

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Child and Family Services
11 State House Station
2 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel.: (207) 624-7900; Toll Free: (877) 680-5866
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 624-5553

January 6, 2022

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 497 – Resolve, To Direct the Department of Health and Human Services To Report on Child Abuse Prevention Efforts To Implement the Family First Prevention Services Act

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Last session, this Committee passed LD 497 (Resolves 2021, Ch. 24) which directed OCFS to provide information to the Committee on the implementation of the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act. This letter and the attached report serve as the requested update.

In the last year, OCFS completed the development of the Family First Prevention Services State Plan and submitted it to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Maine was the first state in New England to have their plan approved by ACF. The plan spans five years and aligns OCFS' Child Welfare and Children's Behavioral Health programs with Family First.

Family First implementation began on October 1, 2021. Since that time OCFS has been working to expand the availability of Parents as Teachers (PAT), an evidence-based home visiting parent education program. PAT has been available in Maine for a number of years through the Maine Families Home Visitors program, but implementation of Family First PAT will allow the service to be expanded to more families involved in child welfare as a means to prevent the need for out of home care. Previously PAT was available to children 0-3 years of age and referrals could be made from the prenatal stage to four months of age. Under Family First PAT, eligibility will be expanded to include children 0-5 years of age and referrals will be expanded to include prenatal to 4.5 years of age.

Work is also underway to stand up an evidence-based intensive family preservation and reunification program known as Homebuilders. Homebuilders serves children ages 0-17 and their families. The goal is to provide high-risk families involved with child welfare with services to remove the risk of harm to the child (instead of removing the child) and give families the chance to learn new behaviors and help them make better choices for their children.

OCFS has also dedicated significant time and resources to increasing education and information available to OCFS staff, providers, and families about the supportive services available to Maine

families. OCFS organized and hosted two sets of regional staff trainings titled “Services and Supports for Maine Families” whereby community providers shared program and referral information with OCFS staff. In addition, OCFS has developed a Staff Toolkit that includes tools and resources to assist with implementation of Family First. A Family Services Resource Guide is in development and OCFS has partnered with Chapin Hall, an independent policy research center at the University of Chicago to conduct a small-scale gap analysis of the service array in Maine. A report posted on the OCFS [website](#) and attached to this letter includes additional information on Family First implementation and OCFS’ work with Chapin Hall.

All of the efforts outlined above have been developed in collaboration with a dedicated group of providers and stakeholders who have engaged with OCFS through town halls, individual conversations, and workgroups. Groups involved have included (but are not limited to) the New Mainer community, parents with lived experience in child welfare, and the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT). These diverse stakeholders have provided invaluable input into the needs of Maine children and families and undoubtedly improved OCFS’ work to advance the programs of Family First.

In the year ahead, OCFS will continue to provide training to service providers working with families receiving child welfare services, support our staff in the implementation of Family First, and continue efforts to implement Homebuilders. OCFS is also carefully watching the Federal Prevention Services Clearinghouse which is the entity tasked with reviewing and evaluating all services to determine if they meet the requirements to be established as evidence-based (and thus eligible as a Family First service). New programs are being considered and OCFS will continue to review any newly approved services to determine how they may benefit children and families in Maine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Todd A. Landry
Director, Office of Child and Family Services

January 2022 Report on Implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act

Background:

The Family First Prevention Services Act, signed into law on February 9, 2018, as part of the federal Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (H.R. 1892), increased federal financial support for prevention services within child welfare with the aim of maintaining a child safely with their family and preventing their entry into out-of-home care. Additionally, Family First also increased support for kinship caregivers and raised the required standard of quality of children’s residential treatment programs by establishing Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTM) standards.

Family First provides Maine with an opportunity to leverage additional federal funding to expand and enhance prevention services aimed at maintaining children safely in the home. From 2010 to 2020, there was a 38% increase in child welfare investigations where a substantiated finding of abuse and/or neglect was made. Over half of the children entering foster care in Maine are under the age of 5 and parental substance use as an identified risk factor has increased 48% from 2015 to 2020.

