff positions, strategies to decrease staff turnover, and a focus on prevention work.

Arkansas's current risk assessment tool was adapted from SDM and is a double-stream abuse/neglect assessment. This risk assessment tool must be used in an investigation with a true finding. Our current policy reflects that the risk assessment should be used to inform case opening and closing decisions, however, since unsubstantiated investigations do not require a risk assessment be completed, in practice this does not factor into case opening decisions. Cases are currently opened based on either a true finding or a safety factor. Unsubstantiated investigations do not result in a case opening even in families where there is substantial risk for future maltreatment without intervention unless the family voluntarily requests services. In addition, DCFS currently has one risk assessment tool to be used at all stages of involvement with the family. Arkansas is actively addressing this in our work with NCCD.

Efforts are in place to improve training, support, and the tools used for assessing risk and safety. For example, DCFS requested assistance from Casey Family Programs and the NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC) to help in assessing and remedying potential obstacles to effectively assessing and addressing risk and safety in our practice. Work began in 2018, with CRC initially focusing on understanding existing practice and tools through two primary activities: an offsite review of policy and key informant interviews. DCFS is using implementation science to implement Safety Organized Practice and Structured Decision Making over a five-year period (see Arkansas's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan – still pending approval – and 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan – also still pending approval – for more details regarding the work with NCCD. Further information regarding the implementation process is in section VIII Child Welfare Workforce Training.

NCCD (CRC) is working with DCFS to create validated assessment tools that are specific to stages of a case. These include an intake assessment, safety assessment, risk assessment, case planning tool, reunification assessment, and risk reassessment as follows:

- 1) Intake assessment – This assessment has two components: screening and response priority. These components are used to help the hotline worker determine if a CPS response is needed, based on local legal and regulatory requirements, and if they should be a Priority 1, Priority 2, or D.R. assignment. At this time, CACD is in agreement with implementing this tool.
- 2) Safety assessment – This assessment provides a structure for assessing the presence of immediate danger to a child. Workers will use this guide as a support in making decisions about whether a child may remain in the home with no intervention, may remain in the home with a protection plan in place, or must be taken into protective custody. Use of this tool will help to provide consistency in decision making across the state. This tool is to be documented with 24 hours of first contact with the victim or identified children, when there is a change in family conditions, if there is a change in the initial safety decision, and when a recommendation is made to close an in-home case.
- 3) Risk assessment – This is an actuarial assessment that looks at a range of family characteristics including number of prior referrals, children’s ages, and caregiver behaviors that demonstrate a strong correlation with subsequent child abuse and neglect referrals to classify families by their likelihood of future involvement with the system. This risk assessment classifies families in low, moderate, high, and intensive risk levels. Workers will use this guide as a support in making decisions about case opening and intensity of services.
- 4) Case planning tool – This was formerly known as the family strengths and needs assessment. This tool provides a reference to ensure that all workers consider each family’s strengths and needs in a clear, consistent manner and helps identify priority areas to address in the case plan.
- 5) Reunification assessment – This tool is used when at least one child is in out-of-home care. This tool helps ensure that local and federal policy regarding reunification, permanency planning, and termination of parental rights are effectively translated into practice. The presumptive guidelines behind this tool are based on risk of future maltreatment, demonstrated parenting interest and involvement in their children’s lives, and safety of the home environment.
- 6) Risk reassessment – This tool is used for in-home cases and is used at regular intervals (i.e., every 90 days). This tool helps guide a worker in making decisions regarding whether a case should remain open; and if so, at what level or intensity of services.

Due to the transition to a CCWIS system taking several years, CRC is hosting these tools in their data collection system. The current plan is that as the CCWIS system is being built they will be integrated into our new system. These tools will help improve consistency and accuracy in assessing and addressing risk and safety.

In addition, current policy requires the FSW to make face to face home visits weekly for the first thirty days. These visits can move to biweekly or monthly with a waiver after the first month. During these visits, the FSW is to talk privately with each child and caregiver, as well as observe the home and family interaction. In addition to the formal assessments, FSWs are to informally assess for risk and safety during each interaction with a family. With implementation of SDM and SOP, policy will be aligned to ensure required visits match the level and intensity of service recommended by the SDM tools.

