

Advancing a Family-Centered Approach:

Lessons from the Prevention and Family Recovery (PFR) Initiative

PUTTING IDEAS INTO ACTION - KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION SERIES | AUGUST 2021



LESSON 2: The Effectiveness of Parenting and Children's Services is Integrally Linked to Timely and Effective Substance Use Disorder Treatment

This lesson is one of a set of nine lessons from the Prevention and Family Recovery (PFR) initiative. The other PFR lessons and an overview of the complete Knowledge Application Series can be accessed [here](#).



Advancing the capacity of family treatment court teams to provide a comprehensive family-centered approach that improves child, parent, and family outcomes

LESSON 2:

The Effectiveness of Parenting and Children's Services is Integrally Linked to Timely and Effective Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The round 1 Prevention and Family Recovery (PFR) grantees learned that positive child welfare and court outcomes occur when a parent with a substance use disorder successfully engages in treatment, stays in treatment, completes the program, and then smoothly transitions to a sustained recovery. The provision of quality substance use disorder treatment is critical to improving family functioning and overall child, parent, and family well-being.

Depending on the size of the family treatment court's (FTC's) jurisdiction and the structure of its substance use disorder and mental health treatment systems, an FTC may work with just one or two preferred providers or as many as a dozen different community treatment agencies. In all cases, treatment providers need to be connected to FTC core operations, and all other FTC team members need to fully understand the type and effectiveness of the treatment provided to families.¹

A recurring theme during round 2 was grantees' need to actively reach out to substance use disorder treatment providers to strengthen relationships, increase communication, enhance information sharing,

and better integrate the treatment team into FTC operations. All four sites recognized that to improve treatment outcomes, such as timely access to treatment and treatment retention, treatment providers must be on board as a core partner with shared values. In addition, treatment partners must be actively engaged in FTC staffings and court hearings and included in decisions regarding practice and program improvements.

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The grantees increasingly recognized that the FTC needed to be an educated consumer of quality, evidence-based substance use disorder treatment to ensure these services meet the needs of their FTC participants and their families. FTC core staff and key partners sought to broaden their understanding of and monitor the treatment that participants received to ensure they align with the FTC's family-centered mission.

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¹ The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW) recently released a series of three modules on [*Implementing a Family-Centered Approach for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders and Involved with Child Welfare Services*](#). The series is designed for partners at the state, county, and agency levels that are working together to improve systems, services, and outcomes for children and families affected by substance use disorders.

Strategies to Advance the Provision of Quality, Family-Centered Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The 2017 PFR [Brief 2](#) highlighted critical components to effectively integrate substance use disorder treatment into FTC operations. Building on these insights, the second round of grantees used the following strategies to strengthen relationships with treatment providers and enhance the quality of treatment:

- ▶ **Ongoing facilitated discussions with treatment providers.** This activity helps build collaborative relationships, increase reciprocal information sharing and trust, clearly define roles and responsibilities, and provide education about the benefits of a family-centered approach.
- ▶ **Informal onsite visits to treatment facilities.** This strategy enhances relationship-building and allows FTC team members and partners to observe firsthand the enrollment process and services provided to participants in the FTC (and possibly other families receiving treatment who are involved in the child welfare system).
- ▶ **Structured trauma and treatment walkthroughs of outpatient and residential facilities.**

Walkthroughs provide FTC team members and partners more in-depth insight into providers' treatment practices, pinpoint treatment barriers and gaps in trauma-informed care, and jumpstart candid conversations among partners about how to solve identified issues.²

- ▶ **Standardized progress reporting.** This practice ensures that all treatment providers, including those who may not regularly attend staffings or court hearings, share meaningful and consistent information about families' needs and progress to inform appropriate therapeutic responses.
- ▶ **Modified service provider contracts.** Contracts that incorporate family-centered practices promote increased accountability for sustained quality treatment and outcomes that improve overall family well-being.

"Because we have a full child and family team, we bring a lot of information about child development and what's going on with those kids when they're involved with us, either because they live with their moms in residential [treatment] or because we're providing some sort of service."

