

Family First Act Supplement to the Diligent Recruitment Navigator

Purpose of this tool

This is a supplement to our full customizable Diligent Recruitment Navigator tool. It is designed to help your child welfare system develop or update your comprehensive diligent recruitment program in a way that incorporates your efforts to recruit, develop, and support foster, adoptive, and kinship families and that addresses your current priorities and areas of focus.

With the enactment of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018, child welfare systems are continuing to place increased emphasis on areas that relate to diligent recruitment efforts, including:

- Recruiting, developing, and supporting families for children and youth who will be transitioning out of congregate care and into family-based care
- Increasing the effective use of kinship care as a placement and permanency option for children in foster care
- Providing additional support to children, youth, and their birth or resource families through approved placement prevention services when the child or youth is at-risk of entry or re-entry into out-of-home placement*

Aligning with the structure of the Diligent Recruitment Navigator, this resource provides additional questions and recommendations for people to include in discussions you have through the lens of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.

Using this resource

As you use the full Diligent Recruitment Navigator (<https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/diligent-recruitment-navigator/>) to develop or update your diligent recruitment plan or pro-

* Provision of placement prevention services is an option within the Family First Act. States and eligible tribes can determine if they wish to implement this provision within the law.

gram, treat this resource as a companion piece. Add in the information from this publication to supplement and expand on the discussion questions to ensure that your planning and implementation for relevant elements of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 are incorporated into and aligned with your overall diligent recruitment efforts.

In your discussions, you may find it helpful to include staff with responsibility for leading or coordinating implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act within your child welfare system, in addition to the people suggested in the full Diligent Recruitment Navigator and the people suggested below.

Key considerations and tips

- Family First embodies a strong expectation of youth and family engagement throughout placement prevention services planning and as part of the therapeutic intervention from a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), specifically through the child or youth's family and permanency team during placement and post discharge.
- Family First affirms the critical importance of collaboration with the family and professionals. Particular emphasis is placed on informing and engaging the courts and including judicial partners' input and perspectives into planning and decision-making.

Scope of this resource

This resource does not address the specific requirements for diligent recruitment plans or for implementing requirements of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. Instead, it is designed to help you think about how some components of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and related areas of practice may connect with your diligent recruitment efforts. For any specific questions about policy guidance or implementation of your diligent recruitment plan, please see guidance from the Children's Bureau.

Diligent Recruitment Navigator elements—additional discussion questions

Procedures for consistently updating the characteristics of children in care utilizing information and analysis of AFCARS data and other data available to the state, region, or county

- How frequently do we update and review our data on the number of children in congregate care?
- Does our data on children in congregate care indicate details about when we expect to transition children to family settings? Do we have procedures for analyzing this data to help us understand our need for placement options as we transition children out of congregate care (e.g., number of children to be transitioned, desired geographic locations for placements)?

Additional people to include:

- Leadership from congregate care facilities
- Placement prevention services providers (as relevant)

Procedures for ongoing analysis of the current pool of available foster and adoptive placement resources

- How does our system provide training and tools to support the assessment of the child, youth, and family's need for placement prevention services?
- What expectations and support are in place to ensure collaboration to develop, implement, and support a child or youth's individual placement prevention plan?
- How do our procedures and practices provide for assessment and support of a family's ability to engage in the QRTP's family and permanency team?
- How do we maintain current information about our foster families' capacity to meet the needs of children stepping down from group care into family settings? Do we have consistent approaches for assessing how well we are preparing and supporting our foster families to be involved in children's transition from group care into the foster family's home?

Recruitment and development of homes that can accommodate siblings in care so siblings can be placed together or reunited when they have been separated in care

- What strategies do we have in place—or should we begin using—to help reunite siblings who were separated when at least one of the siblings was placed in group care and is moving to a family setting?
- What policies, procedures, and protocols are in place to support sibling participation in planning as part of the family and permanency team planning process?
- How do our collaborative structures and agreements ensure consistent partnering to identify or develop services post-QRTP discharge that support and strengthen reunification, including transition plans that support sibling connections?

Additional people to include:

- Leadership from units involved in placement decisions
- Former foster youth, including young adults who aged out of foster care

Recruitment of foster homes to ensure children and youth may be maintained in their schools when placed in foster care

- Do we provide guidance to staff about how to balance the priorities of keeping children in their school and of placing them with relatives?
- Do we have strategies for exploring options for keeping children in their schools even when placing them with kinship caregivers who don't live near the school?

