

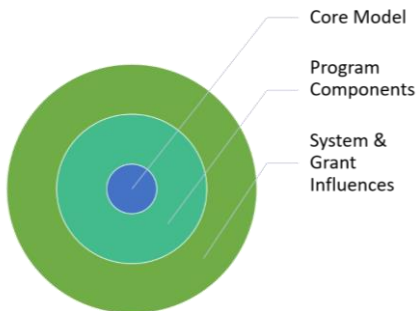
Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development Overview

Maryland DHS applied for and was awarded the national Center for Excellence (CfE) in Foster Family Development grant by the Administration of Children and Families. The grant will provide \$8 million, spread over a four-year federal fiscal year period, which began on October 1, 2019. The Social Services Administration (SSA) is implementing this project in partnership with the University of Maryland Institute for Innovation.

The purpose of this grant is to fund one Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development that will develop one model program for the engagement, development and support of foster families that have the capacity to provide community-supported, family based placements that support comprehensive family engagement and family well-being, to be implemented in 4-6 local sites. In an effort to promote reunification and maintain children out of needless congregate care placements, this pool of families will be prepared and supported by the child welfare system to provide enhanced reunification and stability supports to biological families and to provide enhanced stability and well-being supports to children transitioning out of congregate care to family settings. The Center will secure partnerships that build corresponding knowledge, expertise and capacity in developing and implementing the model program and in evaluating the process and impact on outcomes. The model program will be integrated with other existing programs, policies and practices promoting improved system response and comprehensive systemic change.

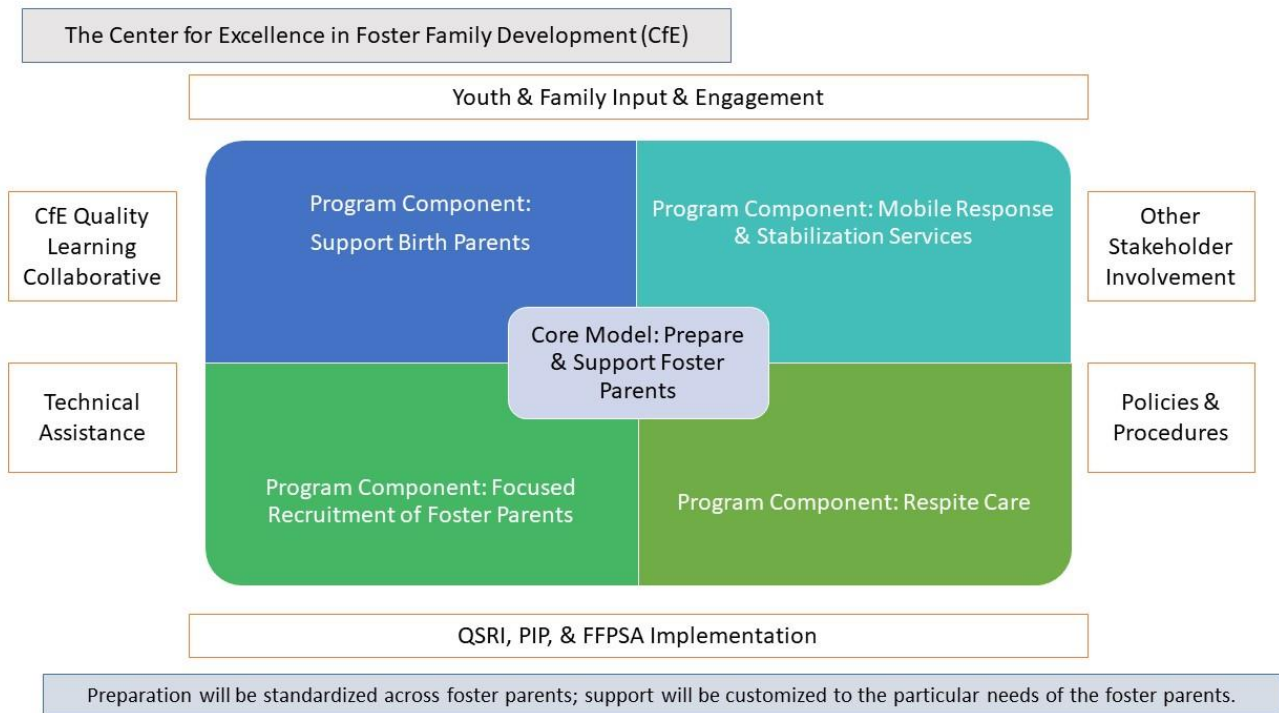
Maryland proposed to implement a model program that will focus on 3 major activities:

- a. **Recruit** quality resource foster families, including targeted recruitment from the neighborhoods and communities with high numbers of foster care entries and foster children placed in congregate care;
- b. **Prepare** those families to serve as professional members of a child's support network, including providing enhanced support to children and their birth families; and
- c. **Support** resource foster families, birth families, and children in care with comprehensive well-being and placement stability services.



Our core model will be supported by key program components and system and grant influences (see diagram on next page). The core model speaks to the importance of resource (foster) parents being enrolled in (recruited) the purpose of the Center for Excellence. The theory of change is that when resource parents (RP) are provided comprehensive preparation and support (Keep and KeepSafe Training) they:

- are able to partner meaningfully with Birth Parents (BP) to support (via Parenting Through Change-Reunification (PTC-R) model), shared parenting, and
 - feel capable of supporting BP and youth in their homes even when there are challenges, and
 - feel increased capacity to take care of themselves and their children so that there is:
 - Increased placement stability and child well-being;
 - Less utilization of non-family-based settings;
 - Reduction in re-traumatization of RP, BP, and youth so that:
 - ✓ There is timely and lasting reunification;
 - ✓ Families have the knowledge and resources to support themselves in their communities; and
 - ✓ RP are able to ask for and get the support they need when they need it.



The framework of the model is based on a quality improvement center (QIC) model in 4-6 selected sites across the State. This will include in-person learning sessions, plan-do-study-act cycles, multidisciplinary quality improvement teams, and data collection for quality improvement. The QIC will convene several times over the 4-year grant period to support peer learning and cross-site exchange of information.

Desired outcomes include that Maryland will improve permanency outcomes for children, decrease congregate care and strengthen parent-child and foster-birth family relationships. This project is going to require a collaborative effort between SSA, resource parents and staff in 4-6 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) selected sites (identified through a site selection process), as well as partner agencies. It is a cooperative grant which means that the Administration of Children and Families will have substantial involvement and close monitoring of the related activities.

SSA is currently in the year 3 Implementation phase and has selected 5 LDSS to pilot the project. The CfE sites are Baltimore County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Prince George’s County, and Montgomery County. Activities related to model development, site selection, recruitment and evaluation are driven by a steering committee and advisory committee to include the voice of families.