

DCF Family First Prevention Candidacy Charter v. 12.19.2019

This charter creates a clear and mutually agreeable description of the Connecticut Candidacy Workgroup's role and purpose. The charter may be revised as better ways of functioning emerge and will be reviewed when major changes to the group's structure or function occur to ensure relevance and appropriateness to the work.

Purpose

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was passed in February 2018, introducing historic reforms with the potential to dramatically change child welfare systems across the country. Among other provisions, Family First includes provisions to help keep children safely with their families and avoid the traumatic experience of entering foster care, while helping to ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate to their special needs when foster care is needed.

Connecticut has embraced the legislation as a tool for system transformation and outcomes improvement. Connecticut seeks to engage families, youth, experts, sister agencies and staff in developing its response to Family First, by focusing on the opportunities to become a prevention oriented system. Connecticut seeks to ensure that:

- Parents and kin are better equipped, supported and informed to raise their children, resulting in overall better outcomes for children and families;
- Children maintain their culture, connection to community ties, and access to their extended families;
- Workers gain access to tools, resources and services to assist in their efforts to better serve children and families;
- Connecticut continues to build upon its prior efforts to ensure the delivery of quality services to include evidence based practices; and,
- Where appropriate, there are overall cost savings to the system of care.

Workgroup Goals & Key Deliverables

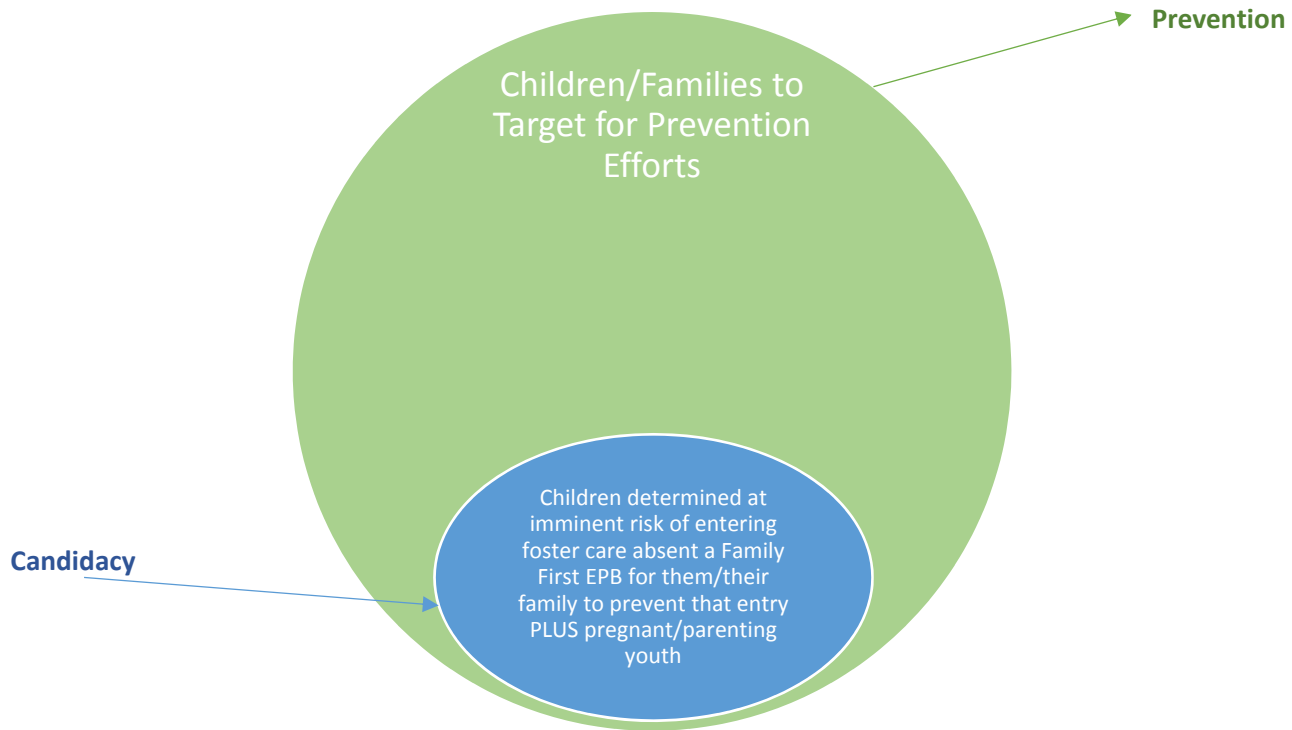
The goals of the Candidacy workgroup are to:

- (1) Recommend a written definition of "*candidate for foster care*," for the state of Connecticut's initial title IV-E Prevention Plan. *Target end of January 2020.*
- (2) Articulate an understanding of the population of children and families that would most benefit from a more prevention-oriented system. This understanding may be used by the governance committee to describe a vision and/or make decisions about re-balancing resources and systems within the state's child welfare system. *Target March 2020.*

Scope & Governance

The Candidacy workgroup will report its recommendations to a governance committee, which is then responsible for making all decisions related to Family First. The governance committee is a committee comprised of DCF executive level staff along with various stakeholders and partners. The governance committee will review all workgroup recommendations, raise questions as needed and make decisions about the incorporation of those recommendations into the state's title IV-E Prevention Plan and related plans.

