

Help Vulnerable Families: Implement and Fund *Family First*

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents over 90 percent of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong.

KANSAS FACES A GROWING FOSTER CARE CRISIS

- In 2017, there were a total of 7,933 children in foster care in Kansas. Nearly half of the approximately 4,000 Kansas children who entered foster care that year did so in part as a result of parental substance abuse.
- Many times, children at-risk of entering foster care could stay safely with their family with appropriate services, interventions, and oversight to ensure the child's safety. Evidence supports this approach, which helps families heal while preventing the additional trauma of unnecessary entry to foster care.
- Existing policy does not support access to these services before children enter foster care, contributing to the current crisis. A new federal law offers funding and flexibility to our state to update its approach.



A NEW FEDERAL LAW OFFERS KANSAS NEW FUNDING AND TOOLS TO SOLVE IT

- In 2018, the U.S. Congress enacted the *Family First Prevention Services Act*, a landmark bipartisan child welfare reform law that will support interventions to keep families in crisis safely together.
- Starting in October of this year, the law will allow states to use federal funds previously limited to foster care placements for evidence-based services for children and their caregivers that can prevent the need for foster care, including mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and parenting skills training.
- KAAP and the American Academy of Pediatrics support *Family First* because it aligns policy with the evidence of what we know works. But for Kansas to see this law's benefits, our state legislature must act.

KANSAS MUST ACT TO ACCESS THESE NEEDED RESOURCES

- States must affirmatively elect to begin using federal foster care funds for prevention services under *Family First*, so Kansas will need to prepare for and implement *Family First* to realize these benefits.
- *Family First* requires states to provide 50% of the costs of operating a prevention program. Our state will need to appropriate \$7.4 million in matching funds now to draw down these critical federal resources.
- Recognizing the value of *Family First*, Kansas' bipartisan Child Welfare System Task Force recommended funding and implementing *Family First* as one of its top recommendations to the 2019 state legislature.

Kansas pediatricians call on our lawmakers to implement and fund a prevention services program under *Family First* to support vulnerable children and families in crisis.