



Tips for talking to people about the Family First Prevention Services Act

Try referring to the new legislation as **Family First**, the Family First Act or by its full name of the Family First Prevention Services Act, rather than FFPSA. Here's why:

- The name of the law helps to describe its goal and a vision for children and families involved in the child welfare system. It reflects the key elements of the law: A *family first* for children and teens through quality *prevention services*.
- When talking to audiences beyond child welfare, using Family First reinforces the law's purpose²: To prioritize having children and teens growing up in families.
- FFPSA is alphabet soup. The letters sound bureaucratic and audiences beyond children and family services will not know what is being discussed.

What's in a word?

Words often mean different things to different audiences and can evoke different responses.

- Try to be inspirational and visionary when you describe Family First. Use words such as providing an **opportunity to be innovative** or **having the ability to be responsive** to the individual needs of children and teens.

Here's why it matters: Stagnant terms such as "process" or "tools" are the means to something rather than the result or a shared value. As much as possible, the words you choose to write or say should be inspirational, focusing on how your agency helps children and families, rather than on the process of reform or implementation of new policies.

- Try saying, "children and teens **growing up in a family**," rather than *living with* or *placed with* a family.

Here's why it matters: The term "growing up" reminds the listener that kids need help as they grow and develop into adults. Kids need a family, not a placement or just a living arrangement.

- If you refer to the cost of services, try saying **cost-efficient** rather than *cost-savings* or *cost-cutting*.

Here's why it matters: It's best not to imply that taxpayers are saving money at children's expense. People want government efficiency, not necessarily to cut programs.

- Try saying **customized or individualized care** rather than *specialized care*.

Here's why it matters: Whenever possible, reinforce that kids need services and treatment tailored to their individual needs, not a cookie-cutter approach.

- Try saying **research on child and adolescent development** rather than *research on brain development*.

Here's why it matters: A broader frame is better and encompasses medical, educational and social development, especially with an emphasis on "what works" to assist healthy child and adolescent development.

- Try saying "**institutional**" and avoiding using the term "**congregate.**"

Here's why it matters: For many people, the word is similar to congregation or congregated (meaning gathering) and is connected to belonging to a church or place of faith; it conveys a positive experience. The average person does not think of congregate care as living in an institution or orphanage.