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Development and Implementation
of Family Preservation Services

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Family Preservation Services in Iowa:
A Legislator's Perspective on Key Issues

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FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES IN IOWA:
A LEGISLATOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON KEY ISSUES

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I. INTRODUCTION

During its 1987 legislative session, the Iowa General Assembly developed and enacted a family preservation services pilot project to provide a new and specialized form of home-based services for families at imminent risk of foster placement. The first-year appropriation for the project was \$680,000, and the second-year appropriation subsequently was set at \$959,040. This represented nearly a twenty-five percent increase in state funding for all types of home-based juvenile service programs statewide, although family preservation pilot projects were limited to three human service districts serving less than one-fifth of state's population.

The authorizing legislative language for the family preservation services pilot project specified the project's structure, including the scope and duration of services, the clients for whom the services were designed, the allowable caseloads for the persons performing the services, and the manner in which the project would be evaluated. Legislative involvement extended beyond authorization of the project, with the legislative fiscal bureau placed in a prominent formal evaluating and monitoring role.

While the General Assembly continued to support existing home-based services, the family preservation pilot project represented a distinct departure from past funding efforts and

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represented significantly greater legislative involvement in the design and oversight of such programs.

First, a very specific program model was delineated. This model was different from existing home-based programs operating in the state, and controls were established to assure the project retained that distinctive character. The most significant differences between the family preservation project and other home-based services were the service's intensity and the targeting of resources exclusively on families at imminent risk of out-of-home placement.

Second, project goals were made explicit and established anticipated fiscal and program outcomes. The emphasis upon reducing the reliance on out-of-home placements of children through the provision of intensive, family-centered services meant that achieving those goals would also reduce projected out-of-home placement costs. This became a significant rationale behind the project.

Third, an evaluation, which, included the use of a comparison group, was designed so empirical evidence could determine whether the fiscal goals of the pilot were achieved. While the Iowa General Assembly had established pilot programs in the past (usually in response to explicit political demands), the concurrent establishment of an evaluation process was new. Legislative intent was clear that, after three years, findings would be used to determine whether family preservation services would be extended statewide.

Iowa's success in establishing the family preservation services pilot project can be attributed to a number of positive factors at work. Ultimately, however, the success in establishing the project was based upon the strength of the arguments put forward in support of family preservation services as a more effective and less costly solution in the child welfare system to out-of-home placement. The value of providing intensive counseling services to at-risk families to help preserve those families was acknowledged, but many valuable programs competed for the very limited funding available for new programs. The ability of the family preservation project to demonstrate that it had the potential to offset its costs by reducing out-of-home expenditures was critical to the project's establishment.

This paper first describes some of the factors in Iowa that were used to help support the establishment of family preservation services. It next discusses the elements of the family preservation services model that made it attractive to policy-makers. Finally, the paper summarizes the importance of recognizing key policy concerns in obtaining state funding for programs in the child welfare system.

II. IOWA FACTORS AT WORK IN DEVELOPING FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES

A number of factors contributed to the legislative success in initiating the family preservation services pilot project in Iowa in 1987. Taken together, they helped build the support necessary both to obtain legislative passage and gubernatorial acceptance. These factors, which are common to many states in one form or another, are discussed below:

- A. A rise in foster care caseloads and costs presented a fiscal challenge to the state that policy-makers did not feel they could afford to ignore.

Prior to the 1987 legislative session, Iowa had experienced a significant growth in its foster care caseload. Between June of 1983 and June of 1986, according to Department of Human Service figures, the number of children in foster care in Iowa increased from 2,693 children to 3,427 children -- a rise of 27 percent. The largest rate of increase occurred in the most costly forms of foster care, foster group care and shelter care -- up nearly 41 percent.

This rise in caseloads occurred despite a decline in the number of children living in the state, and followed a considerable period of time in the early 1980s when the number of children in the foster care actually declined. The increase was not predicted, and for two years the General Assembly had been required to provide supplemental appropriations in the

middle of each fiscal year to deal with unbudgeted foster care caseload increases.

In short, as has been the case with many states, fiscal concerns placed the entire state budget on notice, and particularly scrutinized were those programs constituting entitlements. The increases in costs associated with the foster care budget made any options for most cost-effective expenditures worth serious review.

- B. There existed strong provider support for additional funding for programs and services that provided alternatives to foster placement, and private providers did not sense family preservation services as a threat to their existing programs.