DCFS is currently using the FAST as our assessment/case planning tool for in-home cases. Per policy the FAST is updated every three months at which time the case plan is also updated. As the prevention plan is an addendum to the case plan it will also be updated at this time. This provides for a reexamination of the prevention plan and whether or not the risk of the child entering care remains high despite the provision of services or programs. These frequent updates allow for the worker and family to

assess if the current services are still appropriate, if additional supports should be put in place to help the family succeed, or if an altogether new strategy is needed. Should DCFS switch tools in the future, they will still be updated every three months per policy.

## V. Evaluation Strategy and Waiver Request

### *Pre-Print Section 2*

The Family First Services and Prevention Act requires that each program listed in a State's Five-Year Title IV-E Prevention Program Plan have a well-designed and rigorous evaluation strategy, unless granted a waiver from HHS. HHS may waive this requirement if they deem the evidence of the effectiveness of the practice to be profound and the state to meet the continuous quality improvement standard regarding the practice.<sup>29</sup> See Appendix C, Attachment II for the two services which Arkansas is requesting an evaluation waiver.

DCFS has contracted with an independent evaluator to conduct a well-designed and rigorous evaluation of all programs listed under our initial In-Home Parenting strategies. This includes SafeCare, each Intensive In-Home Services (IIHS) program, Intensive Family Services (IFS - although, IFS will not be included in the evaluation until SFY2021, and Nurturing Parenting Program/Nurturing Families of Arkansas (NPP/NFA). The major objectives of this evaluation are to determine if each service is successful in reducing the removal of children into foster care, reducing maltreatment and subsequent maltreatment, and reducing future involvement with the child welfare system while improving child safety, permanency, and well-being. The evaluation also aims to help the Division in implementation efforts and in determining which clients are most appropriate for which service. This last objective is important in that it will help to create tools to guide our staff in making service delivery decisions and in creating best practice guidelines. Furthermore, the evaluation will help DCFS in planning for both the expansion of existing services and the direction to take in implementing new services. The latter will be accomplished by identifying characteristics of those not being successfully served by these programs. As implementation expands more programs will be added to the evaluation strategy either through an amendment to the current contract or through an additional procurement process.

Due to the nature of our service provision of substance abuse and counseling, a rigorous evaluation is not feasible or cost effective. There are hundreds of providers, small sample sizes, and no feasibly logistical way to create control or comparison groups with the population DCFS serves. However, mental health treatment modalities have a plethora of research and evidence behind them. Therefore, Arkansas is requesting a waiver for those services listed in our prevention plan that are already documented as well-supported on the Federal Clearinghouse or have enough evidence that Arkansas is confident they will be listed as well-supported once they are reviewed and qualify for transitional payments.<sup>30</sup>

See Table 6 for which services will be formally evaluated, which we are requesting waivers for, and when evaluation will start. Information in Table 5 assumes waiver approval for transitional payments until rated on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and assumes implementation of service occurs on schedule. Adjustments will be made accordingly.

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<sup>29</sup> ACYF-CB-IM-18-02: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1802.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> ACYF-CB-19--6

**Table 6 Evaluation Type**

| Interventions                        | Category          | CQI (evaluation Waiver) | Formal Contracted Evaluation | Title IV-E Clearinghouse Rating (Designated(D)/Anticipated(A)) | Start Date of Evaluation and reimbursement claimability |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| SafeCare                             | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | Oct. 1, 2019  |
| Nurturing Families of Arkansas (NPP) | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Supported (A)  | Oct. 1, 2019  |
| Intercept                            | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Promising (A)  | Oct. 1, 2019  |
| Family Centered Treatment            | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | Oct. 1, 2019  |
| Strengthening Families               | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | Oct. 1, 2019  |
| Home Builders                        | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | July 1, 2020  |
| Teaching Family Model                | In-Home Parenting |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | July 1, 2020  |
| TF-CBT                               | Mental Health     |                         | ✓                            | Promising (D)  | To be determined  |
| PCIT                                 | Mental Health     | ✓                       |                              | Well-Supported (D)   | Jan. 1, 2020  |
| CPT                                  | Mental Health     | ✓                       |                              | Well-Supported (A)   | Jan. 1, 2020  |
| Child Parent Psychotherapy           | Mental Health     | ✓                       |                              | Well-Supported (A)   | Jan. 1, 2020  |
| Functional Family Therapy            | Mental Health     |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (D)   | To be determined  |
| Arkansas Cares                       | Substance Abuse   |                         | ✓                            | Promising (A)  | To be determined  |
| MI (DCFS Staff)                      | Substance Abuse   |                         | ✓                            | Well-Supported (A)   | To be determined  |

