

## SIX STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING FAMILIES SUPPORTED, CONNECTED AND SAFE

In recent years, two concurrent factors have led to an increased focus on how child welfare leaders can work with partners to support families to stay together: the 2018 passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act, which created new approaches to a child welfare funding stream to prevent the need for foster care, and a heightened awareness of how discriminatory policies and practices within child welfare lead to unnecessary disruption and separation of families of color.

Many states are expanding their efforts to support families and creating new partnerships to fund those efforts. The Annie E. Casey Foundation profiled six innovative efforts across the country. While the focus and stage of development of these partnerships vary, six strategies emerged as important to successful and effective coordination of resources to prevent system involvement and keep families supported, connected and safe.



### I. INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVELS

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Child welfare agency leaders and their partners need dedicated staffing at the state and local levels to facilitate key functions such as convening partners, coordinating planning, aligning programs and funding, delivering training, collecting data and evaluating services. In some states, a designated intermediary organization supports infrastructure and leads prevention efforts. Dedicated staff and intermediaries also are important at the local level, where family resource centers and local boards are common approaches.

**Colorado** has built a robust infrastructure to support child abuse prevention. The Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund provides statewide leadership and funding for child abuse prevention efforts. The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families brings together leaders from state public health, child welfare, early childhood and Medicaid offices, local government and nonprofit organizations, as well as parents, with a focus on aligning strategies and funding to support family well-being. At the local level, Colorado uses state general funds to support a statewide network of Family Resource Centers that act as a hub for prevention efforts. The state's Department of Human Services worked with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to develop a framework and tool kit that has been used by 25 local coalitions to create community prevention plans.



### 2. CREATE FUNDING STRUCTURES THAT MAXIMIZE PREVENTION FUNDS

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Creating mechanisms through state statute that allow for public prevention dollars to be pooled and administered through one entity can streamline the process of allocating resources and maximize results.

In 2010, the **Washington State** legislature created a Home Visiting Services Account (HVSA) to braid and leverage public and private funding sources to expand high-quality home visiting services. The HVSA is administered by the Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families. Start Early Washington, a private-public partnership, supports the programs funded through the HVSA and raises additional private funds to support home visiting quality and implementation. The HVSA started with \$750,000 and now brings together five public funding streams and private funds totaling more than \$23 million annually.



### 3. SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING AND DESIGN

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Although the child welfare agency is at the table (and, in some cases, is the lead agency), prevention planning efforts should include community members as partners so services reflect community priorities. Service providers should be trusted local organizations and reflect the racial, ethnic and cultural makeup of residents. Community involvement facilitates continuous quality improvement by providing regular feedback on services, which helps the state refine how funding sources will support services that are relevant to culture and advance equity. States and counties use a variety of funding streams to support community engagement, such as state and local child welfare funds, Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention funds and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

The **Massachusetts** Department of Children and Family Services, the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and the Institute for Health and Recovery have collaborated to form family recovery councils throughout the state. These councils include representatives from various agencies, service providers and organizations led by people who have experienced substance abuse disorders. Family recovery councils work on local issues, such as developing plans to ensure infants exposed to substances are safe and their parents are supported. They review service protocols and engage in cross-systems training. The partnership promotes trust and ensures services are more accessible to those most in need.



### 4. ALIGN PROGRAMS AT THE STATE LEVEL TO BETTER SERVE FAMILIES

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States reported success coordinating prevention funding, program and evaluation requirements to streamline implementation for local communities and service providers. Prevention efforts become more effective and accessible, allowing more families to get the help they need.

As the statewide intermediary in **Nebraska**, the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE) brings together multiple funding streams, including Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Social Services Block Grant, John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, Victims of Crime Act discretionary funds, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and state general revenue funds. Local community well-being collaboratives work to meet family needs, and NCFE allocates the funding to support local efforts while ensuring each funding stream's spending and reporting requirements are met.



### 5. INVEST IN EVALUATION

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Evaluation ensures that prevention efforts are working and meeting the needs of families. But evaluation also is important in securing sustainable funding by building evidence for prevention strategies, programs and services, especially for sources such as the Family First Prevention Services Act that require a certain level of evidence. State and local child welfare agencies that invest state and local dollars in evaluation of IV-E funded prevention services can receive reimbursement through IV-E Family First prevention administrative funds. Private foundations are another important funder of evaluations.

In **Washington, D.C.**, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) has built an Evaluation and Data Analytics (EDA) unit to track the effects of all agency-led prevention activities, including Families First DC, a primary prevention initiative focused on integrating services and preventing family crises through early engagement. EDA and Families First DC staff have partnered with Harvard University to learn and utilize the principles of Active Contract Management, a set of strategies to deepen continuous quality improvement activities across the Family Success Center Network. CFSA is building a partnership with Howard University to further develop evaluation efforts across CFSA's primary prevention activities.



## 6. LEVERAGE PRIVATE AND LOCAL DEDICATED FUNDING STREAMS

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While the core federal and state social service streams provide the bulk of funding for prevention, private and local dedicated funding can offer essential flexible support. Private foundations can bring funders together, help cover start-up costs and fill gaps in funding, especially when private-public partnerships are built early. Dedicated local revenue streams that designate revenue from specific taxes or fees for children's services are another funding source that can offer stable and flexible funding to fill gaps in funds from other public streams.

A **Missouri** law allows communities to create children's services funds for prevention services such as home and community-based interventions and services for teen parents. In 2008, voters in St. Louis County passed a one-quarter-cent sales-tax measure that created the St. Louis County Children's Service Fund, which provides behavioral health and substance use treatment services for children and youth from birth through age 19.

### **THRIVING FAMILIES** *Safer Children*

The U.S. Children's Bureau, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Prevent Child Abuse America have launched **Thriving Families, Safer Families: A National Commitment to Well-Being** to prove it is possible to fundamentally rethink child welfare by creating the conditions for strong, thriving families where children are free from harm. The effort seeks to demonstrate that coordinated investment in a full continuum of prevention and robust community-based networks of support will promote overall child and family well-being, equity and other positive outcomes for children and families while preventing child maltreatment and unnecessary family separation. Three Thriving Families sites were interviewed for this fact sheet: Colorado, Nebraska and Washington, D.C.

Read about more examples and tools for successful funding strategies at [www.aecf.org/series/funding-strategies-to-support-families](http://www.aecf.org/series/funding-strategies-to-support-families).