To address these trends through the Family First initiative, OCFS has completed, in collaboration with other state departments and through partnerships with community-based providers, a comprehensive Family First State Prevention Plan that includes the expansion and establishment of existing and new prevention services including Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), Incredible Years, Positive Parenting Program (Triple P), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Homebuilders.

Activities to Date:

OCFS initiated the planning process to implement Family First in September of 2019, which included the development of several workgroups to engage key state and community stakeholders in the planning for Family First. OCFS submitted a draft Family First State Prevention Plan to the federal Department of Health and Human Services in February of 2021 and received full plan approval in September of 2021. OCFS began implementation of Family First, including Prevention and the new Qualified Residential Treatment Program standards, on October 1, 2021.

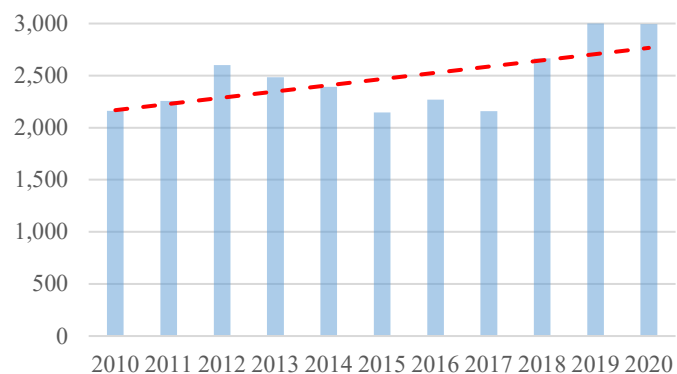
As a part of this process OCFS has engaged in three areas of work to better understand the existing continuum of child abuse prevention services in Maine and identify service gaps. These areas include initiating a quantitative assessment of the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention services relative to OCFS

service cases; a qualitative assessment of barriers to accessing services; and a series of process activities designed to build capacity to provide and raise awareness of existing prevention services.

Quantitative Analysis

In 2021, OCFS engaged with Chapin Hall, an independent policy research center at the University of Chicago, with the support of Casey Family Programs, to begin quantifying gaps in the Maine prevention service array. This includes primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention services.

Total Substantiated Investigations
2010 to 2020



OCFS used administrative data to quantify the candidate for foster care populations outlined in Maine's State Plan. That plan identifies these candidate populations as:

1. Children who are victims of maltreatment in which safety factors can be mitigated by the provision of in-home services and are able to safely remain at home with a child-specific Prevention Plan.
2. A pregnant or parenting youth in foster care.
3. Children who have exited foster care through reunification, guardianship, or adoption and may be at risk of re-entry.

To quantify the array of services available to support these populations, OCFS utilized the newly developed State Agency Partnership for Prevention (SAPP) which includes, but is not limited to, the state agencies represented in the Governor's Children's Cabinet (Department of Labor, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, and within the Department of Health and Human Services the Office of Family Independence, Office of Behavioral Health, Office of MaineCare Services, Office of Child and Family Services, and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention). This group has worked to create a program inventory that provides a framework of information regarding the types of services funded or provided across the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention service continuum.

In addition to the prevention service inventory, OCFS has also begun to collect detailed state level services information, including program details and website information, that will form the basis of a web-based resource guide in the first quarter of 2022.

Utilizing the candidate population and the SAPP service provider data, Chapin Hall completed an initial geospatial service gap analysis. Chapin Hall has begun to analyze three tertiary prevention programs outlined in the State Plan including Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT), Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), and the Positive Parenting Program (Triple-P).