DCFS is committed to continuous quality improvement through contract monitoring. Each contract is overseen by a program manager or an Assistant Director. SafeCare, Intensive In-Home Services (IIHS), IFS, and NFA are all monitored by the In-Home Program Manager. Through initial implementation of Intensive In-Home Services, monthly meetings with the providers are held to discuss implementation Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan | August 2019

barriers and successes. Feedback from field staff is incorporated into these monthly meetings. Providers must also submit a certification of compliance each month along with a monthly report. The information provided in the monthly report is changed as needed to ensure the right information is being reported. Along with the monthly reports, each IHS provider must submit semiannual and annual reports on the outcomes they are achieving. Regular provider meetings are also held with SafeCare, IFS, and NFA: NFA is a monthly meeting; SafeCare is every other month, and IFS is every quarter. All counseling contracts are monitored by the DCFS Assistant Director of Mental Health. Our Substance Abuse contracts are monitored by the DCFS TDM Program Manager. DCFS is receiving technical assistance from Chapin Hall to implement performance-based contracting for our Therapeutic Foster Care contracts. DCFS will evaluate and should it have positive outcomes will work to move all contracts to performance-based contracting.

## VI. Prevention Caseloads

### *Pre-Print Section 7*

DCFS does not have a set ratio of cases by type for frontline case workers. Arkansas is a very rural state, with 42% of our population residing in a rural county; this is a stark comparison to the national profile of only 15% of the population living in a rural area. In rural counties, there is a limited number of staff because positions are assigned based on the need (i.e., number of cases in a county). Due to these dynamics, the structure of each DCFS office varies by county. Some county offices have FSWs that work investigations, foster care, and in-home cases, where others have designated investigation units and units with mixed caseloads of foster care and in-home, while others still, have designated staff for each role.

DCFS' current goal is to maintain caseloads at 20 or under. In SFY2018, the statewide average has ranged from a low of 18.7 in June 2019 to a high of 23.4 in Oct. 2018. For the past two years, statewide average caseloads have peaked in October with somewhat steady decreases until a low during June, July, and August. While caseload averages are slightly skewed by graduated caseloads, and some areas struggle with caseload sizes much more (e.g., within SFY2018, Area 1 had an average high of 39 and an average low of 25.2, whereas Area 10 had a high of 17.3 and a low of 15), DCFS has still made great strides in lowering caseload sizes in the last three years. In 2016, the average statewide caseload was 28, with six counties averaging caseloads above 40 and three above 50. As of June 2019, the statewide average was 18.7, no county had an average caseload size above 40, and 80% of the state had average caseloads 25 and below.

Caseloads are monitored at the unit, county, area, and statewide level through reports generated from NCCD. In addition, the Community Services Unit monitors to ensure graduated case load guidelines are being followed.<sup>31</sup>

DCFS has also partnered with NCCD (CRC) to implement SafeMeasures (see Arkansas's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Goal 4, Strategy 10). While SafeMeasures is a case management tool helping workers manage their workflow, it also allows real time data from the worker level to the statewide level. SafeMeasures allows supervisors and county supervisors to more easily monitor caseload sizes on a day to day basis.

Over the last three years, DCFS has implemented strategies to address caseload size and retention, and while great strides have been made, DCFS recognized that a more holistic approach was needed to help

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<sup>31</sup> DCFS implemented graduated caseloads in 2017 to ensure that new workers were assigned cases in a structured manner. Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan | August 2019

us achieve our goals in a sustainable manner. As part of this effort, DCFS applied for and received a grant from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) to be a NCWWI Workforce Excellence site in partnership with the University of Arkansas (UA) at Little Rock School of Social Work (see Arkansas 2020-2024 CFSP Goal 4, Strategy 11). In addition, DCFS is exploring using SDM risk assessments to weight PS and SS cases to help supervisors make better decisions when assigning cases and to elevate the importance of in-home cases.

Along with monitoring DCFS caseloads, our contracts with our In-Home Parenting EBPs include limitations on case load sizes. SafeCare staff have a full caseload at 12 families and can have no more than 15 (note that for SafeCare each caregiver in the home is counted as a separate case to align with the other Home Visiting Programs). All Intensive In-Home Services (YVIntercept™, Strengthening Families, and Family Centered Treatment) may have no more than 5 cases per worker. Nurturing Families of Arkansas does not have a set number for a full-caseload, but rather use a work unit breakdown of direct service, time spent traveling to the family's homes, and the preparation work needed to determine when a worker has a full case load.

