

The Deloitte logo, consisting of the word "Deloitte" in a white, sans-serif font, followed by a small green dot. The background is a dark teal color with abstract, overlapping circular patterns of varying shades of teal and green, some with a halftone dot pattern.

Strategies for enhancing prevention in child welfare

A small, horizontal green bar with a white dot pattern.

Technology can help staff make critical
decisions about the safety and well-being
of children

Introduction

For decades, federal child welfare funding has prioritized foster care placement over prevention. Today, states have access to policy levers, funding streams, evidence-based programs, and advanced data analytics, and are increasingly shifting their focus to preventing child maltreatment and unnecessary foster care placements—and seeing real, positive impacts on children, families, and communities. States have only just begun to scratch the surface on using policy, data, and technology to drive transformational change that prioritizes prevention.

Prevention of child maltreatment, promoting child safety, and strengthening families is a shared responsibility. Child welfare agencies recognize that lasting change requires collaboration across child- and family-serving systems, community partners, and the public. Enhanced data sharing and cross-system partnerships are essential for effective policy decisions, implementation, and evaluation of prevention strategies.

Recent policy changes and funding opportunities have given agencies options to expand the array of services for children and families and modernize technology. Data analytics, process improvements, and technology upgrades can strengthen prevention efforts, increase efficiency, and ultimately improve long-term outcomes for children and families.

With the implementation of the [Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System \(CCWIS\)](#) and the [Family First Prevention Services Act \(FFPSA\)](#), state agencies have unprecedented opportunities to transform child welfare. These initiatives are expanding services, modernizing operations, and fostering collaboration.

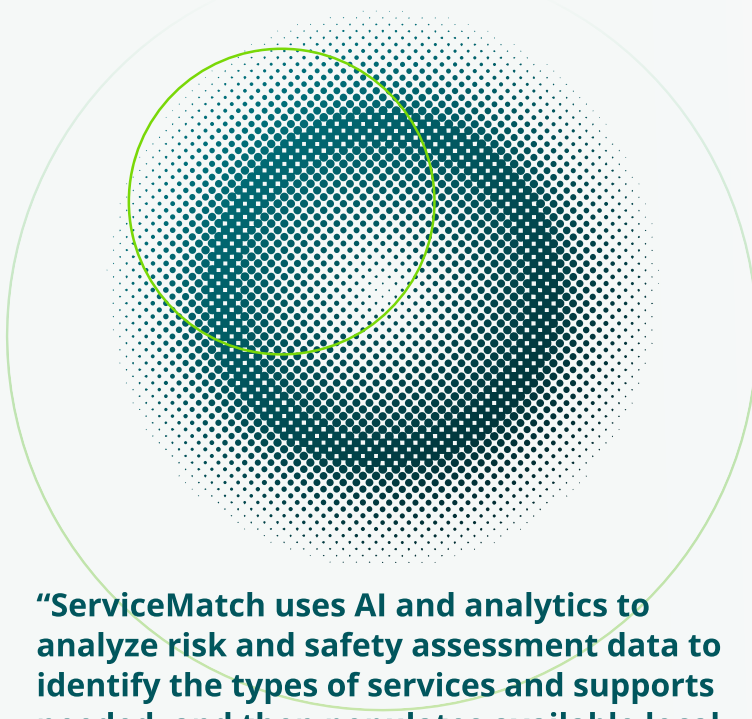
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), enacted in 2018, prompted Title IV-E agencies to consider and make significant decisions about policy and investments in prevention services. These decisions also impact how states provide services, support their workforce, and engage with other child- and family-serving agencies.

Several Title IV-E agencies are operating approved 5-year IV-E prevention plans and nearing the timeline to submit another 5-year plan. Some states have made amendments to their plans as new programs have been approved by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse and as they have increased their capacity to provide eligible services. As states consider their next 5-year Title IV-E prevention plan, states can assess the impact of implementation to date and consider potential changes to modify their plans with new eligible prevention services or changes to whom and where they provide IV-E prevention services.

In January 2025, the bipartisan Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act, which reauthorized and made changes to Title IV-B, provided additional funding and flexibility for Title IV-B programs. This provides additional tools states can use to achieve their goals for preventing child maltreatment and unnecessary foster care placements.

The new funding opportunities and policy changes that came with FFPSA and Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act are happening at the same time as many states are considering and making significant changes to modernize their information systems and move from a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) to CCWIS. States implementing CCWIS can design and use the enhanced information system and technology to strengthen how they collect and utilize robust data to inform policy decisions to further advance and monitor progress towards prevention goals. For example, CCWIS can include dashboards and reports enhancing visibility of prevention data and the experiences of children and families in the child welfare system to inform decisions and ongoing continuous quality improvement. Advanced analytics can help inform efforts about the existing service array and community strengths and needs across geographic areas, age, and other factors and help inform decision makers about resource gaps, resource allocation, and policy decisions.

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Data-informed decision-making can enhance policy decisions & implementation

Effective data analytics – combined with modernized tools and the people to support the analysis and utilization of data – can help child welfare leaders, staff, and local community partners make more informed decisions about what is working to keep children safe and strengthen families.

