QIC·R
NATIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER ON FAMILY-CENTERED REUNIFICATION

Improving Systems & Implementing Interventions to Support Lasting Reunification of Families

ABOUT

The National Quality Improvement Center on Family-Centered Reunification (QIC-R), in collaboration with the Children's Bureau (CB), invites eligible applicants to participate in this project. Applications are limited to **state governments, county governments, and federally recognized American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) tribal governments.** The primary applicants need both the access and the authority to assess and make changes in child welfare (CW) agencies and workforce practices.

Eligible applicants can apply for this grant to support the current and new practices that support timely, stable, and lasting reunification of families by preserving, nurturing, and strengthening parent-child relationships and supportive community connections and resources, including through the meaningful engagement of birth parents, foster families, youth, alumni of foster care, and other stakeholders. The selected Local Implementation Sites (LIS) and the QIC-R will build a body of knowledge on effective engagement, services, and interventions to support family-centered reunification for and with youth in foster care and their families.

The QIC-R is led by the Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work along with participating core partners: Center for the Study of Social Policy, Children and Family Futures, Tribal Law, and Policy Institute, and Youth MOVE National.

437,000 children experienced a **foster care episode in FY 2018**[1]

56% of all children in foster care in FY2018 had a **primary case plan goal of reunification**[1]

FUNDING

The QIC-R provides funding to accepted LIS to support the implementation of new or existing programs. Funding amounts vary depending on the number of LIS selected. LIS receives five years of funding with year one to serve as startup support for implementing proposed strategies.

Tribal LIS may include up to $520,000 for year one and $200,000 in years two through four for a total maximum four-year budget of $1,120,000. Unspent funds may be eligible for carryover funding for the following year.

 Tribal LIS are responsible for using funding allocations to support project personnel, purveyors, interventionists, project supplies, stipends, etc. In addition, the QIC-R covers the cost of travel to QLC learning sessions and the costs of consultation from experts as needed.

[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2019, October 24). Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY2018 data. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport26.pdf

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

There are few, if any, models that comprehensively and intentionally address best practices and related challenges associated with reunification, particularly regarding parent engagement and shared parenting approaches. After exploring what is known about interventions that have been found to improve reunification outcomes, the QIC-R has developed **Family-Centered Reunification in Child Welfare: A Review of Best Practices.** This is a resource guide (add a link to resource guide here) for Local Implementation Sites (LIS) to consider which interventions to select. LIS are not required to choose interventions highlighted in the document but will need to describe why their selected intervention(s) were chosen and be able to respond to the related application questions adequately.

THE QIC-R IS WORKING TO IMPROVE...

- REUNIFICATION SUPPORTS
- ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
- DISPARITIES
- FAMILY-CENTERED FOSTER CARE EXPERIENCES
- WELLBEING OUTCOMES

AIMS

The QIC-R will identify and fund up to two Tribal LIS. Each Tribal LIS could implement evidence-based, evidence-informed, or promising approaches or practices that are inclusive of comprehensive, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and individualized services for youth in foster care and their families. In addition, sites implement practices that address a minimum of four of the seven focus areas outlined by the CB:

1. Tribal CW systems' philosophies and cultures related to working with families and parents with children in foster care.

2. Cultural comprehensive assessment of family needs with meaningful input by parents, relatives, significant family supports, and children and youth.

3. Provision of timely and tailored in-home and out-of-home biological family/ family of origin services through collaborative practice with other service providers that intentionally support reunification and ensure the service array.

4. Preparation of foster families that promotes and demonstrates parental support and engagement, shared parenting, and development of meaningful connections.

5. Development of reunification-centered resources and services in the tribes, neighborhoods and communities of origin and where reunified families will live.

6. Maintenance of children's important connections by providing foster care services in their neighborhoods, keeping them in their communities and schools of origin, and facilitating participation in activities of interest that children in foster care can enjoy.

7. Comprehensively addressing both child and parental well-being, including trauma related to removal and temporary placement in foster care.

QUALITY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

LIS are required to participate in the QIC-R National Quality Learning Collaborative (QLC) process. Throughout the QLC process, LIS are supported through an implementation science framework using data to adapt and refine interventions over time. The ultimate goal is to produce manuals for replication in other Tribal child welfare agencies. Each LIS will select an implementation team to participate in the QLC of 6-8 participants representing key roles and functions necessary to advance the identified intervention(s) and supports successfully. These individuals must include Tribal leaders with decision-making ability; youth leaders who are currently involved in or recent alumni of the foster care system; parent leaders with lived experience; and a data manager/evaluator.

EVALUATION

The QIC-R evaluates each site independently while incorporating multiple cross-site evaluation components to assess the best practices implemented throughout the sites. The evaluation includes site-specific and cross-site process and outcome evaluation activities tailored to cultural and community factors and selected Tribal family reunification strategies. Utilizing a Formative Evaluation process, the QIC-R evaluation team serves as the centralized, coordinating entity for evaluating each LIS and provides expertise in implementation, evaluation, and child welfare research. Contact us with questions by emailing qicreunification@ssw.umaryland.edu

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AND IMPLEMENTATION

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