## VII. Child Welfare Workforce Support

### *Pre-Print Section 5*

The leadership at DCFS recognizes that the Division has several initiatives at this time (e.g., Structured Decision Making, Safety Organized Practice, restructuring Team Decision Making, the NCWWI Workforce Excellence grant, several new services including SafeCare and Intensive In-Home services, and implementing Family First). In the past, DCFS has struggled with presenting new initiatives in a cohesive way so that front line staff sees each piece as part of a whole and as integral to their work. This has resulted in inconsistency in implementation and a workforce that sees new initiatives as another checkbox instead of as a framework in which to do their job well. DCFS leadership has learned from this experience and is mitigating that with the following steps.

First, DCFS is holding a series of Zoom meetings called “Family First Fits Us” to discuss what Family First is, how it aligns with our value that every child in Arkansas deserves a safe, stable, and nurturing family every day, and to inform staff of Arkansas’s intent to implement Family First on Oct. 1, 2019. These are high level overviews and will be followed up by in person trainings for each area on the specifics of how to assess for eligibility, how to complete a prevention plan, and how to choose an appropriate evidence-based practice if available. There will also be follow up trainings for the changes occurring in foster care placements. DCFS will continue to utilize Zoom meetings for updates and coaching sessions on candidacy, prevention plans, and EBPs.

In addition to the “Family First Fits Us” series, DCFS is creating a “brand” for the In-Home program including naming it “Stronger Together” and creating a website for front line staff. This website is purposefully designed to show a cohesive vision of the In-Home program and to help staff connect how Structured Decision Making, Safety Organized Practice, each chosen evidence-based practice, etc. all fit together. This will also be a place for staff to share success stories, look for resources, and give feedback regarding candidacy, prevention plans, and programs.

Traditionally, when new services are added, “Kick-Offs” are held to introduce the new service and provider to staff. When appropriate, “kick-offs” will be held when new Family First eligible services are added and become available in an area. DCFS has done “kick-offs” in each area as SafeCare and IIHS have rolled out. In addition, DCFS will implement “Service Cafés” in year two of implementation. These would serve to introduce staff to providers in their area and give them a chance to sit down and learn



more about the service and ask questions, as well as allow providers to have the same opportunity. At each “Service Café” a portion of the time would be spent on helping workers “connect the dots” on how these services fit into Family First either as a family first eligible service or as a support to the EBPs.

The work DCFS is doing in collaboration with NCCD and NCCWI is integral to the success of our In-Home program and Family First implementation. NCCD is providing the support necessary to write policy revisions, create validated assessment tools, train, and coach staff on how to implement the safety-organized practice model and SDM. These training and coaching efforts are vital to support practice change and use SDM to fidelity. NCCD will also be providing continuous quality improvement activities over the next five years. While the NCCWI grant will help DCFS in several ways, one important aspect will be the NCCWI Leadership Academy for supervisors and managers. DCFS acknowledges that the key to our success is quality supervision and as such this Leadership Academy will provide the needed support in improving the quality of front-line supervision in the state.

## VIII. Child Welfare Workforce Training

### *Pre-Print Section 6*

Building a strong workforce is a critical component in our efforts to build upon successes thus far in our system improvements. Making sure that our workers have the tools they need, giving them a manageable and equitable caseload, supporting and encouraging them, and ensuring the best legal support possible all combine to lead the way of our work in Phase three over the last year.

DCFS partners with MidSouth, the community service branch of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) School of Social Work, to provide new worker training for all Program Assistants (support role staff), Family Service Workers, and Supervisors. The Arkansas Academic Partnership in Public Child Welfare has nine IV-E university training partners, including UALR, that provide field training during the first year of employment for FSWs and supervisors as well as the quarterly in-service trainings mentioned in section VII. These trainings are to ensure that all front-line staff are competent, professional, trauma-informed, and have the skills necessary to do this work in a manner consistent with DCFS values. NCCD will be providing training and coaching for the implementation of SDM and SOP, which are foundational to accurately assessing risk and safety, over the course of implementation. Furthermore, these concepts as well as candidacy, prevention planning, and EBPs will be written into the curriculum for ongoing training of new FSWs.

