

**NEWS RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** August 28, 2020

## **ND receives federal approval for its Families First Title IV-E prevention plan to strengthen families and reduce entry into foster care**

BISMARCK, N.D. – This month, North Dakota became the seventh state in the country to receive approval of its Family First Title IV-E Prevention Services and Programs Plan from the federal Children’s Bureau, an office of the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families.

North Dakota’s prevention plan will allow the state to access federal Title IV-E funding for evidence-based prevention services for children and families who are at risk of entering the foster care system. Services include both mental health and substance abuse treatment and recovery support services as well as in-home parent skill-based programs that are designed for parents of young children.

The approved evidence-based programs eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement include Healthy Families, Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, Homebuilders, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.

“For the first time, we will be able to use federal funding that has always provided care for children who have been removed from their family homes for front end prevention services that are designed to divert children from entering foster care,” said Cory Pedersen, the North Dakota Department of Human Services’ Children and Family Services director. “Our goal is to help strengthen and stabilize families so children can stay in their family home safely.”

As part of implementation, the department is developing a web-based portal where parents or caregivers, public and private agencies, treatment providers, tribal social services, juvenile court and others will be able to submit a referral to determine a child’s eligibility for services. Eligibility is set by the federal government and verified by the department. A child receiving Title IV-E prevention services must be at risk of entering foster care.

Community and private agencies will be able to apply to become an approved provider of the evidence-based prevention programs. The application and approval process will be completed through the department’s portal. The provider must identify what approved service, as indicated in the department’s plan, they will offer. Providers must submit proof of qualifications and training requirements to offer that service.

The recently approved Family First Title IV-E Prevention Services and Programs Plan is available online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/family-first.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/family-first.html).

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## ND receives federal approval for its Families First Title IV-E prevention plan

Page 2

Earlier this spring, the department accepted public comments on its prevention plan. The first draft plan was submitted to the Children's Bureau in May 2020 and a revised plan was submitted in July. The state received official approval to proceed with the plan on Aug. 17, 2020.

"I'm really proud of our team's dedication and commitment for creating a comprehensive prevention plan that received timely approval from our federal partners," Pederson said. "The focus on prevention services will have a positive impact on children and families throughout North Dakota."

States are required to create a Title IV-E prevention plan as part of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. In October 2019, North Dakota became one of the first 11 states to begin implementation of the federal law by stressing the importance of engaging families and relatives as primary resources for children in need of placement.

A special emphasis was made to reduce the number of long-term placements of children in congregate residential settings. This effort included enhanced service delivery and accreditation standards that transformed many of North Dakota's residential child care facilities and foster care group homes into licensed qualified residential treatment providers, as defined under the new Family First Act.

For more information on the implementation of the 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act in North Dakota, visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/family-first.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/family-first.html).

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