

Family First Prevention Services Act

PL 115-123

Stakeholder Informational Meeting Highlights

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was signed into law as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act on February 9, 2018. This act reforms the federal child welfare financing streams, Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, to provide services to families who are at risk of entering the child welfare system.

North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS) is responsible to implement the federal regulations resulting from FFPSA, manage the Title IV-E State Plan, and administer funding to support these efforts. The department will host Stakeholder Informational Meetings the 3rd Wednesday of each month during 2019. The purpose of the monthly meetings is to engage with Stakeholders and inform on progress, while soliciting feedback and comments related to FFPSA implementation.

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| DATE | February 20, 2019 |
| FACILITATORS | Tracy Miller, Administrator – NDDHS-CFS Division Sue Grundysen, Lutheran Social Services |
| TOPIC | Kinship Navigator Program (ACYF-CB-PI-18-11) |

NOTE: We did not discuss FFPSA prevention activities in depth today because we are still waiting on federal guidance regarding approved evidence-based programs. The Administration of Children and Families (ACF) expects to release this guidance in April 2019. Once guidance is received DHS will convene a subcommittee to build our prevention plan. Therefore, we will update at a future Stakeholder Informational Meeting.

Critical distinction = The intent of FFPSA Prevention Plan is to **PREVENT FOSTER CARE**. It is important to make this distinction because the term “prevention” includes many different interpretations.

Link to the federal Kinship Navigator Program Instruction (PI):

<https://familyfirstact.org/sites/default/files/ACYF-CB-PI-18-11%20Title%20IVE%20Kinship%20Navigator%20Programs%20.pdf>

Highlights of the Kinship Navigator Program:

- In July 2018 ND DHS applied for federal funding to develop a Kinship Navigator Program. The funding was received by the state in September 2018. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued and the contract was given to Lutheran Social Services (LSS). Contract timeframe is November 15, 2018-September 30, 2019. The contract is for **program model development only**.
- Our goal is for the ND Kinship Navigator Program model to have the highest level of evidence (i.e. well-supported) so that we can draw down federal IV-E dollars, which would cover 50% of the allowable costs. Currently there are two well-supported models in the country (New Jersey and Florida).
- Federal requirements of the Kinship Navigator Program:
 1. The kinship navigator program needs to assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and

their own needs, and to promote effective partnerships among private and public agencies to ensure kinship caregiver families are served, which program—

- a. shall be coordinated with other State or local agencies that promote service coordination or provide information and referral services, including the entities that provide 2–1–1 or 3–1–1 information systems where available, to avoid duplication or fragmentation of services to kinship care families;
- b. shall be planned and operated in consultation with kinship caregivers and organizations representing them, youth raised by kinship caregivers, relevant government agencies, and relevant community-based or faith-based organizations;
- c. shall establish information and referral systems that link (via toll-free access) kinship caregivers, kinship support group facilitators, and kinship service providers to—
 - (i) each other;
 - (ii) eligibility and enrollment information for Federal, State, and local benefits;
 - (iii) relevant training to assist kinship caregivers in caregiving and in obtaining benefits and services; and
 - (iv) relevant legal assistance and help in obtaining legal services;
- d. shall provide outreach to kinship care families, including by establishing, distributing, and updating a kinship care website, or other relevant guides or outreach materials;
- e. shall promote partnerships between public and private agencies, including schools, community based or faith-based organizations, and relevant government agencies, to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families and other individuals who are willing and able to be foster parents for children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who are themselves parents to promote better services for those families;
- f. may establish and support a kinship care ombudsman with authority to intervene and help kinship caregivers access services; and
- g. may support any other activities designed to assist kinship caregivers in obtaining benefits and services to improve their caregiving.”

2. There is no requirement that the child be determined to meet the definition of a foster care candidate to be eligible for kinship navigator services, which is different than what is required for other FFPSA prevention services.

3. The statute does not define “kinship caregiver” so the State can choose to serve such families as those headed by a grandparent or other relative as well as tribal kin, extended family and friends, or other ‘fictive kin’ who are caring for children. ND will determine their target population as the model is developed with LSS.

- LSS activity to date:

1. Researching the two evidence-based Kinship Navigator models – New Jersey and Florida.

- New Jersey Kinship Navigator model:

- In place for past 20 years;
- includes specific programming for both families NOT involved with the child welfare as well as those who ARE in child welfare; and
- provides both assessment and hands-on service delivery with caregiving families.