DCFS caseworkers are hired as generalist family service workers and are expected to be able to perform all duties associated with front line casework. DCFS has a hybrid training model of online (self-directed) training, field training (as mentioned above). New FSWs participate in a five-week foundational training provided by Mid-South that addresses the Division’s Practice Model, trauma-informed child welfare practice, the dynamics of maltreatment, and assessments (CANS/FAST). In addition, all FSWs attend week-long concentration trainings through Mid-South in the areas of investigations, in-home cases, and foster care. While D.R. is touched upon in new family service worker training, a separate training provided by the D.R. Program Manager and Specialist specifically for D.R. is mandatory for any worker assigned to D.R.

A Worker Readiness Assessment Meeting (WRAM) is held after an employee has worked for 8 months. At this time the FSW, field trainer, and FSW supervisor review the FSW’s training status and develop a plan for training activities needed in the remaining four months of the worker’s first year of employment. Information from the WRAM is also used to help the supervisor guide the individual assessment,

completed at the 9-month mark, that determines whether the FSW is ready to complete the graduated caseloads and receive a full caseload.

DCFS also has a mandatory trauma training each year in addition to quarterly trainings for continuing education. Topics covered by Quarterly training vary by each Area. During the first year of Family First, DCFS will ensure alignment of Family First values with the approved topics while assessing the need for additional trainings. This will be a continuous process based on continued implementation needs and feedback from staff, providers, parents, and other stakeholders.

For more information regarding child welfare workforce training, please see the state's 2020-2024 State Training Plan (Attachment H of Arkansas's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan).

## IX. Consultation and Coordination

### *Pre-Print Section 4*

DCFS is committed to ensuring community engagement and stakeholder input in the implementation and expansion of Family First. In the recent past, DCFS conducted 44 focus groups across the state with stakeholders as part of its Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Statewide Assessment and, as part of its root cause analysis efforts related to the CFSR Program Improvement Plan development, these additional focus groups were held: ten with front line workers and supervisors, one with Area Directors, three with agency attorneys, and three with legal stakeholders including judges, parent counsel, and attorney's ad litem, one with Youth Advisory Board, and one with the Parent Advisory Council. Although not directly tied to Family First implementation, the feedback from these focus groups helped inform planning for Family First implementation.

The Division also held Family First Provider meetings with providers from across the state that serve DCFS clients, through foster care services and in-home services, to discuss the Family First Prevention Services Act and what it means for Arkansas families and for them. These meetings were to discuss services already in place, RFQs and RFPs being issued, and to elicit feedback from them regarding the direction DCFS is taking. The Assistant Director of Placement Support and Community Outreach, along with others in her unit, had one-on-one phone calls with placement providers to help them work through what FFPSA would mean for their facilities to help them to transition into FFPSA compliant models. DCFS also presented at the Children in the Courts Conference on Family First, which engaged the legal community, including judges, attorneys ad litem, parent counsel, and agency attorneys.

In June of 2018, the Division started the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). This council is made up of parents who have been involved with DCFS either through an investigation, a protective services case, a D.R., or have had their children placed in foster care. The PAC gave feedback and approval on our definition of candidacy and will continue to be involved in providing feedback and helping shape the direction of our in-home services.<sup>32</sup> In conjunction with the work the PAC will do as its own council, they will also be represented in workgroups and will eventually assist in trainings and messaging efforts.

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<sup>32</sup> Several of our PAC members completed NFA and wish for the Division to expand access to NFA. Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan | August 2019

The Division and ARBest have collaborated in the past and are interested in collaborating again on the effort to increase access to trauma-informed therapy for adults. As discussed in section II, ARBest's mission is to build a trauma-informed mental health system. They are best known for providing training for mental health professionals in trauma-informed therapeutic modalities. They have done significant work in training therapists across the state in TF-CBT and other trauma informed therapy for children and families. ARBest is now looking at training clinicians in trauma treatment for adults.

Going forward, the Division is implementing quarterly meetings with stakeholders and other divisions within the State, such as Medicaid, and the Division of Aging and Behavioral Health Services, in order to guide our efforts in creating a continuum of care for families receiving prevention services. The Division is also creating an email for provider feedback and sharing of ideas.

For more information on the Division's overall collaboration efforts, to include Family First implementation, please see the Collaboration Section of Arkansas's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan.

