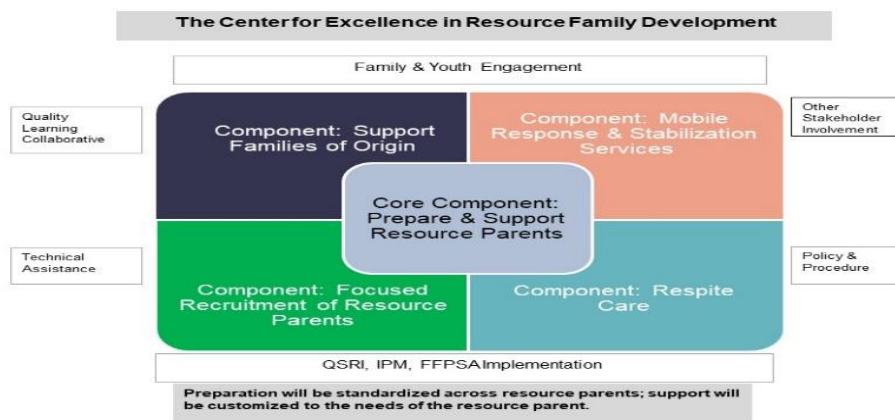


Center for Excellence in Resource Family Development Overview

Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), Social Services Administration (SSA) was awarded the national Center for Excellence (CfE) in Resource Family Development grant by the federal Children’s Bureau, Administration of Children and Families. The grant was awarded only to the state of Maryland and provides \$8 million, spread over the life of the grant, which began on October 1, 2019. DHS/SSA is implementing this project in partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work, Institute for Innovation and Implementation.

The Maryland CfE is implementing a national program model for the engagement, development, and support of resource families. The goal of the CfE is to promote reunification of children with their families of origin and to minimize congregate care placements by providing resource parents with enhanced support services and building partnerships between resource parents and families of origin. The CfE model builds on the existing DHS/SSA Integrated Practice Model that articulates Maryland’s vision and guiding principles for partnering with families based on the values of CARE: Collaboration, Advocacy, Respect and Empowerment. The CfE is aligned with existing DHS/SSA programs, policies, and practices to achieve comprehensive systemic change and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

The CfE Model focuses on 3 major activities: targeted recruitment, preparation, and support of resource families, further supported by key program components and system initiatives. See model diagram below.



The core model highlights the importance of resource parent active participation in the CfE. The theory of change suggests when resource parents are provided comprehensive preparation and support through additional training and participation in a peer educational and support program, Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported (KEEP/KEEP SAFE), they:

- are able to partner with families of origin and practice shared parenting, especially when the birth parents participate in Parenting Through Change-Reunification (PTC-R) groups;
- feel capable of supporting the children/youth in their homes and their families of origin, even when there are challenges; and
- feel an increased capacity to take care of themselves and the children in their care.

Desired outcomes include that Maryland will improve permanency outcomes for children, decrease inappropriate use of congregate care and strengthen parent-child and foster-birth family relationships.

The CfE utilizes the Quality Improvement Collaborative (QIC) model with five selected Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) sites across the State of Maryland. The selected sites are Baltimore County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County. Activities related to model implementation, recruitment, training, and evaluation are guided by a steering committee and advisory committee of representatives from DHS, The Institute, community agencies, and persons with lived experience (kinship care parents and youth).