

# The Children Need Amazing Parents Campaign (CHAMPS) and the Family First Prevention Services Act

In 2017, a multidisciplinary partnership of national organizations launched the Children Need Amazing Parents (CHAMPS) Campaign to promote state and federal policies that ensure high-quality parenting for children in foster care. In 2018, Congress enacted the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First), which reforms federal child welfare policy to emphasize the importance of keeping children safely with their families when they are at risk of entering foster care, and ensuring the most family-like setting possible for children who need foster care. **Together, CHAMPS and Family First offer important new opportunities to significantly improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system.**

## What is CHAMPS?

- **CHAMPS is a national policy campaign promoting high-quality parenting for children in foster care** through policy reforms that ensure children receive the nurturing parenting they need, whether from foster parents, relatives, or birth parents.
- **CHAMPS recognizes that high-quality parenting is central to a child's well-being.** Decades of research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have found that childhood trauma can alter a child's lifelong health and wellbeing. Fortunately, we know that a safe, stable, nurturing relationship with a caring adult can promote resilience and alter that trajectory for children so they can heal and thrive.
- **CHAMPS brings together multi-sector partners** to support policymakers in enacting low- and no-cost policy solutions that promote high-quality parenting for children in foster care, including:
  - prioritizing family placements;
  - supporting relationships between birth and foster families;
  - implementing data-driven practices to improve foster parent recruitment and retention;
  - engaging foster parents in decision-making;
  - providing foster parents staff and peer support; and
  - improving access to physical and mental health services for children in foster care.

## What is Family First?

- **Family First is a landmark federal child welfare reform law that emphasizes the importance of family through two important and related policy changes:** (1) promoting the stabilization of families in crisis through evidence-based services that prevent the need for foster care, and (2) reducing inappropriate use of group care for children who can be served in a family setting.
- **Family First's prevention services will enable states to use federal funds previously limited to foster care for evidence-based services to keep families safely together,** including mental health and substance use prevention and treatment services, and in-home parenting skills training. These services can promote family strengths and healing by addressing the cause of the crisis.
- Family First's group home policies ensure children who need treatment services in a non-family setting receive appropriate and high-quality care by creating new safeguards for federally-funded group care. **Family First continues federal funding for family foster homes and quality group care settings designed to meet children's specific needs.**

## How are CHAMPS and Family First Related?

- Both CHAMPS and Family First recognize the therapeutic benefit of family for children who have experienced maltreatment. They are part of a shift to keep families safely together, where appropriate, and ensure that children who do enter foster care experience the most family-like placement possible.
- The reforms of Family First represent a paradigm shift in child welfare policy and financing. CHAMPS offers the opportunity to leverage and build on those reforms by expanding progress to promote family placements.
- As states implement the reforms in Family First, they will need the availability of the kind of high-quality family foster homes CHAMPS promotes to support a shift of children from group homes to family placements.
- These two efforts together present states with a major opportunity to do better for these children through a focus on ensuring that children are placed with birth, kin, or foster families that can meet their needs.