- Florida Kinship Navigator model:

- The kinship navigator attends every meeting where child removal is being considered (in ND, this would mirror our newly implemented Family Centered Engagement practice); and

- Involves a workforce consisting of many peer kinship navigators who meet with the family with an initial goal of assisting the caregivers in getting the child qualified for TANF so that they receive immediate financial assistance.
- Both models include:
 - Broad definition of “kinship caregiver”;
 - strong use of information & referral through websites, brochures, and other resource materials;
 - strong use of community networking to assist with such issues as legal questions, housing needs, etc.; and
 - data that shows when the kinship navigator supports the caregiving family up front, the placement remains more stable and the cost of caring for the child is lower.
2. Discussions with ND 2–1–1 to determine if that would be a viable collaboration.
 3. Plans to attend the Child Welfare League of America’s 2019 national conference April 9-13 in Washington D.C., in which Kinship Navigator programs will be discussed (it is anticipated that the federal government will issue a list of additional models that have reached a high level of evidence around that time).
 4. Convene upcoming Focus Groups in four ND communities (Jamestown, Grand Forks, Washburn, and Bismarck).
 - Goal is to generate conversation identifying needs and barriers for caregiving families
 - **PLEASE PROMOTE IN YOUR AREA!**
 - Two focus groups in each location (refer to **page 6** of this document for the schedule):
 - If you have questions or would like promotional materials contact Sue at sueg@lssnd.org

Q & A

Does the program allow for the kinship navigator to go out to the caregiving family’s home to work with them directly, or is it only a referral service?

The kinship navigator would be an advocate for the caregiving family. For example, the child goes with grandma and the kinship navigator would work with grandma to identify and address her needs.

Will there be certification or licensing requirements for the kinship navigator?

Depends on the model the state develops. For example, Florida has social workers as the lead worker assigned to the caregiving family along with a peer kinship caregiver who can deliver the services.

Will there be dollars that follow these staff and the families?

Yes – that could be part of the service array provided through the program. But sometimes its as simple as parenting skills, or how to obtain needed authority to get the child immunized or registered for school.

Is it envisioned that there would be one navigator position for all of North Dakota or regional navigators?

The goal is that kinship navigators are available to all kinship caregiving families regardless of where in ND they reside. This will depend on the available budget.

It seems this is much broader to include kids who are NOT in the [public child welfare] system. Are we in discussion with school districts, because it would make sense that there be kinship navigators in the schools? There are a lot of grandparents raising their grandchildren.

That's correct, but we need to understand that FFPSA's intent is prevention of foster care, so the focus needs to be on children who are defined as candidates for foster care. This would be good discussion for the upcoming focus groups so that we can get a sense of the numbers of situations such as you've described. We have reached out to school principals, social workers, and counselors in the cities where we'll be convening focus groups so that they can inform us on what they've seen. We can also invite the local foster care liaisons in each district – list is available through Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Anne Linden is the contact at DPI (alinden@nd.gov).

I have a 2-part question. 1) With this program is the intent or the goal to assist families that are not already in the system to help them maneuver kinship supports? 2) How are you defining kinship, and are there going to be funds available to a child who doesn't meet that 5th degree of rule for kinship TANF payment?

1) The target population hasn't been defined yet. It will be determined as part of the program development. Again, remember that the intent of the law is prevention of foster care. We also must work within the available resources given to this program. The budget is yet to be determined and will impact who we can serve. Remember 50% of the cost will have to come from the State, 50% will be reimbursed to the State through federal title IV-E dollars. Once we've developed the ND Kinship Navigator model, we still need to ensure we have the money set aside in our budget to implement the model. That budget is dependent upon what happens during the legislative session.

2) When a child has entered foster care there needs to be a valid court order stating the child is in public custody for the child to be eligible for the Kinship TANF payment through Economic Assistance. Eligibility for Kinship TANF is based on the income guidelines requirement. Kinship families who are providing care to a child NOT in public custody may be eligible for regular TANF, depending on income.

Is the State setting aside discretionary funds to pay for this program?

The Governor's budget was provided to the ND legislature; however, we were not given a detailed line-item budget to determine if funds were set aside for implementation of the Kinship Navigator program. The final decision regarding the DHS budget is still under consideration by the legislature so we won't know for certain until the session concludes.

Regarding your comment that you're waiting for the feds to give you the answers [of what will be included as evidence-based programs] – Is there an avenue by which states are able to push the feds to ensure particular practices/programs are included on the clearinghouse list?