Additional people to include:

- Leadership from units involved in placement decisions
- Leadership from the kinship unit (if applicable)

Procedures or processes to address barriers presented by the agency in order to increase the rate of retention of prospective foster and adoptive parents and to reduce the dropout rates

- Do we provide or have access to local Kinship Navigator services to potential kinship caregivers to help them move through the process of becoming licensed?
- How effective are we at supporting potential kinship caregivers in navigating the licensing process?

- Do we conduct systematic reviews of the barriers that potential kinship caregivers face (e.g., licensing standards, steps or timing in the approval process) to determine patterns and identify areas of improvement to help reduce the number of potential kinship caregivers who can be considered as placement options?

Additional people to include:

- Kinship Navigator program staff (if applicable)
- Staff involved in licensing kinship families

Procedures for providing training to prospective foster and adoptive parents regarding the characteristics, needs, and issues of children who have experienced trauma, as well as adoption clinical issues

- What training do we provide to prospective parents to help them understand and prepare for considerations for parenting children who are transitioning out of congregate care and into a family setting?
- Do we consistently get—and use—feedback from foster and adoptive parents about what kind of training we should provide to help prepare them for parenting children who are transitioning out of congregate care and into a family setting?
- What approaches do we use to train potential or new kinship caregivers? Does our training for kinship caregivers address the unique dynamics involved in kinship care (e.g., managing family dynamics, setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, navigating new roles as caregivers)? Does this training take a thoughtful approach to helping caregivers understand the impact of trauma while recognizing that it may be challenging for kinship caregivers to process the experiences of and results of trauma that have happened within their family?

Utilization of adoption exchanges, including adoptuskids.org and/or regional or local exchanges

- What are the implications, if any, of using an electronic interstate case-processing system to expedite interstate placements on how we will use photolistings and consider potential family matches in other states?

Procedures and processes to eliminate barriers to the interjurisdictional placement of children

- How are we complying, or preparing to comply, with the requirement to use an electronic interstate case-processing system to expedite interstate placements by October 1, 2027?
- What procedures and processes, including training and communication plans, do we need to put in place to ensure that staff know about this electronic system and how to use it to support timely interstate placements?
- If relevant based on our existing partnerships for state and tribal coordination on interstate placements, how are we including the appropriate state and tribal leaders in our planning for using an electronic interstate case-processing system?

Additional people to include

- Staff training unit leadership
- Leadership involved in any relevant tribal/state partnerships on interstate placement work

Training strategies for staff and community partners

- Do our training curricula provide information regarding assessment and provision of placement prevention services for children (and their families) who are at risk of entry or re-entry into out-of-home placement?
- How are we training staff at residential treatment centers and other group care facilities to be active partners who support effective transitions for children from group care to family settings?
 - Does the training provide specific information regarding the family and permanency team expectation for intervention planning and service delivery?
 - Does the training highlight information regarding the Family First expectation of six months of intervention and services post discharge from a QRTP?
- Is our training for staff, stakeholders, and other community partners sufficient for ensuring that everyone understands our approach and priority level for seeking kinship placements for children in foster care?
- Does our training for staff, stakeholders, and other community partners ensure that they understand our approaches to prevention, supporting transitions for children stepping down from group care, and other relevant practices as part of our implementation of the Family First Act requirements?

Useful resources

The following resources are available as states, jurisdictions, and eligible tribes begin implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act.

The Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau has issued three Program Instructions that describe expectations, processes, and procedures for implementation of specific areas with the Family First Act:

- Placement prevention services: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1809>
- Title IV-E and IV-B planning: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1807>
- Transitional payment for prevention services: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/pi1906>

The Children's Bureau has also issued two Information Memorandums that provide information and resources regarding family engagement and foster home standards:

- Family engagement: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1903>
- Foster home standards: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1901>

Two websites are available to provide current and updated information related to the Family First Act:

- FamilyFirstAct.Org is a collaboration among professionals, foster care alumni, states, tribes, and other stakeholders to gather information, programs, and services to support implementation efforts: <https://www.familyfirstact.org/>.
- The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse provides current and updated information regarding placement prevention services within the Family First Act: <https://preventionservices.abtsites.com/>.



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