In Iowa, most out-of-home care is provided through purchase-of-service contracts with private agencies or with foster families. State mental health institutions and state training schools provide foster care services for fewer than ten percent of the children in foster care. The remainder is purchased.

At the state capitol, the private service agencies are represented by the Coalition for Family and Children's Services. The dominant agencies within the Coalition are multi-service agencies, providing both residential and nonresidential care.

Because of the growth in residential foster care placements since 1982, residential facilities treating foster children in Iowa have remained virtually full. Further, a relatively low rate of reimbursement has served to discourage agencies from establishing new residential beds. Consequently, out-of-state

placements have increased. Out-of-state placements (not under state reimbursement ceilings) assumed nearly 20 percent of all state residential treatment program costs in 1986, a source of considerable concern to in-state providers.

For a number of reasons, the Coalition for Family and Children's Services was an early advocate for the family preservation services pilots. In part, this was because the Coalition expected its member agencies to provide at least some of the new services. In part, it was because the pilots represented a move in the direction of performance-based reimbursement rather than unit-of-service reimbursement, a priority of the Coalition. In part, it was because private providers saw possibilities for family preservation services to provide more effective reunification services, another Coalition priority.

Perhaps most important, however, family preservation was not seen as a competitor with services currently being provided by the agencies. Rather, the service was seen as a means to retain more treatment service dollars for Iowa's child welfare population within the state.

- C. The state welfare agency had developed its own proposal for reducing placements similar enough to the family preservation services model to establish additional legitimacy for the legislature's approach.

Recognizing the strain that increased foster care caseloads placed upon its own and the state's budget, the Department of Human Services, the state agency responsible for child welfare

services, developed a series of budget initiatives in the foster care area for consideration by the Governor.

One such proposal, labelled "Project Impact," employed department personnel to provide more intensive home-based services to high-risk families. The Department's budget proposed that these services be financed by projecting lower foster care caseloads as a result of the service and redirecting these anticipated savings into the community service budget.

The Governor did not include "Project Impact" in his budget, because he was not convinced this increase in the Department's direct services staff would result in reduced foster care expenditures. Still, the Department remained on record as projecting direct cost-offsets for its intensive placement prevention initiative. Eventually, this information was used as the basis for the legislative fiscal bureau's fiscal analysis of the legislature's family preservation initiative, which showed a complete cost-offset with the foster care budget.

Finally, since elements of the department's proposal were incorporated into the final legislative initiative, the Department continued its advocacy for the project despite the Governor's rejection of its initial proposal.

D. Publicity around a specific foster care case in Iowa produced a heightened sense of urgency for foster care reform, and the family preservation services initiative was represented as being a component of this reform.

In October, in a case that was later to become the subject of a "Sixty Minutes" segment and was to receive frequent front

page coverage in the Des Moines Register, the department was forced to enlist the support of local police to remove five children from their foster home to begin reunification efforts for those children with their natural mother. The Cooper children, as they were known to the public, became something of a cause celebre, and the "Sixty Minutes" feature recorded the highest level of viewer comment of any segments aired by that program.

The Cooper children did not want to leave their foster parents, and the foster parents with the children's attorney fought to retain custody in a case that eventually went to the Iowa Supreme Court. The natural mother was undergoing mental health treatment and previously had been physically abusive to the children. Those were the features that were picked up by the media. The crusade by the Register attacked the department's handling of the case as bureaucratic, heavy-handed, and secretive.

Bills subsequently were introduced in the General Assembly by legislators who were not normally involved in child welfare policy, to address the alleged abuses in the case. This specific case placed additional pressure upon lawmakers to do something that could be considered foster care reform. While family preservation services did not address the specific circumstances of the Cooper case, lawmakers advocating for pilots drew a connection between the availability of family preservation

services and a decrease in the incidence of problems such as those experienced by the Cooper children.

- E. Iowa had a tradition of support for home-based services, coupled with a recognition that home-based service gaps existed.

Iowa has been recognized nationally as a pioneer in providing home-based services for youth and their families with problems that might lead to out-of-home placement. Iowa's revision of its juvenile justice law in the middle seventies explicitly recommended the use of home-based services where relevant, and viewed the preservation of the family as almost always being in the best interest of the child. The concept of community-based services, both in the juvenile and in the adult correctional area, enjoyed strong rhetorical support in Iowa and had an active legislative constituency.