For example, ServiceMatch uses AI and analytics to analyze risk and safety assessment data to identify the types of services and supports needed, and then populates available local contracted and community services and supports to address a child's or family's needs. The tool streamlines the process and empowers caseworkers to provision timely, informed, and individualized services to support the children and families they are serving. The tool embeds analytics so the agency can gain visibility into provider gaps, referral acceptance rates, and performance and use this information to inform decisions related to service array and availability and future contracting needs.

Data can also be evaluated to understand the impact of long- and short-term policy decisions designed to prevent child maltreatment and unnecessary foster care placement. Over time, using data to analyze and communicate trends can support an agency's ability to share information about investments, impact, and needs to achieve the goals of the agency.

“ServiceMatch uses AI and analytics to analyze risk and safety assessment data to identify the types of services and supports needed, and then populates available local contracted and community services and supports to address a child's or family's needs.”

Collaboration is critical to successful policy development & implementation

Sharing and utilizing data across child and family serving agencies can be a tool to bring agencies together and identify opportunities to inform policy development and implementation. We understand real and perceived limits to data sharing between systems due to statutory confidentiality laws exist and we are increasingly seeing agencies identify ways to share what they can in ways to achieve goals and increase cross-agency collaboration. By collecting relevant and valuable data sets, integrating where possible, and analyzing data across child and family-serving agencies, states and communities can better understand and respond to the current and evolving strengths and needs of their systems and the people they are serving.

For example, strategies to prevent child maltreatment fatalities and near fatalities can be informed and assessed using tools to analyze qualitative data and blend data from multiple systems to identify potential risk and protective factors and provide decision makers at the systems level about resource allocation and policy decisions. Similarly, information can be used at the individual or family level to inform a worker about potential risk and protective factors.

Technology, policy, processes, and data sharing can accelerate collaboration across state and local jurisdictions and other child and family serving systems, leading to a more child and family-centered approach. Public health, healthcare, education, housing, and other public agencies play vital roles in engaging and supporting families that are involved or at risk of involvement with the child welfare system. Partner agencies gather information that is critical to deepening an understanding of the experiences of children and

families and informing child welfare prevention strategies and maximizing limited resources for children and families.

By building an integrated infrastructure, states and local jurisdictions can gain a more comprehensive and continuous understanding of child and family experiences. Timely information sharing and data analytics that transcend the boundaries of specific programs or agency jurisdiction can improve child welfare prevention efforts and support the management of limited resources and increase child safety and family well-being outcomes. Components to consider in establishing or assessing potential changes to collaborative approaches include a common understanding of current needs and outcomes of children and families through data, including trends over time; processes for coordinating planning, policy, resource allocation, continuous quality improvement, and communications; information sharing expectations, processes, and tools; and roles and responsibilities.

During times of transition and long-term transformation, such as the investments and changes made through FFPSA and CCWIS implementation, collaboration with stakeholders in business process redesign can be a powerful tool for adapting policies. By streamlining processes, improving decision-making, increasing transparency, and promoting collaboration, agencies can improve child safety outcomes and strengthen families.

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Core strategies to advance prevention efforts

Child welfare systems and their partners are continuously evolving to meet the changing needs of their communities and the people they serve. The following strategies can enable agencies to maximize existing resources and strengthen short- and long-term prevention efforts.

- Clearly define prevention goals and how policy changes and investments are intended to meet these goals. Identify key metrics and how data will be collected, shared, and utilized to measure progress and decision-making.
- Consider how an increase in Title IV-B funds^[1] can complement Title IV-E Prevention plans to further prevention goals. States can consider strategizing the use of additional funds for Title IV-B activities, including providing families with concrete supports to keep children safe and strengthen support for grandparents and relatives providing kinship care for children who would otherwise enter foster care.
- Conduct data analytics to inform a Title IV-E plan amendment and/or new 5-year plan, including a needs and gaps analysis. This could include the use of data across Medicaid, home visiting, housing, education, and employment to inform policy and resource decisions to meet prevention goals.
- Identify technology solutions and tools to increase the quality of and access to data to inform prevention plans and resource allocations, and to measure impact. This could involve dashboards or reports that capture key data to measure the impact of prevention efforts and inform future policy and programmatic decisions.
- Convene child and family serving agencies and local community leaders to support the development of prevention plans for child maltreatment and unnecessary foster care. This can include amendments or new Title IV-E prevention plans and a plan for Title IV-B programs. Develop a shared vision and goals and a collaborative strategic planning approach. Assess current data utilization and consider how enhanced data-sharing can support planning and tracking progress.
- Analyze current business processes and identify potential areas for process redesign to strengthen collaboration, data-sharing and utilization, transparency, and efficiency to achieve prevention goals.
- Assess opportunities and roles for new and deepened partnerships and working relationships with young people, parents, and relatives who have experienced child welfare services. Those with lived experience have critical insights to identify gaps, opportunities, and solutions to strengthen prevention and well-being. Child welfare agencies are increasingly developing processes to engage youth, parents, kinship caregivers, foster parents, and community providers in new ways to provide critical information to inform policy and provide feedback on implementation and impact.

Collaboration across child and family serving systems and community partners is critical to the prevention of child maltreatment and unnecessary foster care placements.



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Title IV-B was increased by \$75 million annually beginning in FY 2026 through the [Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act](#).