The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First Act) became law in February 2018. The Family First Act is a landmark child welfare law with the potential to establish significant changes in the way the child welfare system is funded and operates across the country.

There are many different provisions within this new legislation and the legal community of attorneys, judges, court administrators, and others have several key roles to play ensuring these provisions are implemented successfully. Those legal community roles fall roughly into three categories: (1) engagement in state and local policy and systems change; (2) direct practice implementation applying the law in individual cases; and (3) new judicial and attorney responsibilities in group placement decisions.

The ABA Center on Children and the Law is excited to offer a Family First Prevention Services Act Track at our National Conference on Access to Justice for Children and Families to provide practitioners and child welfare leaders an opportunity to learn how this new applies to your role in any of the three categories.

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

10:30-12PM: A COURTROOM ADVOCATE’S GUIDE TO THE FAMILY FIRST GALAXY

- Allison Green, JD, Missouri Children’s Division
- Stefanie Sprow, Children’s Defense Fund

This session will provide an overview of key components of the Family First Act. Attendees will learn how this legislation can be used as an opportunity for courtroom advocacy, legal innovation, and healthy system transformation. Participants will return to their home jurisdiction with increased confidence and urgency to leverage the language and the spirit of the law in their daily case practice.

1:30-3:00PM: IS “LEAST RESTRICTIVE” THE BEST WE CAN DO? SECURING THE “MOST CONNECTED” PLACEMENT FOR CHILDREN

- Brent Pattison, JD, Children’s Rights Clinic, Drake University School of Law
- Jennifer Pokempner, JD, Juvenile Law Center
- Jennifer Rodriguez, JD, Youth Law Center

Though the law requires children separated from their families to be placed in the least restrictive setting, this does not happen for far too many children and youth. Attendees will discuss practical resources and current research to reframe our message to advocate for the “most connected” placement for child clients.
3:30-5PM: PREVENTION SERVICES – WHAT THIS COULD MEAN FOR THE FIELD IN THE LONGER TERM & THE LAWYER’S ROLE

- Honorable Ernestine S. Gray, Orleans Parish Juvenile Court
- Carlyn Hicks, JD, MBA, CWLS, Mission First Legal Aid Office
- Jerald A. Sharum, JD, Arkansas Department of Human Services and American Association of Health and Human Services Attorneys

The prevention services component of the Family First Act introduces complex questions for attorneys regarding safety decision making, due process, reasonable efforts, and judicial review. This session will examine those questions more closely and look at the role of counsel for children, parents, and agencies in ensuring prevention services are implemented in a way that is compatible with child welfare law.

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

9:00-10:30AM: IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES FROM A STATE PERSPECTIVE

- Carl Ayers, MSW, Virginia Department of Social Services
- Bill Delisio, MSLA, Colorado State Court Administrator's Office
- Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW, Maryland Department of Human Resources
- Prudence Beidler Carr, JD, ABA Center on Children and the Law (Moderator)

Presenters will discuss Family First implementation from a state perspective based on their work integrating the legal community in the planning process in Virginia, Colorado, Maryland.

10:45AM-12:15PM: A TOOL FOR THE LEGAL COMMUNITY IN AND OUT OF THE COURTROOM

- Cristina Cooper, JD, ABA Center on Children and the Law
- Alicia Davis, JD, National Center for State Courts

The legal community has a critical role to play ensuring key provisions of the Family First Act are implemented successfully, ranging from residential treatment placements with parents, to extended reunification services, and Chafee older youth service expansions. This session will provide attorneys and members of the legal community, including judges, court administrators and CASAs guidance for using the new legislation to advance children and families’ interests and their states’ larger child welfare system goals.

1:30-3:00PM: FAMILY FIRST ACT - NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINSHIP FAMILIES

- Heidi Redlich Epstein, JD, MSW, ABA Center on Children and the Law
- Ana Beltran, JD, Generations United

This session will explore the kinship provisions of the Family First Act: kinship navigator programs, foster home licensing, prevention services, and engaging family for children in congregate care. As kinship advocates or legal stakeholders who want to ensure the best possible outcomes for children, we
will collectively explore the benefits of this new law for the kinship triad (parents, kinship caregiver, and children) as well as potential implementation challenges.

3:30-5:00PM: FROM THE GREENBOOK TO FAMILY FIRST - BUILDING BRIDGES AT THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD WELFARE

- **Honorable Karen Howze (ret), JD, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges**
- **Connie Hickman Tanner, JD, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges**

Achieving safety and well-being for families experiencing domestic violence continues to be a challenge, and professionals have called for elements of child welfare practice that the Greenbook (NCJFCJ 1999) did not fully explore, including the implicit bias and systemic racism impacting families of color, the need for total family engagement (including fathers), and the need for fuller understanding of protective factors in these cases. The Family First Act presents courts and communities an opportunity to do community-based prevention work to take up these important issues.