For each of these interventions, OCFS and Chapin Hall were able to use child welfare data to estimate, by county, the number of children and families that could potentially benefit from these services and compare it to current service availability. For example, Lincoln County had 83 potential cases that could benefit from TF-CBT in 2021. Given that there was only one TF-CBT service provider in the county this initial gap analysis would suggest that there is a need for increased TF-CBT capacity within Lincoln County. For additional data tables on the gap analysis completed to date, please see Appendix A.

After creating this methodology for identifying service array gaps, more work will need to be done in 2022 to provide the full picture of existing services and needs across the continuum of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. In 2022, OCFS and Chapin Hall will work together to refine the methodology using additional data. Service provider and program information will continue to be gathered and with the assistance of the SAPP, OCFS intends to determine additional evidenced based practices to analyze. This work will result in the development of a set of suggested strategies for aligning the Maine prevention service array with the needs of the Family First candidate populations.

Qualitative Analysis

Beginning in 2019, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) engaged in a range of readiness, planning and community engagement activities to prepare for the changes that Family First will bring to the state. OCFS engaged multiple community-based stakeholders including but not limited to service providers, advocacy groups, OCFS staff, youth and families across the state who have lived experience with the system, and the New Mainer and tribal populations to gather input on implementation of Family First.

OCFS, in partnership with the Maine Parent Federation and Parent Partners, co-hosted several sessions with parents to introduce key elements of Family First and solicit their opinion and input on how best to implement Family First in Maine. OCFS also hosted a series of youth sessions in 2020 and 2021 to help inform the planning and future implementation of Family First.

OCFS is committed to continuing to engage a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the implementation of Family First. Stakeholder workgroups that continue to operate include:

- Trauma Informed Care Committee
- Behavioral Health and Supportive Services Workgroup
- Implementation Stakeholder Workgroup.

In addition, youth and parent sessions will continue to be scheduled in 2022 and feedback from these sessions will be utilized to inform decisions and practice.

Other Process Activities

Increasing the knowledge of and access to services and support for Maine families is an identified priority in the Maine's State Plan. Several strategies have been identified and are in the beginning phases of implementation.

In June and November of 2021, OCFS partnered with community-based providers to host a series of trainings for OCFS staff on the services and supports available to Maine families across the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention service array. These trainings were the first step in a larger set of activities designed to increase knowledge of available services to vulnerable children and families. OCFS also provided training to staff on Family First implementation and developed a Family First Staff Toolkit with tools and resources to identify and connect families with appropriate services.

Building on these trainings, OCFS, with engagement from the SAPP, began the process of creating a comprehensive online resource directory of state level primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs and services in Maine. This will serve as a resource for parents/guardians, service providers, OCFS staff, and other users who are seeking information regarding services. It will provide links to websites for more information and will complement the existing statewide Maine 211 community service directory. This work will continue in 2022 with the goal of publishing the directory this year.

Next steps

In 2022, OCFS intends to continue to work on successful implementation of Family First in Maine through the expand the prevention services gap analysis and publication of the online resource directory of prevention services. Additional planned activities include:

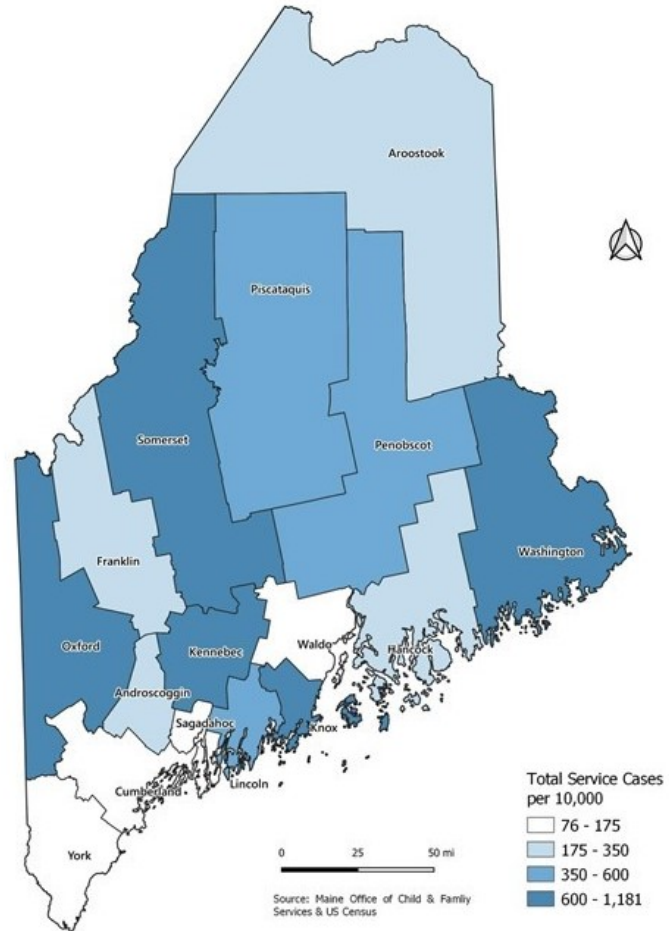
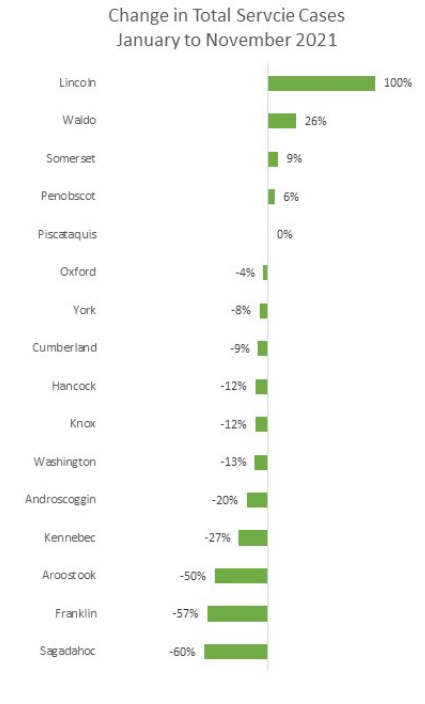
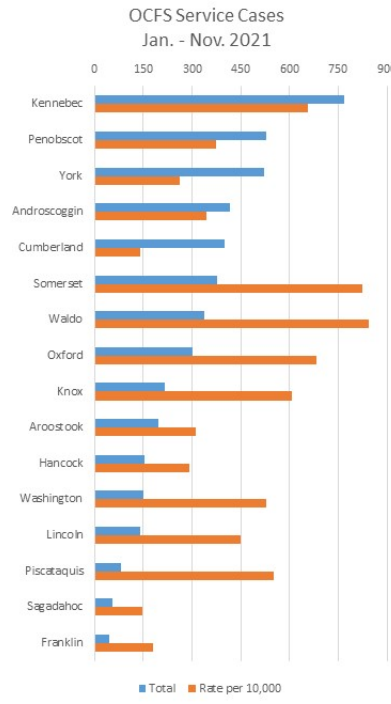
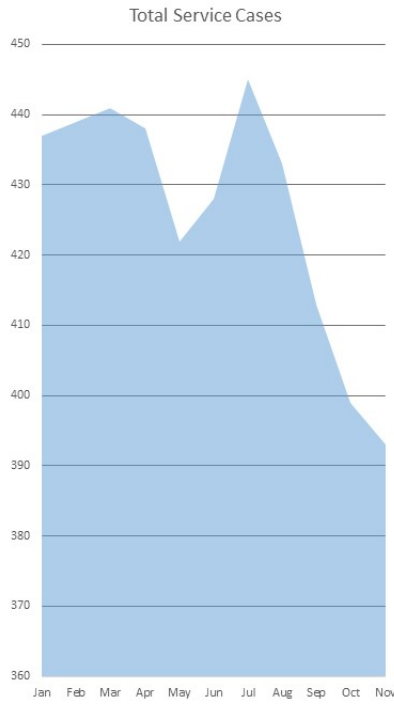
1. Conduct a series of focus groups across the state that will leverage the experiences of families involved in the prevention service array to identify needs and barriers to access. These focus groups will form the basis for the development of structured recommendations that Maine can implement to reduce barriers to accessing services for vulnerable families.
2. Work with Chapin Hall and the SAPP to identify which evidence-based practices have the most potential to cut across multiple candidate populations and provide the broadest level of support to prevention agencies in Maine, as well as gathering qualitative data to strengthen the understanding of the strengths and challenges of Maine's prevention service array