Over time, home-based services in Iowa drifted from their intended role as a last resort alternative to foster placement toward a preventive service for families with difficulties, but who were not necessarily at imminent risk of placement.

The static history with home-based services, and the number of agencies with long histories in the provision of such services provided a high level of comfort among legislators with such programmatic efforts. This commitment also carried with it the legislators' recognition that out-of-home placement, even into loving foster homes, often produces serious emotional problems for the child.

- F. Technical assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) added legitimacy to legislative activity as well as expert assistance in project development and oversight.

At its 1986 annual conference, the National Conference of State Legislatures conducted a workshop on family preservation services, using the Homebuilders program in Washington state as a model program. The thrust of the workshop was that such programs could provide more appropriate treatment at less cost to the state than their alternative -- placement. That workshop encouraged key Iowa legislators to explore the possibility of developing such a program in Iowa.

Early in the 1987 legislative session, NCSL provided expert testimony on family preservation services to several legislative committees, including the joint appropriations subcommittee on human services, where the legislative initiative was drafted and funded. The testimony included representatives from the Homebuilders program and the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

The Center and NCSL further committed to and provided ongoing support for the proposal in the implementation stage, including assistance in drafting the eventual request for proposals, selecting pilot programs and sites, conducting training sessions for family preservation service workers, and introducing state staff to professionals from existing family preservation programs in other states.

The testimony provided to the legislative committees received statewide attention and front-page media coverage, which further legitimized the effort. In addition, the on-going support for project implementation from outside experts assured a number of legislators that the project was a legislative and not a Departmental initiative. Given the unpopularity of the Department's handling of the Cooper case, this distinction was important to many legislators.

Taken together, these factors helped set the stage for the enactment of the family preservation service initiative. A supportive private provider system, a foster care system in need both of fiscal and programmatic control, a receptive state agency beleaguered by charges of insensitivity, public outcry over foster care problems requiring some legislative response, a history of in-home and community-based solutions to child welfare problems, and the availability of technical assistance in project development all helped to bring the issue to the legislative agenda.

If Iowa is viewed as a state with unusual receptivity to such programs, however, it must also be recognized that some of these same factors could have worked against, rather than for, the project. The Cooper case could have been used as an argument against the establishment of services that in effect might assist the very mother who was now seeking the return of her children and facing so much hostility. The Department or the Coalition could have perceived the initiative as a threat to their existing

services, imposed by outsiders. Claims of cost offsets could have been dismissed by citing the fact that prior legislative appropriation increases for other home-based programs had not produced a measurable reduction in foster placements.

The fact, however, was the efforts were made in the political process to use these specific factors positively. Family preservation services also were cited as a means of better protecting vulnerable children, or as an indirect means of expediting termination proceedings for truly dysfunctional families, thus avoiding the type of foster care drift that occurred with the Cooper children. The interest and concerns of both the state Department of Human Services and purchase-of-service agencies were recognized in fashioning the pilots so each had a stake in making the project work. A built-in mechanism for determining the pilot programs' fiscal impact on the number foster placements and foster placement costs served to assured that project cost-effectiveness could and would be evaluated.

The key to establishing the family preservation services projects, however, rested with the family preservation services model itself and its record of performance in other states. While many factors made the state of Iowa receptive to the project, it was the characteristics of the family preservation services model that ultimately persuaded policy-makers.

III. THE STRENGTH OF THE FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES MODEL

Family preservation services are designed to provide intensive, in-home counseling services to families at imminent risk of foster placement and to provide those services for a limited period of time. The service is designed to take advantage of a true crisis situation, where the family is most willing to change, and to build on the family's strengths in developing appropriate coping skills within the family.

The family preservation service worker will be in the family's home for as much time as necessary for this critical, four to six week period, and may assist the family in dealing with the welfare bureaucracy, landlords, or other pressures in addition to providing counseling assistance. Typically, workers are on call on a 24 hour basis. Because of the intensity of service, family preservation workers are given very small caseloads, with a maximum of three or four families at any one time.

The Homebuilders program in Washington state was one of the earliest family preservation service programs, and has had more than a decade of experience in dealing with families. It has been successful in dealing with a wide variety of families, even those experiencing such extreme dysfunction that many professionals initially doubted the potential for success. Homebuilders has been willing to accept virtually all clients referred, although the program will only work with families that

voluntarily accepted services; a family, ultimately, must be willing to accept the family preservation service worker. Simply getting families to voluntarily accept the service may take considerable time and work.

