

Making Indiana Family Preservation Services Work:

Tips for effective collaborations that keep families together and safe



How does IN Family Preservation work?

- Family preservation empowers all families in *Informal Adjustments* and *In-Home CHINS* cases with the resources and support to change their lives while keeping their family together.
- In most cases, one community-based child and family welfare agency works with the family to meet all of their needs. That agency works with DCS and the family to create a case plan that relies on evidence-based programs to help the family meet their goals and overcome their most pressing challenges.
- To keep families receiving INFPS services safe, DCS and the agency must practice open, ongoing communication and proactively plan for how services to - and contact with - the family will be maintained when there are disruptions. Safety and services planning is an evolving process that requires timely and quality communication from everyone working with the family.
- The agency is in the family's home regularly. At a bare minimum, the agency visits the family once-a-week but most case plans and evidence-based programs require more frequent in-home contact.
- If an agency isn't able to be in a family's home on a particular week or notes a safety risk in the home, they must speak directly with the FCM, supervisor, or local office director (and call the hotline if needed). The Team must also make a plan for how support and services will be provided that week.

Making and accepting referrals that change lives

- Family preservation is an intervention. It's success relies heavily on how quickly the agency can begin meeting with the family. FCMs have to include as much information about the family as possible in a referral. At a minimum, the referral needs to include an accurate telephone number, names of who is being referred (and a notation about any other children in the home who are not being referred for service), and information about why DCS is intervening.
- Since having only one agency involved with the family is a core principle of IN Family Preservation, it is important that child and family agencies evaluate their ability to fully meet a family's needs. The understanding of those needs may change over time but agencies should only accept referrals if they are confident that they can meet the needs that are known or easily anticipated.
- The FCM can help set up the intervention for success by clearly explaining to the family how IN Family Preservation works, the intensity of the services, and the role of the child and family welfare agency.

- The agency can reinforce that message by helping the family understand how their role differs from DCS's at the beginning services. The agency must also get a signed Release of Information from the family so that they can submit reports and DCS and other involved entities can freely share information with them.
- Finally, the agency should meaningfully involve all family members with the capacity to do so in the process of treatment planning and goal setting. As much as possible, the family should be encouraged to take the lead in sharing their progress and ongoing challenges during team meetings.

Coordinating the Case

- IN Family Preservation somewhat changes the relationship between a FCM and the agency providing services. Once a referral is accepted, the agency, with input from the FCM, determines what evidence based program best meets a family's identified needs.
- *This change can sometimes lead to FCMs who feel cut out of decision making.* Good, collaborative teaming on meeting a family's needs won't feel like this, though. Under Family Preservation, it is more important than ever that agencies proactively share information with FCMs. Reports should include sufficient detail so that the FCM knows what the services and goals are for each referred family member, why a particular evidence-based program will meet those goals, and what progress will look like along the way.
- FCMs should also share their thoughts and information in the formulation of the safety and treatment plans. And, FCMs should feel empowered to call an agency between reporting periods to make sure they understand how the case is progressing and what challenges may lie ahead.
- Provision of concrete supports should be an ongoing and open discussion. Concrete supports should be targeted to prevent removal. There will be differences of opinion on which supports are necessary to head off family separation and when community resources should be accessed instead. If everyone keeps an open mind and focuses on how the family can be successful after case closure, the team should be able to agree about most ideas for concrete supports.
- Child and Family Team meetings should occur regularly and involve all parties. FCMs and agency leads should work together to make the meetings useful and family members should be active participants in discussing what is working well, what changes may be needed, and how they will maintain progress after the case closes.

Closing the Case

- Providers are expected to continue working with the family until the court closes the case. Cases are closed by judges orders.
- If an agency determines that they do not have the services a family needs or is otherwise unable to continue with a case, they must contact the FCM so the case can be referred to a different Family Preservation agency. Agencies are allowed to close cases according to existing non-participation case closure protocols.
- DCS and the agency should work together to keep the judge updated on where a family is in completing an evidence-based program as a family will be most successful if they complete the program before the judge closes their case.