3. Develop, deploy, and analyze a service provider survey to collect information on agencies and service providers, perceived barriers and perceptions of the services provided.
4. Consult and advise on strategies to expand current community engagement efforts as well as identify new strategies for engaging diverse constituencies including Tribal members,, immigrants, and other communities that have been historically marginalized.

In summary, OCFS is committed to continuing the examination of existing primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention services in Maine that will help to support all families. Through ongoing prevention services analysis, collaboration across state and community programs, and with the voice of a diverse group of stakeholders, OCFS will work toward the goal of increasing access, availability, and knowledge of prevention services in Maine to keep children safely in their home and prevent the need for removal or other out-of-home care.

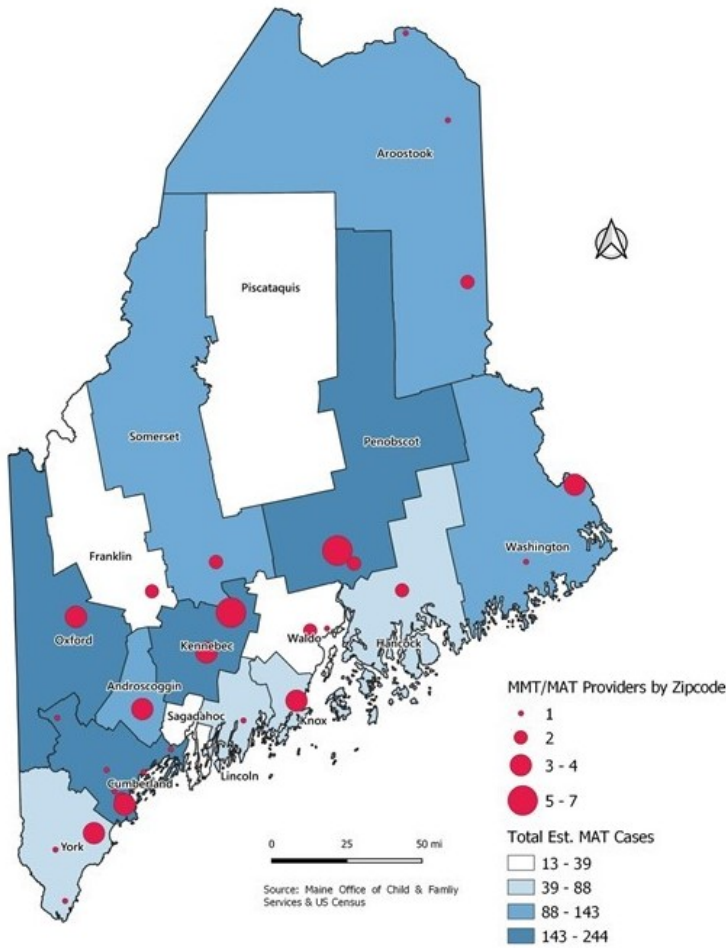
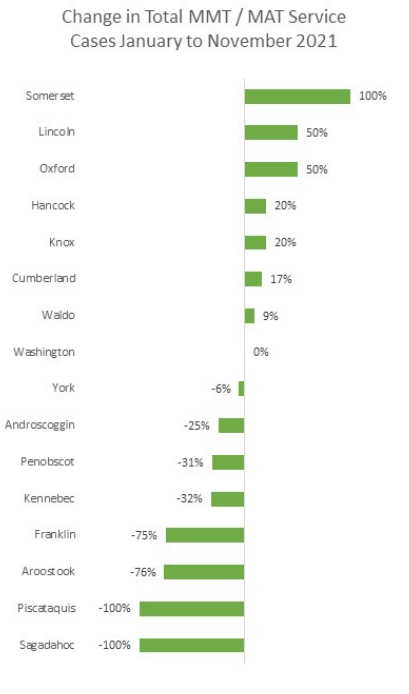
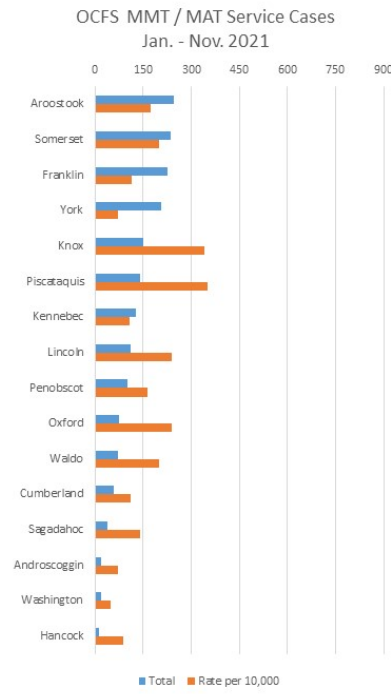
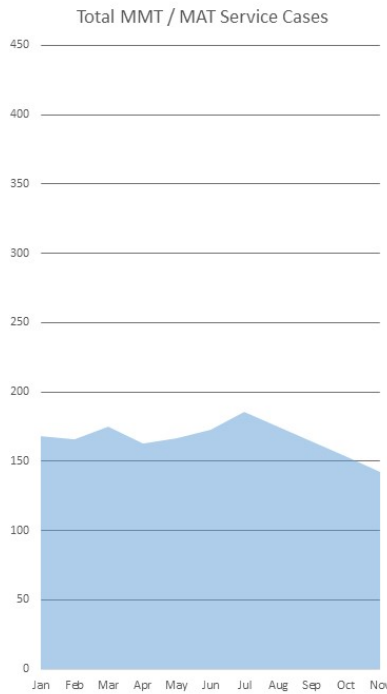
Appendix A: Gap Analysis Data

