



Integrating DULCE into a State Child Welfare Prevention Continuum

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) marks a substantial movement toward child welfare reform by bringing child welfare financing into alignment with what research tells us is best for children and families—keeping children in their homes whenever safe and possible. FFPSA allows for federal reimbursement for mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services; and in-home parent skill-based programs in order to keep children safely with their families and out of foster care.

While the majority of resources through FFPSA are specifically targeted to families who are at imminent risk of entering foster care, it does create a heightened focus on the need for a broader prevention continuum. As states focus on implementing FFPSA—and ideally building a broad continuum of prevention services, there are opportunities to leverage existing dollars to support innovative programs meeting families' needs.

Early childhood is a critical time in a child's life and lays the building blocks for healthy physical, social-emotional, and cognitive growth. Development during this time period is foundational, rapid, and cumulative—and when there are concerns about a young child's development—early intervention has been proven the most successful at mitigating future problems.^{1,2} It is also during these years when positive early attachment experiences can create the framework for healthy relationships and expectations of caregivers.³

DULCE helps to prevent child maltreatment by supporting families during the critical first six months of life. An important element of DULCE is the Medical-Legal Partnership model, which adds critical support by helping families meet their concrete needs, including food and shelter. DULCE is unique in its collaborative approach—placing families at the center and connecting otherwise disconnected programs into a seamless whole.

As FFPSA is implemented there are a couple of key opportunities for DULCE to better support families as a part of a state's prevention continuum. Additionally, since select prevention programs may now be newly eligible for reimbursement through Title IV-E as a result of FFPSA, states may be better able to invest more flexible funding to support primary prevention. Below are two possible child welfare funding streams that could be leveraged to integrate DULCE into a state's prevention continuum.

Opportunities Under Title IV-B

Title IV-B was authorized at \$709 million in FY2018 with \$269 million provided in grants to states, territories and tribes for programs directed at keeping families together either through prevention services or reunification activities when a child has been temporarily placed in foster care.⁴ Specifically, these grants are intended to “promote state flexibility” in providing services to children and families that:



- **Protect and promote the welfare of all children;**
- **Prevent abuse, neglect or exploitation of children;**
- Permit children to remain in their homes, or to return to those homes, whenever it is safe and appropriate;
- Promote safety, permanency, and well-being for children in foster care or those in adoptive families; and
- Provide training, professional development, and support to ensure a well-qualified workforce.⁵

FFPSA amends the state plan requirement under title IV-B to “describe activities to reduce the length of time to permanency for children under age five and the activities the state undertakes to address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under age five who receive services under title IV-B or IV-E.”⁶ States now have direct guidance and the responsibility to implement targeted services and strategies that achieve these goals for young children. There are no requirements that these services meet specific standard of evidence, creating an opportunity for states to invest in innovative programs.

Alignment with DULCE

FFPSA requires a focus on meeting the developmental needs of vulnerable children 0-5.

- Children under age 1 are the most likely to come into contact with child welfare systems. DULCE has the potential to reduce this number in states by ensuring families have their basic needs met, thereby also eliminating some parental stress, and that their children’s developmental health is supported.

Opportunities Through CAPTA

CAPTA was funded at \$158 million in FY2018 with \$40 million going to the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program.⁷ CBCAP funding provides child welfare systems with the opportunity to invest in further upstream prevention programs. Specifically, the purpose of the CBCAP program is to:

- Support community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, enhance, and coordinate initiatives, programs, and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect and to support the coordination of resources and activities to better strengthen and support families to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect; and
- Foster understanding, appreciation and knowledge of diverse populations in order to effectively prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.⁸

Children and families enrolled in these programs do not have to be known to the child welfare system and there are no requirements on the level of evidence. While this grant program is small, there are opportunities for DULCE to leverage this funding.

Alignment with DULCE

CBCAP does not require families to be involved in child welfare and is focused on supporting families through primary prevention and community interventions with the goal of promoting well-being and avoiding deeper system involvement.

- DULCE helps meet the primary prevention needs of families with children six months and under at a time when families can experience advanced material hardship and stress.

CBCAP supports the coordination of resources and services for families in order to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

- The DULCE approach meets families where they are and helps to identify and coordinate services and supports to address family-specific needs.

Citations

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¹ Child Trends DATA BANK (2013). Screening and Risk for Developmental Delay: Indicators on Children and Youth. Retrieved from http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/111_Developmental-Risk-and-Screening.pdf.

² Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2018, April). Opportunities to Strengthen Developmental Screenings for Children Involved in Child Welfare Systems. Retrieved from <https://www.cssp.org/policy/2018/Developmental-Screening-FINAL.pdf>.

³ Bowlby J. Attachment and loss. London: Hogarth Press; 1969.

⁴ Stoltzfus, E. (2018, July). Child Welfare Funding in FY2018. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45270.pdf>.

⁵ Stoltzfus, E. (2014, October). Child Welfare: Funding for Child and Family Services Authorized under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from https://greenbook-waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenbook-waysandmeans.house.gov/files/R41860_gb.pdf.

⁶ The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Sec. 50772. Available at <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Family-First-Prevention-Services-Act-of-2018.pdf>.

⁷ Stoltzfus, E. (2018, July). Child Welfare Funding in FY2018. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45270.pdf>.

⁸ CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-320).

