



Re-visioning Residential Care Services for Children and Youth: The Family First Prevention Services Act & the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment

CONTACT US
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FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was passed into law on February 9, 2018 as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. The law expands the use of federal Title IV-E child welfare dollars to prevent entry into foster care, and limits funding for residential care, with some exceptions. Among the FFPSA approved models of residential care are qualified residential treatment programs, maternity homes, independent living facilities, and group homes for sexually exploited or at-risk youth. Notably, the FFPSA calls for **quality residential care**.

GROUP CARE QUALITY STANDARDS

The *Group Care Quality Standards*, established in 2015, represent research-informed, best practice standards for residential care. The *Group Care Quality Standards Assessment* (GCQSA) is a multi-dimensional assessment designed to measure group homes' performance on the standards. The GCQSA draws upon empirically-driven frameworks to transform residential services through the integration of research-informed practice standards, on-going assessment, and continuous quality improvement.

The assessment consists of two sections. In Section I, information is collected about residential program models and services. Section II of the GCQSA measures standards in eight specified quality practice domains:

1. Assessment, Admission, & Service Planning
2. Positive, Safe Living Environment
3. Monitor & Report Problems
4. Family, Culture, & Spirituality
5. Professional & Competent Staff
6. Program Elements
7. Education, Skills, & Positive Outcomes
8. Pre-Discharge/Post-Discharge Processes

COMPATIBILITY OF THE FFPSA AND GCQSA

There is substantial agreement between the quality elements identified in the FFPSA and the GCQSA. In fact, the GCQSA measures each of the specified quality elements identified in the

FFPSA to some degree. The specific sections of the GCQSA that include measures of the specified quality elements are indicated in the table.

Alignment in FFPSA Quality Elements & GCQSA

FFPSA	GCQSA
Accreditation	Section I
Clinical/Nursing services	Section I
Evidence-based, validated assessments	Section II: Domain 1
Discharge planning services and aftercare	Section II: Domain 8
Family involvement	Section II: Domains 1, 4, 8
Trauma-informed treatment approach	Section II: Domain 6

The GCQSA identifies and provides on-going assessment of a comprehensive set of research-informed standards. The standards outlined in the GCQSA extend to ALL models of residential and shelter care because **quality care is essential in all settings**.

A CASE EXAMPLE—PROMOTING QUALITY RESIDENTIAL CARE IN FLORIDA

Effective July 1, 2017, Section 409.996 (22) of the Florida Statutes was amended, requiring the Department of Children and Families (Department) to develop a statewide accountability system for residential group care providers based on measurable quality standards. The GCQSA is the core measure for Florida's accountability system. In addition to facilitating quality assurance and improvement, the Department is using the GCQSA to collect data on residential programs and assess the implementation of the quality elements outlined in the FFPSA. The data provide a comprehensive landscape of residential care across the state and information to help guide the integration of FFPSA requirements while monitoring changes in residential care over time.

CONCLUSION

The FFPSA represents an opportunity to revision and refine residential care for higher-risk foster youth. The GCQSA represents a research-based, data-driven system to facilitate the process of achieving high quality, effective residential care.

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