



## PII Evaluation Overview

### Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care (Washoe County, Nevada)

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#### **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 Washoe County'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.

**Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care Overview:**

The goal of the Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care, led by the Washoe County Department of Social Services, is to reduce the number of children in LTFC. The project targets three populations of children: those who are: (1) entering the system, (2) currently in care and at risk of LTFC where reunification is the case goal, and (3) currently in care and at risk of LTFC where reunification is not the case goal.

**Target Populations:**

Washoe County is implementing SAFE-FC, a combination of SAFE (developed by ACTION for Child Protection) and Family Connections (developed by Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children, University of Maryland School of Social Work). SAFE-FC aims to prevent LTFC by providing tailored services and intensive engagement with all new families with children identified as unsafe (Population 1) and for cases that are currently in care and at risk of LTFC where reunification is the case goal (Population 2). Family Search and Engagement (FSE) provides intensive searches to identify possible permanency resources for Population 3.

**Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care Evaluation Overview:**

For Populations 1 and 2, a randomized, intent-to-treat study is measuring safety and permanency outcomes. For Population 3, a descriptive study is analyzing relationships between the intervention approach and outcomes.

**Formative Evaluation:**

The formative evaluation for Populations 1 and 2 (SAFE-FC) is examining the frequency and type of caseworker-caregiver contacts and selected key short term outcomes related to parenting attitudes, stress and readiness for change, to assess whether SAFE-FC is working as intended. The formative evaluation for Population 3 (FSE) is determining whether there are increases in the number of: (1) potential caregivers who begin the process of becoming permanent legal caregivers, (2) direct contacts between child and relatives and/or fictive kin, and (3) indirect contacts between child and relatives and/or fictive kin.

**Summative Evaluation:**

The summative evaluation is providing information about families who participate in SAFE-FC and FSE. Both interventions are expected to lead to better permanency outcomes for children. Families who participate in SAFE-FC are expected to have changes in all short-term outcomes (e.g., increased readiness to change, decreases in parenting stress, and increases in positive parenting attitudes). Children in Populations 1, 2, and 3 are expected to experience a quicker time to permanency, when compared to children who receive services as usual.

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For more information about this project contact Jim Durand, 775-785-5655 or [jdurand@washoecounty.us](mailto:jdurand@washoecounty.us)

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