The candidacy workgroup’s scope is to develop a data-informed recommendation(s) of the populations of focus for prevention so that the governance committee can make decisions about the title IV-E Prevention Plan’s definition of candidacy and inform its larger prevention system efforts. The two goals require the consideration of two related but separate populations with different characteristics, as represented in the diagram below:



With regard to the candidacy definition recommendation, the workgroup must have a basic/working understanding of existing evidence-based programs, workforce and business processes; but the workgroup’s scope does not include formulating recommendations with regard to these areas.

Additionally, other workgroups are tasked with related work, a description of their charges follow:

- *Programs and Service Array* –Align Connecticut’s vast array of services and programs to the identified needs of the children and families served, while ensuring a focus on quality services and interventions.
- *Kinship and Foster Care* - Identify barriers to Kinship Care, mitigate such barriers, and expand strategies to ensure relative engagement at the onset of a case, while building a culture that supports relatives and kin as “real” supports to children and families engaged in the child welfare system.
- *Fiscal & Revenue Enhancement* - Enhance and maximize Connecticut’s federal reimbursement claiming.
- *Community Partnership & Family and Child Engagement* - Support full participation of parents, youth, legislative officials, community providers, and other state agencies in the planning, development and communication of Connecticut’s plan.

It will be the responsibility of the Candidacy workgroup co-leads and Family First co-leads to reinforce the distinctions between the groups and to raise questions to the governance committee when workgroup charges need clarification. Additionally, the candidacy workgroup co-leads will create a running list of *Parking Lot* issues and questions that are more appropriately discussed in other workgroups. As needed, the candidacy workgroup will work in collaboration with these other groups, answering questions and sharing information generated by the candidacy workgroup to allow other workgroups to meet their responsibilities.

Membership, Roles and Responsibilities

The members of this workgroup have been selected to serve based on their lived experience, expertise and perspectives. To support a collaborative environment where each member's contributions can inform the recommendations, the role of each workgroup member is to:

- Respect each other's ideas, provide constructive feedback, and have balanced participation so that we hear perspectives of family, public agencies and providers.
- Attend all meetings in person, unless extenuating circumstances do not permit it.
- Come prepared to each meeting by reviewing agendas, meeting minutes and other material that may be provided in advance.
- Actively contribute to proposal, recommendations and deliverables by participating in meetings and following up on assigned action items outside of regular meetings.
- Use quantitative and qualitative data to understand system and population dynamics, test perspectives and justify recommendations.

Workgroup co-leads will be primarily responsible for setting meeting agendas and facilitating the meetings with group input. The co-leads will also be responsible for collecting additional feedback on workgroup deliberations, products and deliverables outside of regular meetings; in particular to ensure robust feedback from families and youth with lived experience. Co-leads may assign this additional feedback gathering task as an action item to one or more members.

Workgroups co-leads will be the only persons responsible for inviting new members or guest speakers to the workgroup. It is not necessary for members to send other persons in their stead to meetings, but may do so after confirming the appropriateness of a substitution with Workgroup co-leads.

Recommendations & Decision-Making

Recommendations to the governance committee will be a direct result of the work of the workgroup. The governance committee is ultimately responsible for decision-making regarding Family First and system prevention efforts. Workgroup consensus is not necessary for recommendations; rather a majority of the workgroup can decide to move a recommendation forward. Minority or non-consenting opinions may be provided to the governance committee along with majority recommendations. In the event of a need to break ties, the co-leads will serve as tie-breakers.

Meeting Cadence

The workgroup will meet approximately weekly until the end of January 2020 to focus on the goal related to recommending the candidacy definition. A subsequent meeting cadence will be determined through agreement so that the workgroup can successfully accomplish its remaining goals. Below follows a high level description of the agenda for each scheduled meeting:

December 3 rd	Group kickoff, formation
December 10th	Workgroup norms, workgroup charge clarification, beginning discussion on candidacy target population
December 19th	Continued discussion on candidacy target population, use visual to come to shared understanding of pathways to DCF involvement and foster care (or opportunities to prevent foster care); refine in real time, refine data questions.
January 2	Present info on other state candidacy definitions, present data analysis on volume of candidacy target populations; synthesize emerging understanding of candidacy
January 6	Present any additional data analysis and other data collected (add characteristics and geography) related to candidacy. Come to a shared understanding of implications of data analysis and nascent candidacy definition.
January 14	Review & provide feedback on a recommended candidacy definition
January 24	Refine candidacy definition, come to a shared understanding of the rationale for the candidacy definition, and reflect non-majority opinions in recommendations. Clarify additional deliverables, invite group to determine their ongoing commitment to meeting second goal re the larger prevention population, and determine meeting schedule/group needs.