– Grantee team member | Substance use disorder treatment provider

2 For guidance on questions to initiate discussion with substance use disorder treatment partners, refer to the NCSACW 2018 technical assistance tool, [Understanding Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Resource Guide for Professionals Referring to Treatment](#). For more information about the trauma walkthrough process, refer to NCSACW's 2015 [Trauma-Informed Care Walkthrough Project Report: Data and Findings](#).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT

In jurisdictions where collaboration with the primary treatment providers is well-established and strong, substance use disorder treatment representatives:

- ▶ Understand the court and child welfare systems and processes
- ▶ Actively collaborate with child welfare partners and other FTC team members
- ▶ Attend and are actively engaged in weekly staffings and court hearings
- ▶ Are members of the steering committee and involved in decision-making about program and policy improvements
- ▶ Communicate frequently with FTC team members
- ▶ Are available to set up immediate intake appointments or assessments with new participants
- ▶ Provide FTC participants with priority access to treatment
- ▶ Respond to the emerging or unmet needs of FTC participants

The Critical Role of Treatment Providers in Implementing a Family-Centered Approach

For the PFR grantees, substance use disorder treatment providers are expanding their vital role in ensuring that families (not just the individual parent) receive the array of treatment and related support services that they need. As educated consumers of quality, family-centered substance use disorder treatment, the FTCs increasingly collaborated with treatment providers who were willing to integrate evidence-based parenting programs and other child and family services into their treatment programs. In addition to evidence-based family strengthening programs, treatment partners provided other key supports, such as comprehensive family-centered assessments (e.g., substance use, mental health, domestic violence, parenting). They also helped families connect to housing support, domestic violence services, supervised therapeutic parenting time, and other community services.



LESSON 2

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IS INTEGRALLY LINKED TO TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT

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In some jurisdictions, the FTC's existing substance use disorder treatment partner may also be the FTC's preferred provider for evidence-based parenting interventions. However, even a current treatment partner may find it challenging to fully commit to implementing these additional services, especially if FTC participants represent only a small percentage of their overall client base. To obtain the buy-in of treatment partners for desired service enhancements, the FTC may want to financially support staff training that enables the treatment provider to extend the services to their other clients who are not FTC participants. This type of approach builds the treatment provider's overall capacity (as well as the FTC's) to ensure families' needs are met. As a result of the enhanced collaboration and expanded role in service delivery, treatment partners may be more invested in sustaining the interventions.

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"The beauty of how we're all set up is we're doing this all right here. If things are really fragmented for the family and if you have to go to different places to get the services that you need, that's hard."

- Grantee team member | Substance use disorder treatment provider





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LESSON 1:

Increased, renewed, and continued focus on **Cross-Systems Collaboration** is needed to achieve and sustain systems change

LESSON 2:

The effectiveness of parenting and children's services is integrally linked to **Timely and Effective Substance Use Disorder Treatment**

LESSON 3:

A **Formal Governance Structure** is necessary to prioritize, oversee, and sustain the FTC

LESSON 4:

FTC teams need to maintain a consistent and strong focus on **FTC Participant Recruitment, Timely Engagement, and Retention**

LESSON 5:

Developing the **Evidence-Based Program Capacity** of sites is a complex undertaking

LESSON 6:

FTC teams need to **Build Bridges to Connect Families** to services and service providers to each other

LESSON 7:

Integrating a **Truly Family-Centered Approach** requires several paradigm shifts

LESSON 8:

Building Data Capacity to advance a family-centered approach involves moving beyond just numbers

LESSON 9:

Achieving larger systems change requires understanding and adapting to the changing **Contextual Environment**



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For more information about the PFR initiative, visit the [PFR home page](#) or email Children and Family Futures at contact@cffutures.org



Children and Family Futures

Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes

Children and Family Futures (CFF) is a national nonprofit organization based in Lake Forest, California that focuses on the intersections among child welfare, mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and court systems. CFF has over two decades of experience in practice, policy, and evaluation arenas to support tribes, states, regions, and communities in their efforts to improve outcomes for children and families. We believe parents with mental health and substance use disorders should maintain hope of achieving recovery and family stability so they can care for their children. While no single system or agency working by itself can help parents achieve that goal, we recognize that recovery happens within the context of the family and that professionals from a variety of agencies and systems must work together to meet the needs of families.

Children and Family Futures provides a full range of consulting, technical assistance, strategic planning, and evaluation services for substance use disorder treatment, child welfare, courts, and the communities they serve. To learn more about CFF, visit www.cffutures.org.

The mission of Children and Family Futures is to prevent child abuse and neglect while improving safety, permanency, well-being, and recovery outcomes with equity for all children, parents, and families affected by trauma, substance use, and mental disorders.



The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation,

child well-being, and medical research, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties. The mission of the foundation's Child Well-being Program is to promote children's healthy development and protect them from abuse and neglect. To that end, DDCF takes a funding approach that centers on intergenerational work that bolsters culturally, geographically, and locally relevant programs with and for communities to foster the long-term well-being of families. To learn more, visit www.ddcf.org.

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

Based in Charlotte and established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke, The Duke Endowment is a private foundation that strengthens communities in North Carolina and South Carolina by nurturing children, promoting health, educating minds, and enriching spirits. Since its founding, The Duke Endowment has distributed more than \$4 billion in grants. The Endowment shares a name with Duke University and Duke Energy, but all are separate organizations. To learn more about the Endowment, visit www.dukeendowment.org.