

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin & U.S. Senator Rob Portman

The Treatment Family Care Services Act

A bipartisan bill that will improve access to home-based health and mental health services for thousands of America's most vulnerable youth. This bill clarifies an existing Medicaid policy that affects children, including foster children, with special behavioral health needs and/or medical disabilities as well as children living with kinship and biological caregivers.

Background: Treatment Family Care (formerly treatment/therapeutic foster care) is the evidence-informed, trauma-informed, and highly effective therapeutic treatment care for children and youth with serious medical, psychological, emotional and social needs. In TFC care, foster parents as well as other parents and caregivers are given special training to address the needs of youths with major mental health challenges and children receive intensive in-home services to sustain them in the community. Kinship and biological families also receive TFC training and support to help avoid out-of-home care, support kinship placements and sustain strong family homes. TFC provides critical services to approximately 44,000, or 1-in-10 foster children across the country, and helps keep children out of in-patient hospitals, congregate care, and group homes. According to research, youth in TFC have equal or better therapeutic outcomes when compared to similar youth in institutional treatment or traditional foster care. In addition, it provides needed clinical therapy options to youth in lieu of overmedication.

The Problem: Despite the clear benefits of TFC, current law does not provide for a standard definition of TFC benefits under Medicaid. While all states provide TFC or an equivalent, there is no clearly defined core set of TFC services accessible for qualified youth.

The Solution: The Treatment Family Care Services Act addresses this problem by providing a definition of TFC and requiring the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to issue guidance to states identifying opportunities to fund TFC for children enrolled in any Medicaid eligibility group. This clarification will promote accountability for states offering TFC, delineate appropriate TFC services for reimbursement, and drive personnel training and standards. The bill also requires CMS and ACF to issue guidance to states on best practices for establishing programs to provide treatment family care services.

In the 116th Congress, the Treatment Family Care Services Act was endorsed by Foster Family-based Treatment Association, Generations United, Child Welfare League of America, the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, Voice for Adoption, National Foster Parent Association, and Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Juvenile Law Center, and Youth Villages.