The family preservation services model focuses its attention upon the entire family, and deals with the dysfunction behaviors that are contained within the family. Family preservation workers are flexible and they offer services or other support that would not be available in other programs. The family preservation worker typically is given wider discretion than other providers in scheduling and designing treatment. Families served by family preservation services often have had a long history of negative contacts with government and social work agencies, and the family preservation worker take care to earn a family's trust.

While home-based services exist in Iowa, the family preservation service model is quite different from other services offered -- by its greater intensity of treatment, its limited duration of that treatment, its emphasis upon treatment at the time of a major crisis, and its flexible treatment structure. These differences were stressed throughout the process, as the outcome claims made for the family preservation service program were different from those of other home-based service providers.

From a funding perspective, the most important claim was that family preservation services not only would reduce future levels of foster placements and preserve families, but would

sufficiently reduce those projected placements and their costs to, in essence, fund themselves. The ability to establish legislative support for the family preservation services pilot project hinged heavily on justifying to legislators that the project's costs would be offset by reduced child welfare expenditures elsewhere.

This justification was achieved by addressing three questions most commonly raised by legislator:

- What indication is there that family preservation services have saved money where they have been established?
- What types of controls are built into the family preservation service pilots to assure that they will not simply be expanding the amount of service provided to families?
- How will we know whether the project is effective in controlling Iowa's foster costs?

These questions do not mean that legislators had no concerns about the treatment implications of such services. It was clear that Iowa legislators were much more receptive to accepting the argument that preserving families was, in general, a positive treatment outcome than they were in assuming that such treatment would save money. In a time of strict budget constraints, financing new or expanded services usually must come at the expense of other services. The family preservation services proposal, unlike many other programs, offered that opportunity in a way that was seen as a positive net improvement in the overall service system.

The family preservation service project addressed these questions in the following ways, which formed the justification for the project's enactment not only with legislators, but with the Department and the Governor as well:

- A. Studies of family preservation services initiated in other states showed that such services could finance themselves through reduced demands upon foster care funds.

Prevention services almost routinely are marketed to policy-makers as constituting investments that, in the long run, save money by reducing the need for more costly services. This has become an argument about which policy-makers have grown wary.

The experiences from the Homebuilders program in Washington state and from other programs which have followed its model, however, provide concrete evidence that a specific, highly intensive form of service intervention actually does reduce the need for more costly services for many families.

While proponents of the Homebuilders program stressed the importance of preserving and empowering families to serving the best interest of the child and society, the evaluation of the Homebuilders program rested on the ability of the family receiving treatment to avoid foster placements during the next year. That Homebuilders was successful in more than 80 percent of its cases by this measure did not necessarily show that families or their children were better off as a result of avoiding placement, but it did suggest that other costs to the

foster care system were averted that would have been at least as expensive as the treatment provided by Homebuilders.

Comparisons of families served by Homebuilders, with those that would have been served if the program were not full at the time of their referral, provided a means to evaluate the Homebuilders program impact, and the comparison pointed to Homebuilders' fiscal effectiveness. Families not served by the Homebuilders program had considerable higher costs to the state than did the Homebuilders families, even in the year in which the service was provided. Although the cost of serving a family in the Homebuilders program was approximately \$2000, it was a one-time cost for a limited duration, whereas costly foster placements could extend for months or years. Unlike many preventive programs, the state did not have to wait years for savings from averted placements to accrue; these savings could be achieved within a budgeting cycle.

Programs modeled after Homebuilders showed similar results, as long as they adhered to the intensity and limited duration of the services. The fiscal successes of such programs allowed legislators to have enough confidence to project sufficient cost-offsets in their foster care budget to finance the project.

- B. The philosophy behind the family preservation services model made sense as a viable means to achieve the goals of reduced placement and less costly service.

While community-based, family-centered, and in-home services were politically popular services in Iowa, existing state

programs had not demonstrated that their services served as direct substitutes for other care. In effect, although in-home services in Iowa began in the 1960s to serve as a substitute for foster placement, they evolved into another in an array of support services for families. By the mid-eighties, they typically were used in conjunction with other interventions or for families not otherwise at risk of foster placement. Although their proponents did argue that they made investments in families that would save money in the long-run, the argument that they provided a direct displacement of foster care dollars had not been supported.

