

## Building Evidence for Family First Programs and Services: *Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens (FHF-T)*



### Background

The [Family First Prevention Services Act](#) incentivizes child welfare approaches that prioritize keeping kids safe and families together. This legislation authorizes federal reimbursement to states for the delivery of evidence-based programs and services that prevent the need for foster care. In October 2022, the Administration for Children and Families approved Colorado's bold [Five-Year Family First Prevention Services Plan](#) (Colorado's Plan) to maximize prevention investments in child welfare that help Colorado's children, youth, and families thrive, together.

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (Colorado Lab) to serve as the [Family First Evidence-Building Hub](#). In this role, the Colorado Lab ensures strategic investments in evidence building for Family First programs and services. The Hub coordinates evaluations that are designed to both meet Colorado-specific learning goals and advance [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) (Clearinghouse) evidence designations.

### Why FHF-T?

[FHF-T](#) is a 30-week mentoring program for 8th and 9th graders with current or previous child welfare involvement due to one or more adverse childhood experiences. It builds on youth's strengths and interests by engaging teens in visioning and goal-setting exercises, skills training, and workshops to reduce adverse outcomes. FHF-T supports youth in their development across the *I REACH* domains of identity, relationships, education, activities, careers, and health. FHF-T was prioritized to strengthen Colorado's [mental health service array](#) and expand supports for older youth in community settings. The program is beginning to be implemented through three community-based agencies in Colorado.

### Evidence Building for FHF-T

FHF-T has received a "does not meet criteria" evidence designation from the Clearinghouse and is not yet in Colorado's Plan. Aligned with Step 5 on the [Steps to Building Evidence](#), [Dr. Heather Taussig](#) at the University of Denver's (DU's) Graduate School of Social Work is conducting follow-up analyses to the initial [randomized controlled trial](#) (RCT), with the goal of building evidence toward a "promising" or "supported" designation. The follow-up analyses will focus on permanency and child well-being outcomes (behavioral and emotional functioning, social functioning, and delinquent behavior).



**The analyses explore FHF-T's impact on child permanency and child well-being (delinquent behavior) outcomes, such as court charges and self-reported delinquency.**

These analyses began in 2024 and will be ongoing.

*The evaluation is being conducted by DU on behalf of CDHS, under the coordination of the Colorado Lab's Family First Evidence-Building Hub.*