## X. Assurance on Prevention Program Reporting

### *Pre-Print Section 8*

Arkansas provides such assurances that the state will report to the Secretary such information and data as the Secretary may require with respect to the provision title IV-E prevention programs and services, including information and data necessary to determine the performance measures.<sup>33</sup> **See Appendix A – Attachment I.**

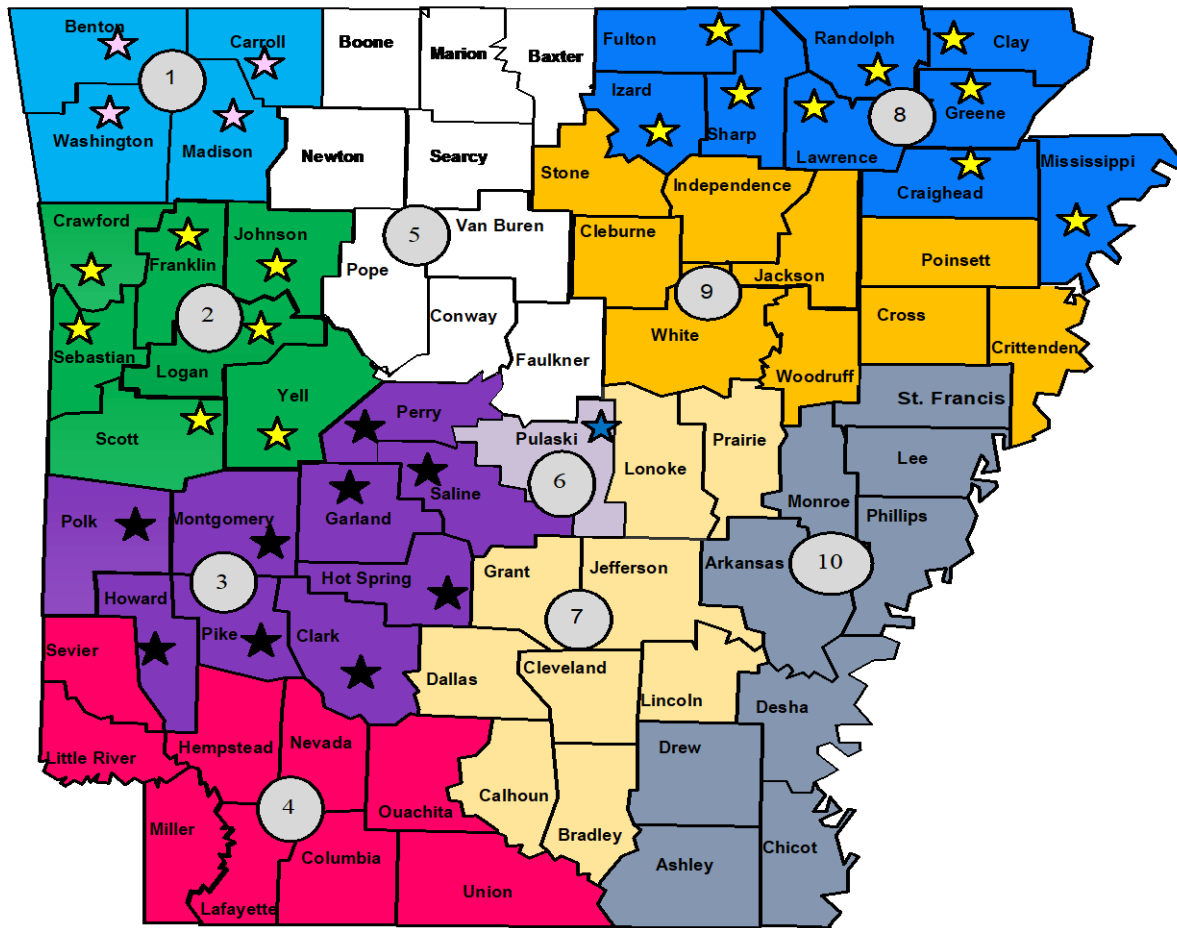
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<sup>33</sup> Family First Services and Prevention Act, Section 471(e)(5)(B)(x)  
Arkansas Title IV-E Prevention Program Five-Year Plan | August 2019



