



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: E. Stover
517-285-6270
stovere@michigan.gov

MDHHS and community partners launch MiFamily Together pilot to help preserve families

LANSING, Mich. — To streamline services and help preserve families, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is partnering with several community-based organizations to launch the MiFamily Together program.

The two-year pilot program began Tuesday, Oct. 1 in 25 counties. Its goal is to deliver more flexible family preservation programming that is responsive to each family's needs whether they are in crisis, need some extra support to avoid out-of-home placement, or have children returning home from foster care. The program was developed in partnership with the Michigan Federation for Children and Families, a Lived Experience Advisory Council, and private agency representatives who work directly with families.

"The launch of the MiFamily Together pilot is an important shift in the way we deliver services," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "The flexibility this program provides, and its holistic approach will have a positive impact on Michigan families and provide seamless transitions to additional resources as their needs change."

The pilot is designed to streamline access to services and create efficiencies by concentrating resources, integrating best practices and reducing the number of different programs families must navigate as their needs change. This approach should increase positive outcomes as families will now be able to build rapport and be connected with the same worker throughout their participation in the program.

"Switching workers and programs can lead to mistrust, confusion and families having to re-tell their stories," said Brittney Barros, lead advisor of the Family Preservation Lived Experience Advisory Council. "When services are connected to one worker and one program, it strengthens the ability for families to prosper."

MDHHS has partnered with the Michigan Federation for Children and Families and Ascend at the Aspen Institute to implement a two-generation, or 2Gen, whole-family approach into the MiFamily Together program. 2Gen is a method of engagement that integrates a more comprehensive and holistic approach to working with both the children and the caregivers in the home.

Although the main focus of service delivery will be to reduce the risk of child maltreatment, 2Gen recognizes the importance of addressing the needs of the whole

family unit while increasing well-being and prosperity. This includes adult/child education, mental and physical health, supporting job skill development, community engagement and building a social support network will also be integrated into service delivery.

“Community-based organizations are well-positioned to develop supports and increase the family’s overall well-being by working with both the adults and the children in the home,” said Kadi Prout of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families. “The 2Gen approach recognizes that when families have support in the many domains of their lives and the voice to drive their own outcomes, they are on a path to full family success, and we will see reduced child abuse and neglect as a result.”

MDHHS has also partnered with the University of Kentucky, Center for Innovation in Population Health, to integrate the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) into the pilot program. FAST is a tool that helps staff in identifying critical needs and protective factors of families through rapport building and engagement. The University of Michigan Child and Adolescent Data Lab will be providing analysis and ongoing evaluation of the pilot.

For more information, visit the [Michigan Federation for Children and Families](#) website.

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