



PII Evaluation Overview

Illinois Trauma Focus Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care Project

PII Overview:

The federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) is a 5-year, \$100 million Presidential Initiative designed to support six grantees to develop and implement innovative intervention strategies to reduce long-term foster care stays and improve child and family outcomes. The PII project aims to provide valuable information about the effectiveness of the programs, interventions and practices designed to reduce long-term foster care (LTFC). This overview first provides an overview of PII evaluations and then describes Illinois's evaluation.

Prior to the Evaluation:

The six PII grantees each identify the needs of their target population and then select, create, or adapt an appropriate intervention. As they implement their interventions, they conduct usability testing, which is a plan-do-study-act cycle that is repeated until the intervention is considered stable and feasible. When their usability testing shows that the components of the intervention are working together as intended, the evaluation of the intervention begins. Usability testing by grantees can continue alongside early evaluation activities in order to improve implementation of the intervention.

Evaluation Overview:

The PII evaluation has two components: site-specific evaluations and a cross-site evaluation. The site-specific evaluations include two phases.

1. **Formative Evaluation** is the process of monitoring relationships between program outputs (activities and services received by the target population) and short-term outcomes. Data collected during the formative evaluation phase are used to establish that short-term outcomes are trending in the right direction and the initiative is not harming children or producing negative results. Once those are established, the grantee can move to summative evaluation.
2. **Summative Evaluation** is a rigorous evaluation of the long-term impact of PII interventions. It determines whether long-term outcomes are achieved and the extent to which these outcomes can be attributed to the intervention. Not every grantee proceeds to summative.

Evaluation Design:

A grantee's outcome evaluation answers the summative question about what is different after some members of the target population receives the intervention and others do not. The evaluation will have demonstrated that the intervention was successful if more of those that received the intervention have positive outcomes than those that did not.

The cross-site evaluation follows a mixed-method approach that includes an administrative data study, implementation study, and cost study. The administrative data study looks at information from Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), National

Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), and other state data systems, including Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS). The implementation study examines key implementation activities and the context in which the programs operate. The cost study examines the costs of implementing these interventions.

Trauma Focused Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care Project Overview:

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its partners are developing and implementing the Trauma Focused Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care Project. The goal of this project is to demonstrate a statewide approach to reducing LTFC by addressing trauma-related and mental health symptoms in youth and eligible biological parents to improve permanency and child well-being outcomes.

Target Population:

DCFS utilizes a trauma-focused intervention, Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET), to increase permanency rates for youth ages 11-16 who are placed in traditional, relative, and specialized foster homes who, upon reaching the two-year anniversary of entering care, are (1) experiencing mental health symptoms and/or (2) have had at least one placement change.

Trauma Focused Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care Project Evaluation Overview:

The evaluation follows an experimental design using random assignment to treatment and comparison conditions. It tests whether or not TARGET improves both biological parent and youth skills in emotional and behavioral regulation, and foster parent capacity to respond to youth behavior. DCFS is learning whether the intervention helps to stabilize foster care placements and improve youth likelihood of attaining permanency.

Formative Evaluation:

Following early implementation activities, the formative evaluation determines whether TARGET is working as intended in light of the best available evidence about its potential impact. The short-term outcomes the evaluation team examines include the foster parent's skills in responding to children's emotional and behavioral dysregulation, and biological parent and youth's ability to regulate their emotions and behavior.

Summative Evaluation:

The summative evaluation provides information about the outcomes resulting from the intervention with youth in foster care ages 11-16 who participate in TARGET. Outcomes among youth in the intervention group are compared to the outcomes of a randomly assigned group of youth who meet the target population description but receive services as usual.

DCFS expects that youth who participate in TARGET will experience a reduction in length of time in care, improvement in stability in their homes post-permanence, and avoidance of subsequent maltreatment.

For more information about this project, contact: Larry Small, Project Director, at larry.small@illinois.gov or 312-814-5987.

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