## Appendix A: Service Coverage Maps

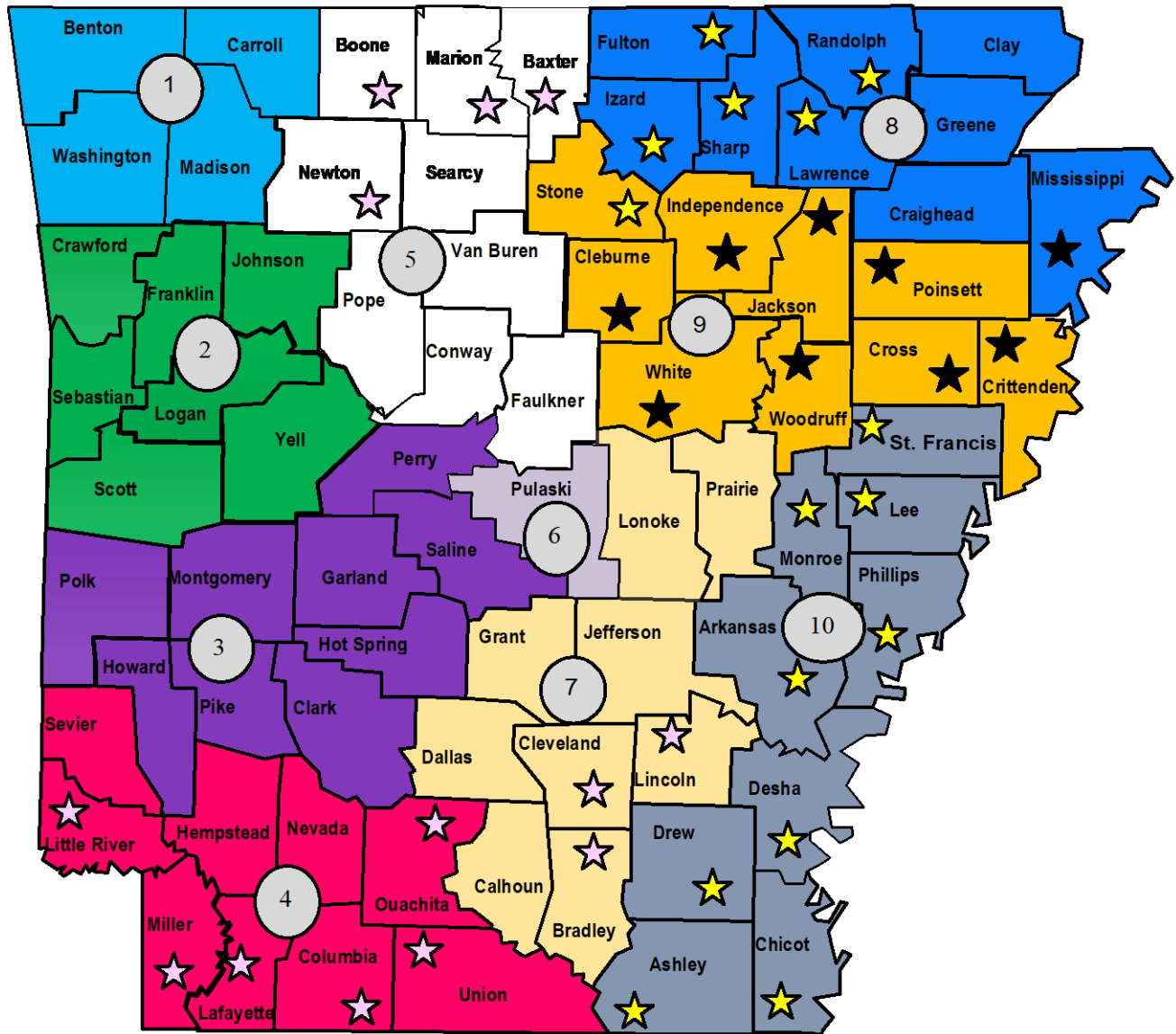
### SafeCare – Coverage and Rollout Schedule 2019



#### KEY

| Area | Local Implementing Agency                | Rollout Schedule | Area | Local Implementing Agency    | Rollout Schedule |
|------|--|------------------|------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1    | EOA of Washington County                 | Active           | 6    | Arkansas Children's Hospital | Active           |
| 2    | Western Arkansas Guidance and Counseling | Active           | 7    | TBD                          | Dec.             |
| 3    | Compact                                  | Active           | 8    | Mid-South Health Systems     | Active           |
| 4    | Not yet announced                        | Sept./Oct.       | 9    | Not yet announced            | Aug./Sept.       |
| 5    | Not yet announced                        | Aug./Sept.       | 10   | Not yet announced            | Sept./Oct.       |