For this reason, expansion of the existing in-home services was perceived as providing additional, rather than, substitute services. While legislators did not argue against the value of expanding these home-based services, they argued such expansion represented an additional cost in a budget that had no latitude for increased spending.

In addition to its fiscal record in other states, however, the family preservation service model was significantly different from existing home-based services to suggest it could succeed in directly displacing foster care costs in the short run.

In establishing the family preservation services pilot project, the General Assembly was quite specific in describing what the family preservation pilot project must include. The following were seen as key distinguishing features of the family preservation services model:

1. Identifying as eligible only those families for which placement in foster care or continuation in foster care would normally be the sole other option.

To serve as a "substitute" for foster care, family preservation services had to be targeted to families at imminent risk of placement. Many preventive programs avert higher and more costly levels of care in a portion of the cases they serve, but serve additional clients who otherwise would have received no services. This "net widening" phenomenon often more than expends any cost-savings achieved through prevention. The provision for dealing with families in family preservation services only as a last resort was spelled out in the legislation and was the subject of technical assistance in developing appropriate protocols for client referral.

2. Establishing a very intensive level of service within the project, with caseloads of no more than four families per caseworker.

The intensity of service at a time of crisis was what made family preservation services distinct from other in-home services. By legislatively stipulating maximum caseloads, legislators assured that the intensity of service would be maintained.

3. Providing counseling services over a short period of time, with an expectation of no more than four to six weeks of treatment and in no instance more than six months of care.

Family preservation services are designed to empower families to function without further interventions, and to

do so in a short, but intense, time-frame. While such families might benefit from additional counseling support, that additional counseling would entail costs that might not be offset by other foster care cost reductions. The service limitation to four to six weeks provided additional control over project costs. Project advocates noted that the service intensity in the project meant that families were likely to receive as much assistance in this four to six week period as they otherwise would have received over a period as long as several years.

4. Requiring the pilots to agree to work with all cases referred to them.

Although clients must "voluntarily" agree to receive family preservation services, the family preservation services pilots are required to accept all referrals. This "no turn-down" policy provided assurances that very difficult cases -- those most likely to be very costly to the foster care system -- would be served and the project would not be diluted.

5. Providing counseling availability around the clock, with expectations for extensive in-home family contact for the duration of the counseling period.

Family preservation specialists emphasized that families are most likely to respond to services when they are provided at the time a family feels most in need of them; timely service is especially crucial for families in crisis or extreme stress. Addressing family needs on the

family's schedule and in the family's home setting are considered as important in helping families build upon their capacities to meet later stressful situations in the same manner.

6. Emphasizing purchase-of-service contracts in service provisions.

Family preservation specialists emphasized that it required a caseworker who was nonjudgmental to establish the trust necessary to deal with the referred families. In Iowa, program planners felt that conducting such services through a state agency might create problems in establishing client trust, as state agencies serve in a regulatory and enforcement role for many of the families referred for service. Since the Department of Human Services wanted to conduct the project through the state workers and some rural parts of the state used direct service staff to a substantial extent for service delivery, up to one-third of the project funds eventually were allowed to be used through the Department. Two-thirds of the funds, however, explicitly were made available only on a purchase-of-service basis.

7. Using outside technical assistance for project development and staff training, with direct assistance from practitioners from existing successful programs.

Iowa was able to secure on-going assistance from the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Center for the Study of Social Policy in developing the request for

proposal for the preservation pilots, selecting sites, and training agency and staff who would be conducting the family preservation services. This staff training involved practitioners from the Homebuilders program, and helped stress the goal of replicating those programs' results in averting out-of-home placement.

8. Establishing a more flexible, and performance-based, payment system.

Rather than basing payments on a per diem or a fee-for-service basis, the authorizing legislation required some form of performance-based payment, consistent with the stated goals of the project. This "results-oriented" reimbursement initiative was considered to be consistent with the project's overall objectives and provided additional incentives for projects directors to control expenditures.

9. Allowing for additional payments for special services needed by the families being served.

In addition to a more flexible reimbursement system for service providers, funds were made available for use by family preservation workers to address otherwise non-reimbursable needs for the family. This provided workers with the chance to meet unique family needs and to fill "gaps" not covered by other state financial support programs, such as payment for plumbing or other household

repairs, rent deposits, or other outside factors potentially precipitating a family crisis.

