

For Immediate Release
October 26, 2021

Contact: Deborah Lopez
Illinois DCFS
312-937-0050

Illinois' Family First Prevention Plan approved by US Department of Health and Human Services

Five-year plan focuses on services to prevent child abuse and neglect, reduce the need for foster care, improve services to pregnant and parenting teens and reduce stays for youth in residential care

(CHICAGO) — The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) today announced the approval of its Family First Title IV-E Prevention Plan by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau. The federal Family First Prevention Services Act, signed into law as part of the Federal Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, increased states' funding and flexibility to operate programs aimed at strengthening and supporting families to keep children safely at home and out of foster care. Illinois is among 17 states and the District of Columbia to submit its plan in compliance with the act and have it approved.

"Illinois has an unprecedented opportunity to transform our child welfare system by focusing on prevention services. Family First funds new opportunities to meet the unique needs of every child and family we serve even before they come into our care," said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. "We can't do this work alone. Our partners across the state were invaluable in helping us develop a bold Family First plan unique to Illinois. We continue to collaborate as we work toward a vision of an Illinois where every child and family has the resources and supports they need to thrive."

Illinois' five-year plan outlines how the state will support families in crisis by mobilizing and broadening the array of evidence-based interventions for parenting skills, substance use disorder prevention and treatment and mental health services to prevent children from entering foster care; encouraging and supporting kinship care; improving services to pregnant and parenting teens; and shortening lengths of stay and improving the quality of care for children for whom residential care is appropriate.

These efforts are already underway in Illinois. DCFS started implementing portions of its plan while it was still under federal review, ensuring families have access to new services as quickly as possible.

The plan was developed over the past three years in collaboration with more than 200 private agency partners and service providers; sister state agencies, including the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois



Department of Juvenile Justice and Illinois State Board of Education; and local community networks, community partners, child welfare experts and stakeholders.

To read Illinois' Family First Prevention Plan, visit www2.illinois.gov/dcfs.

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.

###