OCFS Service Case Data

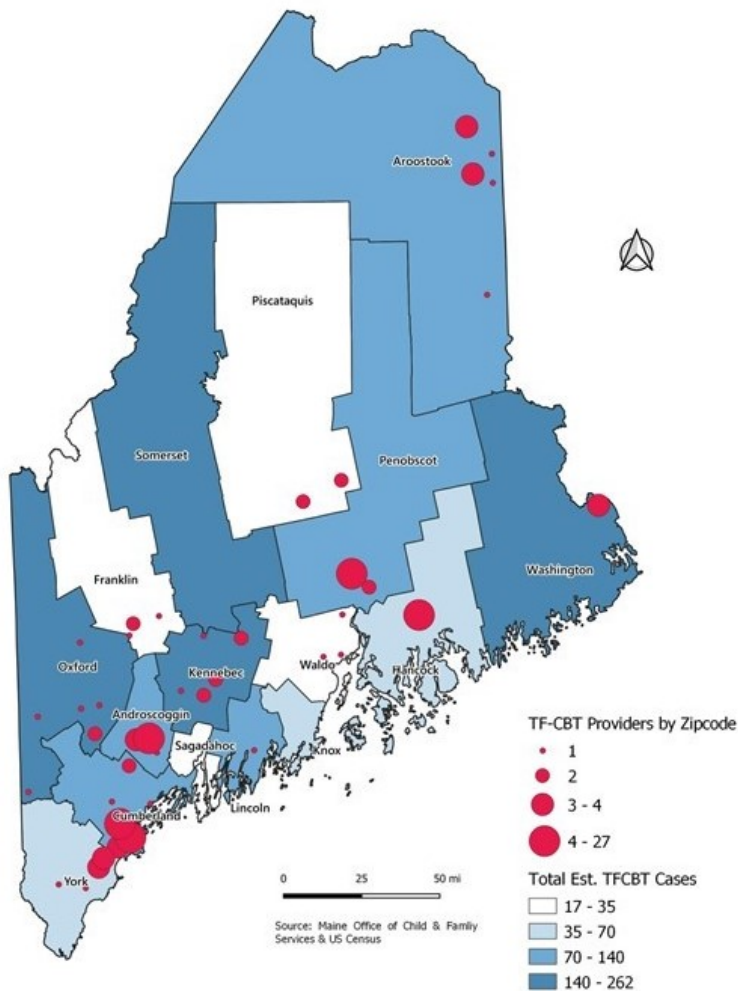
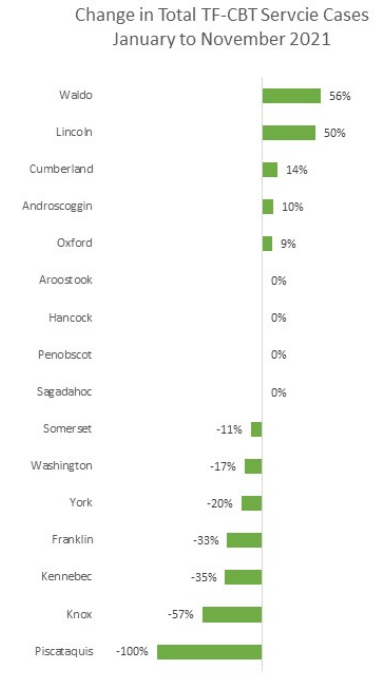
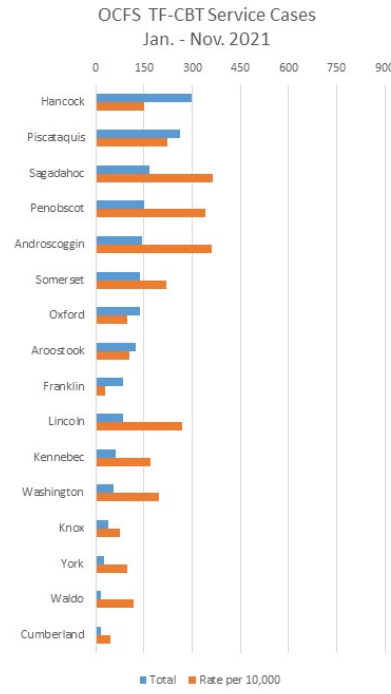
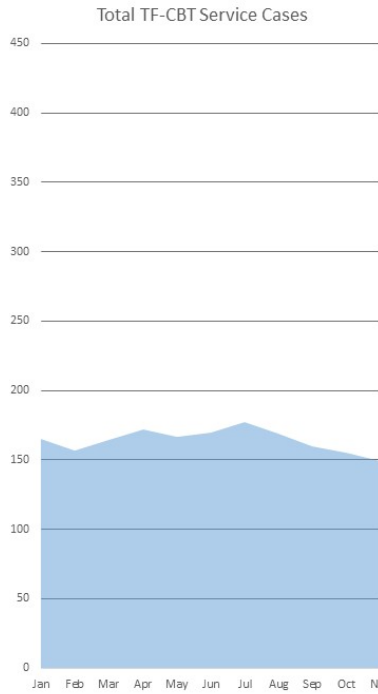


Source: Maine Office of Child & Family Services & US Census

Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT) and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Data



Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) Data



Triple P Parenting Data