Each of these service characteristics was viewed generally by legislators both as consistent with the goals of the family preservation services program and together they distinguished this service from existing services being provided in the state. Taken together, they represented a logical and understandable means to control project costs through appropriate targeting, and to make maximum use of resources in providing services.

- C. The results of the family preservation services projected were to be evaluated in an objective, empirical manner, with a methodology that allowed for comparisons between families served by the project and those eligible but not served by the project.

One of the key questions raised by legislators was how the state would ever know if the family preservation service pilots were successful in averting foster placements and reducing state foster care costs. Demonstration and pilot programs developed by state government in the past often had received minimal evaluation, which left little basis for expanding them beyond their pilot phase.

Proponents of the family preservation program model recognized that project expansion would require evidence that the project met its fiscal goal of directly providing foster care costs offsets. Those concerned with the project's potential cost wanted grounds to eliminate services if they could not be justified on fiscal grounds. The consequence was that an

evaluation component was established legislatively, and that a three-year time period was specified for that evaluation.

The thrust of the evaluation involved maintaining a record of actual costs -- both for family preservation services and for foster care services -- for both families served by the pilots and for a comparison group of families referred to the pilots at the time all slots were filled and therefore not receiving services. In addition to assistance from the Department of Human Services, the legislative fiscal bureau and University of Iowa personnel were directed to develop the monitoring and evaluating system. This emphasis upon an objective, third party evaluation again eliminated questions of bias that might arise as a result of an internal evaluation.

As such, the research related directly to the fiscal and policy concerns of state government. This "policy" research was not intended to answer "treatment-oriented" research concerns regarding the specific program elements that had an effect on subsequent placement or family functioning, although the project is accessible to those wishing to conduct such research.

This "policy" research, however, was judged to be necessary to seriously consider extending the projects beyond a demonstration basis.

IV. CONCLUSION

The family preservation services pilot project in Iowa was a legislative initiative, although its passage was assisted by a variety of other persons and factors. Among these were the strong support of the existing child welfare provider community, the assistance of the state Department of Human Services, and a general recognition of the need to take some action to address increasing problems in the foster care system. Various individuals greatly assisted in the project's passage, and the outside technical assistance provided was invaluable in clarifying key project components and developing project goals, expectations, and monitoring capabilities.

Most important to the establishment of the project, however, was the fact that, where tried, family preservation appeared to work. It appeared to work in keeping families together, and it appeared to work in reducing the costs to the state that exist when families are split apart leaving the state to care for children.

Legislators had sufficient information, and confidence in that information, to believe that family preservation services provided better outcomes for families at a lesser cost to the state. Moreover, the structure of the project made sense in achieving these goals. Legislators believed that, after three

years and with proper evaluation, they would know if the Iowa project met these expectations.

There remain many treatment-oriented research concerns related to family preservation services. Some families may respond more effectively to a different type of treatment at the point of imminent foster placement than the family preservation alternative. There may be additional long-term positive or negative effects of family preservation services -- beyond placement avoidance -- for some families helped by the services. There is always the possibility of a tragic outcome for a child served by a family preservation services program where the alternative would have been a safe placement for the child outside the home.

While important to long-term policy, many of these treatment-oriented research concerns will take years to fully explore and assess; some are unlikely ever to be fully resolved. In the meantime, however, policy-makers are deciding where scarce state resources will be directed in treating families in crisis.

From a policy perspective, the research support for family preservation services is better than it is for many social service interventions government makes. Family preservation services seem capable both of targeting their services to those truly at-risk of foster placement and providing successful interventions in a time-limited fashion that is cost-effective. Further, they embody an often-stated and fundamental goal of the child welfare system, that of preserving and empowering families.

Absent very compelling information to the contrary, policy-makers must accept that family preservation is usually in the ultimate best interest of the child.

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Iowa policy-makers generally have accepted the philosophy behind family preservation services, but want to see Iowa-based results. The three year demonstration period serves both the purpose of developing in-state expertise and in determining whether the programs developed can show results. Demonstration programs sometimes are established by policy-makers as an inexpensive means to address, in at least a symbolic manner, a demand for public policy. When that public demand wanes, the programs themselves may be abandoned without policy-makers ever knowing if they met their objectives. With family preservation services, the clear intent is that the project be expanded statewide when it demonstrates program and fiscal effectiveness. That is a very significant, but reasoned, commitment to a new state child welfare financing effort.