

2008 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-S-19FL

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: FLORIDA

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health and Human Services (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver Demonstration Program
2. Administering Agency Florida Department of Children and Families
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The waiver program allows federal foster care funds to be used for any child welfare purpose rather than being restricted to foster care as generally required under federal law. It also enables funds to be used for a wide variety of child welfare services including prevention, intensive in-home services to prevent placement of children outside the home, reunification, and foster care.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

This program was implemented in October 2006.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address? Florida transitioned to a community-based care system for child welfare based on the premise that agencies closely affiliated with the local community could best initiate and maintain solutions to meet local needs. To function effectively, however, agencies require flexibility to be innovative, improve the system of care, and meet the Adoptions and Safe Families Act outcome measures as evaluated in the Child and Family Service Reviews and the State Assessments. Under the current federal regulations, providers have been challenged to create an innovative system with inflexible funds.

Florida is hampered in its ability to provide appropriate services and achieve excellence in safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and their families due to title IV-E funding inflexibility and burdensome administrative requirements. The inflexibility of the title IV-E regulations prevents the state from meeting the goals of the Adoptions and Safe Families Act. The most significant funding source for child welfare, title IV-E, restricts both the types of services and the settings where they can be delivered and is, therefore, not conducive to strength-based child and family-centered practice.

The current title IV-E funding system is intended to support only those children in foster care settings, and it provides no incentive to focus on preventing children from coming into care. Existing title IV-E funding restrictions are inhibiting the use of funds to support placement types essential for many children now in the child welfare system; historic funding supports only traditional placement types which can no longer meet the needs of all the children entering the foster care system today. The inability of traditional foster care settings to maintain these children has resulted in placement stability issues, as funding limitations push children into inappropriate settings. The Child and Family Service Review process has identified placement stability as a Performance Improvement Plan issue for Florida, but funding restrictions do little to help Florida resolve these issues.

The Child and Family Service Reviews assess whether the services provided are sufficient and appropriate to protect children and strengthen families in order to promote stability and permanence for their children. Since title IV-E funding is provided for removing children and keeping them in government-subsidized care, it provides a perverse incentive against the Adoption and Safe Families Act outcomes.

Florida's waiver provides a statewide laboratory where such a funding strategy can be demonstrated to be more effective and efficient, as well as result in significant improvement in the lives of children and families. With continued focus on the far-reaching goals set by ASFA, this groundbreaking partnership among the state government, community-based care service providers, and communities provides a unique environment to test improvements in the service array that will lead to more timely permanency and enhanced well-being for children without compromising safety or increasing long-term costs. The proposed project will apply title IV-E funding toward a program intervention based on an improved service array, which addresses the needs of the full range of children and families, with funding flexibility.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

The activities are described in the Eligibility Simplification Guide – this is located at <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/GenIVE/IV-E%20Eligibility%20Simplification%20Guide.pdf>

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This program involves a capped allocation of title IV-E funds to the State to increase the array, intensity and accessibility of child welfare services that improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children who are in or at risk of entering out-of-home placement. The overall goals of the State's waiver program are to:

- Improve child and family outcomes through the flexible use of title IV-E funds;
- Provide a broader array of community-based services, and increase the number of children eligible for services; and
- Reduce administrative costs associated with the provision of child welfare services by removing current restrictions on title IV-E eligibility and on the types of services that may be paid for using title IV-E funds.

The program targets title IV-E-eligible and non-IV-E-eligible children ages 0-18 who (1) are currently receiving in-home services or who are in out-of-home placement on October 1, 2006, and (2) all new families with a report of alleged child maltreatment.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

There were no start-up costs. The waiver simply took the level of funding that the State would have received under title IV-E Foster Care and provided that amount like a block grant. Note that 3% annual increases are built in for each of the 5 years of the waiver.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

Funding is based on the state's title IV-E foster care earnings in 2005, approximately \$146 million, for the first year of implementation and continues at that level (plus 3% increases).

16. How is the program funded?

The program is funded with title IV-E foster care funds and general revenue.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

The Title IV-E Waiver Program did not require passage of legislation, executive order or regulations.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The State uses its state automated child welfare information system, and interim child welfare information system.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

The uniqueness of this federal waiver is specific to Florida in that it is statewide. This program is based on a waiver of specific sections of title IV-E of the Social Security Act in order to demonstrate a more effective approach to achieving child welfare outcomes in Florida.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

There are other states operating title IV-E waiver demonstration programs. Each state applies to HHS based on their unique needs. Florida's waiver program is innovative in that it is the only one that is statewide in the country and provides for broad funding flexibility.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

Florida's waiver program is fully implemented as of October 1, 2006.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

Evaluations have been completed and the most recent is located at <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/IVEIMP/Semi-Annual%20Progress%20Report-IV-E%20Waiver%20Demonstration%20Evaluation%20Report%20October%202007.pdf>

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

See the Evaluation referenced above.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The ability of other states to replicate this program was eliminated by Congress in 2006. The authority for HHS to grant this type of waiver was sunset.