



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

January 2, 2019

Dear State Child Welfare Director:

As you know, the Children's Bureau (CB) recently released ACYF-CB-PI-18-09, which provides instructions on the requirements state title IV-E agencies must meet when electing the title IV-E prevention program. The Program Instruction includes a description of the HHS initial practice criteria and first list of services and programs selected for review as part of the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse).

The CB and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) have taken the opportunity, requirements, and timelines within the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) with regard to establishing the Clearinghouse very seriously. Despite very short timelines and a limited budget to establish the Clearinghouse, CB and OPRE have explored all options for the most expeditious path to awarding the contract, while complying with the requirements of federal contract law and policy. Our goal has been, and remains, to review and rate as many services and programs as quickly as possible through the Clearinghouse to support states' efforts to improve outcomes for children and families through implementation of FFPSA.

In developing the revised initial criteria and selecting the first dozen services and programs for review, the CB and OPRE considered comments and recommendations from more than 360 unique responses to the Federal Register Notice (FRN) ([83 FR 29122](#)) issued June 22, 2018. These responses from key stakeholders and input from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) informed the initial list of services and programs to be reviewed. Building from recommendations received from the FRN, federal partners, other key stakeholders, and ongoing consultation with the field, the Clearinghouse will continue to identify and prioritize additional services and programs for review on a rolling basis. We fully expect to add to the body of title IV-E reimbursable services as expeditiously as possible.

We recognize title IV-E agencies have many questions about the Clearinghouse, how it will function, and the programs and services that will be selected for review. Since the award of the contract in September of 2018, the development of the Clearinghouse has been ongoing and we will continue to refine and develop the procedures necessary for identification and review of services. The Clearinghouse will provide additional information, a more detailed description of the revised initial criteria, procedures for systematic review and re-review, and definitions of key terminology in the forthcoming Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures, which we expect to be issued early April 2019.

The Clearinghouse is leveraging the insights and work of other evidence clearinghouses including, but not limited to, the CEBC and the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE). The Clearinghouse is developing unique standards and procedures in accordance

with the statutory requirements detailed in the FFPSA. There are key differences between the statutory requirements of FFPSA and the standards and procedures used by other clearinghouses. For example, while CEBC uses a peer-review process to rate and review studies of programs and services, the Clearinghouse is required to conduct an independent, systematic evidence review. Initial piloting of the criteria in accordance with FFPSA requirements indicated that some of the programs and services may not achieve the same ratings found in CEBC. In addition, distinct from CEBC, the Clearinghouse allows programs or services with rigorous quasi-experimental evidence to achieve a “supported” or “well-supported” rating and includes the review of publicly available research studies including those that do not appear in peer-reviewed journals. Similarly, the rating criteria and outcome domains identified in FFPSA do not directly align with the criteria established by HHS for evidence-based home visiting models in HomVEE. For example, in accordance with the statutory requirement of FFPSA, the Clearinghouse includes criteria for sustained effects based on length of time after the end of treatment, while HomVEE includes criteria for sustained effects based on length of time after enrollment. As a result of these and other key differences, all programs and services will have to be rated using the Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures.

To assist agencies with understanding the work that has occurred thus far with regard to the Clearinghouse and in planning for the implementation of the title IV-E prevention program, below is a timeline for events that have occurred and estimated dates for additional guidance:

EVENT	ESTIMATED DATE	DESCRIPTION
ENACTMENT OF FFPSA	February 2, 2018	The President signed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, including FFPSA.
PUBLICATION OF FRN	June 22, 2018	The CB published a FRN soliciting comments on the initial criteria and potential programs and services for review and inclusion in the Clearinghouse.
CLOSE OF FRN COMMENT PERIOD	July 22, 2018	The CB received and reviewed over 360 unique comments on the FRN
AWARD OF CLEARINGHOUSE CONTRACT	September 2018	The CB awarded the Clearinghouse contract to Abt Associates.
TITLE IV-E PREVENTION SERVICES PROGRAM INSTRUCTION	November 30, 2018	The CB published program instructions on the title IV-E prevention program for states and title IV-E tribal agencies. The CB concurrently published program instructions on the kinship navigator program and the revised title IV-E financial reporting form.

EVENT	ESTIMATED DATE	DESCRIPTION
PREVENTION SERVICES CLEARINGHOUSE HANDBOOK OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES	Early April 2019 Update: As Needed	Release of the Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures, which will include (1) procedures for identifying programs and services and associated research studies for review or re-review, (2) standards for assessing the design, execution, and findings of research studies and rating programs and services, and (3) definitions of key terms.
WEBINAR ADDRESSING CLEARINGHOUSE STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES	Mid-April 2019	The Clearinghouse project team will provide an overview of the standards and procedures and answer questions about elements of review processes.
PROGRAM AND SERVICE RATINGS	Beginning May 2019	Release of the ratings of programs and services (may be rated as “promising,” “supported,” “well-supported,” or “does not currently meet criteria.”)
NEXT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO BE REVIEWED	Late Spring-Summer 2019	Release of additional programs and services selected for systematic review.

We sincerely appreciate your eagerness to begin using the new prevention services funding stream to support improved outcomes for children and families and your patience while we put into place new procedures that will permit us to support your efforts as effectively as possible. We encourage you to continue sending your questions to your CB Regional Offices. The central office of the Children’s Bureau will work with our Regional Offices to ensure that we issue consistent guidance and responses across the regions.

The title IV-E prevention program is part of the Children’s Bureau’s broader vision of advancing national efforts that strengthen the capacity of families to nurture and provide for the well-being of their children. We look forward to working together with you to implement the title IV-E prevention program as part of the broader vision, and to meet our shared goal of keeping families healthy, together and strong.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jerry Milner
Associate Commissioner
Children’s Bureau