



Call for External Research Teams to Conduct Rigorous Evaluations of Programs/Services under Colorado's Family First Strategy

The [Colorado Department of Human Services](#) has partnered with the [Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab](#) (Colorado Lab) at the University of Denver to coordinate rigorous evaluations of programs/services prioritized by the state for Family First. As the designated [Family First Evidence- Building Hub](#) (the Hub), the Colorado Lab is accepting Letters of Interest (LOIs) from research teams interested in receiving funding to design and conduct a rigorous evaluation.

Based on a review of gaps in the current Family First Service Array and the needs of Colorado children, youth, and families, the following five programs/services were prioritized for potential evidence-building and inclusion in [Colorado's 5-Year Family First Prevention Services Plan](#) (Colorado's Plan). For programs/ services already rated by the [Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse](#) (Clearinghouse), evaluations should be designed to advance the program/service to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation. For programs/services not yet rated by the Clearinghouse, evaluations should prepare the program/service for a future Clearinghouse rating of *promising* or above.

- 1. Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)** is a substance use program/service, currently rated as *promising* by the Clearinghouse. Currently, there are no programs/services in Colorado's Family First Service Array specifically approved for the substance use target area, and SBIRT stands to fill this gap. SBIRT is already present and used in Colorado. The proposed study should be designed with the goal of moving SBIRT to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation.
- 2. Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT)** is a mental health program/service, currently rated as *promising* by the Clearinghouse. CCPT can fill the gap in the mental health service array for younger children, and Colorado has providers with the qualifications needed to deliver this service. The proposed study should be designed with the goal of moving CCPT to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation.
- 3. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** is a mental health program/service, currently rated as *supported* by the Clearinghouse. EMDR is available in Colorado and can bolster the mental health array given its broad base of application and reach. The proposed study should be designed with the goal of moving EMDR to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation.
- 4. Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)** is a mental health program/service. Both TBRI 101 and TBRI Caregiver Training are currently rated as *promising* by the Clearinghouse. TBRI was prioritized in Colorado's long-term Family First strategy to bolster the mental health array and reach a wider range of child/youth ages. TBRI is present in Colorado for select populations. The proposed study should evaluate either TBRI 101 or TBRI Caregiver Training and be designed with the goal of moving TBRI to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation.
- 5. Functional Family Therapy (FFT) - Telehealth Enhanced** is an adaptation of FFT, which is a mental health program/service currently in Colorado's Plan and rated as *well-supported* by the Clearinghouse. This telehealth/ hybrid version of FFT is not yet rated by the Clearinghouse and could help bolster service availability in rural areas of Colorado. The proposed study should be designed with the goal of preparing the adaptation for an initial Clearinghouse rating.
- 6. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT):** is a mental health program/service, currently rated as *promising* by the Clearinghouse. TF-CBT was prioritized for the state's short-term Family First strategy, to ensure wide availability of an evidence-based mental health service that targets an expansive age range and has multiple access options. The proposed study should be designed with the goal of moving TF-CBT to a *supported* or *well-supported* evidence designation.



The Family First Evidence-Building Hub has funding to support two rigorous evaluation studies beginning in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024. Initial evaluation design activities will begin in SFY24, and the studies will launch in early SFY25 and can continue for multiple years, depending on design. Budgets for rigorous evaluations funded by the Family First Evidence-Building Hub are anticipated to range from \$75,000 to \$500,000 over the life of the study. We welcome proposals that braid these funds with other evaluation resources. For example, MDRC is evaluating Child First using a combination of funds from Arnold Ventures and the Family First Evidence-Building Hub to conduct a randomized controlled trial in three states.

The LOIs are intended to generate information on feasibility, costs, and unique opportunities to build evidence on the identified programs/services to help prioritize investments. The Hub will select one to two teams to evaluate one to two programs/services. The Hub will accept one LOI per proposed program/service, and teams may submit multiple LOIs, each tailored to a specific program/service. LOIs should be no longer than four pages and submitted to Ellen Witt at ellen@coloradolab.org by Friday, February 23. LOIs should identify the program/service you propose to evaluate and include:

- 1. Approach:** Briefly explain your proposed evaluation design, including:
 - a. How it is informed by and builds on existing evidence, and how it can ready the program/service for a Clearinghouse rating and potentially advance the evidence designation.
 - b. If applicable, any ongoing relevant studies (in Colorado or nationally), whether there are opportunities to partner with an existing research team, and/or how the proposed design will complement (avoiding duplication with) any ongoing studies.
 - c. The unique opportunity for evaluation of this program/service in terms of timing, partnerships, considerations for cultural responsiveness or better understanding evidence for communities of color, and/or leveraging ongoing evidence-building efforts.
 - d. Feasibility of this approach within the current landscape, along with any major anticipated challenges and how you would overcome them.
- 2. Team:** Briefly describe relevant qualifications and experiences of project team leads, and how the team is well-positioned to feasibly execute the proposed study within Colorado. Include any experience with evidence-building for Family First and familiarity with Colorado's Plan. Identify key partners to be engaged during the evaluation design and implementation phases, including roles and whether the partnerships are already established. Also identify any anticipated support that will be needed from the Hub in successful completion of the proposed evaluation plan.
- 3. Timeline:** Include a high-level timeline with proposed project milestones for the study. At a minimum, milestones should include an evaluation plan, Institutional Review Board approval, study site identification and onboarding (for primary data collection) and/or obtaining secondary administrative datasets, regular progress memos, report(s) with interim/preliminary findings, and a report with final findings. The timeline should account for iterative review and feedback on deliverables by the Hub and state partners. A detailed scope of work will be requested should your team be selected.
- 4. Cost:** Propose a high-level cost estimate for the project, organized by SFY (July 1- June 30). A detailed budget will be requested should your team be selected, and modifications to the budget may be made based on the final scope of work.

Questions may be directed to ellen@coloradolab.org. The Colorado Lab will host a Q&A session on January 31, 2024 at 12:00 PM MST. Please email ellen@coloradolab.org if you would like to be included on the invite for the Q&A session.