**Appendix A: Service Coverage Maps**  
**Intensive In-Home– Coverage 2019**



**KEY**

| Provider               | DCFS Areas/Counties  |
|------------------------|--|
| Youth Advocate Program | Area 4: Little River, Miller, Lafayette, Columbia, Ouachita, Union; Area 5: Bradley, Cleveland, Lincoln; Area 7: Boone, Newton, Marion, Baxter |
| Youth Villages         | Area 9: Crittenden, Cross, Poinsett, Woodruff, Jackson, White, Cleburne, Independence; Area 8: Mississippi                                     |
| St. Francis            | Area 8: Fulton, IZard, Sharp, Randolph, Lawrence; Area 9: Stone  |

# Appendix B: Eligibility and Prevention Plan Mock Ups

## Family First Eligibility screen

CHRIS (Refresh) Version User Name: Garrison, Nellena Staff ID: 1317

File Edit Functions Tools Help

Home Workload Ref. Log Inbox Supervisor Org Provider Volunteer Training Diff. Resp. Search Clint List Ticklers NYTD CHRIS Net MidSOUTH Edoctus

Workload Fam. First FF Elig. FF Elig.

Family First Eligibility Information - MILLER - Carnahan, Charles

**Family First Eligibility Details**

| Begin Date Eligibility | End Date Eligibility | Client ID | Client Name       | Refer ID | Refer Date | Case ID  | Case Open Date | Assess Date | Re-A |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------|------------|----------|----------------|-------------|------|
|                        |                      | 5548919   | Carnahan, Charles |          |            | 22561853 | 08/24/2018     | 07/31/2019  |      |

Total Eligibility Checklist Count: 1

Unable to Locate Assess Date: 07/31/2019 Time: 8:08  A.M  P.M

Begin date of eligibility: End Date of eligibility: Re-Assess Due Date:

**In Home Candidacy Details**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. A Protection Plan is in place <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No                                | 7. A Less than Custody has been filed <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No   |
| 2. A TDM was held and did not result in removal <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No                 | 8. A 30-day petition has been filed <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No   |
| 3. A Garrett's Law Investigation(alleged victim)/Sibling <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No        | 9. Child is living with a relative/caregiver (THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE PROVISIONAL FC) <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 4. High or Intensive Risk Assessment <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No                            | 10. CACD made a 'true finding' and there is an in-home offender or unknown offender <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 5. Risk of Adoption/Guardianship disruption <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No                     | 11. Reunification has occurred, and the case is still open <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No                          |
| 6. SS Case open to prevent removal or relinquishment of custody <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |  |

**Candidacy Decision:**

FFPSA IV-E Eligible - Client is a candidate:

FFPSA IV-E Non-Eligible - Client is not a candidate:

**Parent and/or Caregiver (FFPSA Eligible) - Participants**

| Name           | Client ID | Relationship        |
|----------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Carnahan, Adam | 5173566   | Father (Biological) |

**FC Youth Details**

FC Youth is pregnant or Parenting a FC Youth  Yes  No FFPSA Eligible?

**Living Arrangements on Client General Information Screen**

Living Arrangements: Relative Home

Caretaker Name: Cortney Turner

Relationship: Aunt (Paternal)

Buttons: Add, Change, Clear, Request..., Help, Cancel





# Appendix B: Eligibility and Prevention Plan Mock Ups

## Prevention Plan Screen

Prevention Plan - [Redacted] - New

**Prevention Plan**

Family Prevention Plan Creation Date: 07/22/2019


**Prevention Plan Service(s)**

| Client Name | Service Type | Begin Date | End Date | Service Successfully Completed |
|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|--------------------------------|
|             |              |            |          |                                |

No Family First Eligibility Services at this time Verified Data

Prevention Plan Comments:

Last Updated By: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Updated Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_





### **Appendix C: Attachments**

Please see the following Attachments (provided in separate files) included within this plan:

ATTACHMENT I: State Title IV-E prevention program reporting assurance

ATTACHMENT II: State request for waiver of evaluation requirement for a well-supported practice

ATTACHMENT III: State assurance of trauma-informed service-delivery

ATTACHMENT IV: State annual maintenance of effort (MOE) report