We, as a State, responded to our federal partners with a list of current prevention programs we already have in place, and asked if any of them will be included on the clearinghouse list. Actually, every state was given this opportunity. So, we imagine they are combing through all these responses and will be slow to respond as a result. We believe this will not be a static list. Rather, we expect the list will continue to grow over time. Please understand that we have been corresponding with our regional ACF office, asking questions of them regarding FFPSA

interpretation and guidance. Part of the challenge is that these regional ACF offices are also waiting on guidance from the administrative office in Washington D.C.

Since they keep pushing back the date by which they will give you answers, do you foresee that October 1, 2019 implementation date changing?

There is no deadline for the state prevention plan submission, like there are for other portions of the law. But we can't draw down the federal title IV-E dollars until there is an approved state prevention plan.

In the New Jersey or the Florida model – if a long-term kinship arrangement has been established, does that lead to a guardianship, or durable power of attorney, or some type of a more permanent situation for the child?

Yes, sometimes that does result, and the kinship navigator's role then becomes support to determine the caregiver's need for connecting with legal services.

Two-part question: 1) When we talk about the TANF Kinship payment, those are for kids already in our custody, so is this more so for those situations where the children are with, say, grandma as a natural placement? 2) So those are the people I should refer to come to the focus groups?

1) That is correct. If you have a kinship family where there is no public custody, they could still apply for regular TANF and eligibility would be dependent upon their income.

2) Yes – please refer these caregivers to the focus groups.

NEXT MEETING:

March 20, 2018 1:00-2:00PM

Administrative Rules pertaining to FFPSA including:

Qualified Residential Treatment Programs

Supervised Independent Living Programs

Rate-Setting

Family Foster Home Licensing

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR - Focus Group Location/Schedule

| CITY | DATE | GROUP | LOCATION | TIME |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|--|-----------------|
| <i>Jamestown</i> | Thursday 2/28 | Professionals | Medallion Room/Legacy Living 419 5 th St NE, Jamestown | 11:30am-1:00pm |
| <i>Jamestown</i> | Thursday 2/28 | Kinship caregivers | Medallion Room/Legacy Living 419 5 th St NE, Jamestown | 6:00-8:00pm |
| <i>Grand Forks</i> | Friday 3/1 | Professionals | GFPC LSS 412 Demers Ave, Grand Forks | 11:00am-12:00pm |
| <i>Grand Forks</i> | Saturday 3/2 | Kinship caregivers | GFPC LSS 412 Demers Ave, Grand Forks | 10:00am-12:00pm |
| <i>Washburn</i> | Monday 3/4 | Professionals | Memorial Building 805 Main Ave, Washburn | 11:30am-1:00pm |
| <i>Washburn</i> | Monday 3/4 | Kinship caregivers | Memorial Building 805 Main Ave, Washburn | 6:00pm-8:00pm |
| <i>Bismarck</i> | Tuesday 3/5 | Professionals | LSS Conference Room 1616 Capitol Way, Bismarck | 11:30am-1:00pm |
| <i>Bismarck</i> | Tuesday 3/5 | Kinship caregivers | LSS Conference Room 1616 Capitol Way, Bismarck | 6:00-8:00pm |

More than 2.5 million children across the country are being raised by their grandparents and other relatives, both formally through the child welfare system and informally through private family arrangements. Here in ND, there are more than 300 children at any given time being cared for in such arrangements by kin.

The decision of parental relatives and friends to step up to the plate to care for these children is often a solution born out of difficult circumstances. Parental substance abuse & addiction, child maltreatment and neglect, struggles with mental health, poverty, ... and so on.

A traditional service approach may not meet the dynamic needs of these families, that often require a more multi-system coordination of care approach.

We recognize in putting together a model for service delivery there must be SYSTEM and SERVICE COLLABORATION, and the importance of building COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS. These families need information about available resources and services specific to their needs to enable greater stability for the child/children.

The goals in offering Kinship Navigator Services would be to three-fold:

- 1) Safety for the child.
- 2) Permanence – children in care with family have higher rates of reunification with biological family or in guardianship with the kinship care family.
- 3) Well-being – studies in Kinship care have shown Navigator Services were successful at meeting the needs of kincare families, thereby increasing overall well-being.

Lutheran Social Services, in partnership with the North Department of Human Services, is engaged in a project to gather information on both the needs and challenges associated with kinship care. We want

to hear about these experiences from those who know it best: kinship care givers as well as those professionals in the field who come into contact with them and the children they are helping to raise.