



FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

KEEPING FAMILIES HEALTHY AND INTACT

Family Preservation Program – San Francisco

November 2018

What are family preservation services?

Family preservation services are designed to keep children **safe and living with their families** by helping families to improve parenting and family functioning. Services are characterized by small caseloads, intensive services and home-visitation.

Why leave children with their families?

Separating children from their families can have lasting, devastating effects on children. Studies have shown that children removed from their homes (compared to those who were involved with child welfare but not removed) have higher rates of behavioral problems, health problems, depression, anxiety, and conduct problems.

Many children can safely remain at home and develop healthily if their caregivers are provided the services and resources to empower them. We can protect the children and foster their development by supporting their parents! Family preservation can be safer; have less negative effects (both short-term and long-term) on a child; and be more cost-efficient than out-of-home care.

State & County Initiatives

Since our inception, FSS has believed that family preservation services are beneficial for the child, family and society. In the last couple years, statewide and county initiatives have highlighted these same values. These include:

Safety Organized Practice (SOP)

County child welfare agencies across the state have adopted an approach called “Safety Organized Practice” which focuses child protective services specifically on the impact of the caregiver’s **actions** on the child and **not the circumstances** of the family, such as poverty, lack of community resources, isolation. The program targets three areas:

- What are we worried about? (What was the harm to the child? What is the future risk?)
- What is working well? (What strengths can be fostered to address the risk?)
- What needs to happen next? (What supports are needed? What will tell us when things are safe?)

Continuum of Care Reform (CCR)

Research has shown that children have a better track record when left in their homes than when removed from their families. Efforts across California are focusing on supporting the family in situations where the child can safely remain at home. If the harm or risk is too great for the child to remain at home, the goal is to place the child in the most “family-like” placement available (e.g., kinship or foster families as opposed to group care.)

San Francisco Family Preservation Program

The San Francisco Family Preservation Program began in 1991 as a home-based, intensive case management program. It has been chosen in a number of competitive bids and has been funded since then.

In 2011 San Francisco County decided to move the funding from the traditional intensive case-management model to an evidence-based, structured parenting curriculum, called SafeCare®. This is an internationally recognized program from Georgia State University to work with families with children 0-5 years old where child neglect is a concern. The curriculum consists of three modules (Health, Safety, Parent/Child or Infant Interaction) with six lessons each.

FSS and the Epiphany Center were chosen to provide this new service. As a result of the long SafeCare® training and accreditation process necessary to faithfully implement the model, we now have “sole source” status for future funding; it does not have to go out to bid.

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) measures

Like many of our funding agencies, FSS has adopted the Results-Based Accountability model for evaluating services. This model looks at three clear questions to evaluate the program and sets up performance objectives for each. Here are the RBAs for the SafeCare® program.

SafeCare® (July 2017-June 2018)		
Performance Area	Objective	Results
How much did we do?	Opened	100 families
	Closed	103 families
	Graduated	52% (*national average is 50%)
	Received safety materials (safety gates, latches, etc.)	100%
	Received health materials (first aid kits, thermometers, etc.)	100%
How well did we do it?	Reported that staff were warm and friendly	100%
Is anyone better off?	Reduced safety hazards in their homes	100%
	Improved their knowledge of caring for their children	100%
	Reported that services helped improve their family communication	100%

In addition, SFHSA did a comparison of families from 2011-2014 who participated in SafeCare® (whether they graduated or not) and SFHSA families who did not participate in SafeCare®. Those families who did not receive SafeCare® had a 9% recidivism rate, while the SafeCare® families had a 7% rate - a 22% difference.