COLORADO
Office of Children, Youth & Families
Department of Human Services

Colorado 2025-2029 Child and Family Service Plan

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Table of Figures 3
Table of Tables 3
Glossary of Acronyms 4
Vision and Collaboration 8
Vision Statement 9
Collaboration 9
Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes 19
The Administrative Review Division 19
Results Oriented Management (ROM) System 19
Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect. 20
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate. 21
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. 24
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships is preserved for children. 26
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. 31
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. 33
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental needs. 34
Statewide Information System 35
Case Review System 37
Quality Assurance System 39
Staff Training 46
Service Array 48
Agency Responsiveness to Community 52
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention 52
Plan for Enacting the State's Vision 56
Goal 1: Supporting Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment and Retention Efforts. 56
Goal 2: Children, youth and families are strengthened through access to evidence-based services and resources that meet their needs at the right time and in the right place. 59
Goal 3: Children and youth have safe, permanent, and stable living situations with appropriate supports to meet their individualized needs. 67
Goal 4: Youth who leave foster care in Colorado have the tools necessary to be safe, healthy, educated, connected, housed, and contributing young adults. 74

Services 79
Child and Family Services Continuum 79
Service Coordination 83
Service Description (45 CFR 1357.15(o)) 86
Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (title IV-B, subpart 1) 86
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2) 91
Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants and Standards for Caseworker Visits 98
John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (section 477 of the Act) 100
National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) 102
Serving Youth Across the State 103
Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence (section 477(b)(2)(C) of the Act). 103
Collaborating with Other Private and Public Agencies (section 477(b)(2)(D) of the Act) 104
Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services (section 477(b)(2)(E) of the Act) 106
Cooperation in National Evaluations (section 477(b)(2)(F) of the Act) 107
Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program (section 477(i) of the Act) 107
Consultation with Tribes (section 477(b)(3)(G) of the Act) 108
Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes 109
The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) 112
Targeted Plans 115
Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan 115
Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan 119
Disaster Plan 120
Training Plan 120

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Differential Response Implementation in Colorado. 22
Figure 2: Map of PSSF counties served through 5-year contracts. 92

Table of Tables

Table 1: Visitation Frequency and Quality of Contacts made in 2023. 26
Table 2: Fatherhood engagement performance 31
Table 3: Number of counties where MIECHV programs are available and have funded caseloads in FFY 2022-2023 83
Table 4: PSSF Service Priorities 94
Table 5: PSSF Service Area Breakdown 95
Table 6: PSSF Service Priority Breakdown 95
Table 7: Agencies using other data systems to track PSSF services provided to families. 96
Table 8: MCV awards and expenditures 98
Table 9: Programs and services available to Colorado Tribes, per funding source 112

Glossary of Acronyms

AAICPC	Association of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance
ACYF	Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
ACHY	Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth
AFCARS	Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
AI/AN	American Indian/Alaskan Native
APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ARCH	Applied Research in Child Welfare
ARD	The Administrative Review Division
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
BHA	Behavioral Health Administration
BID	Best Interest Determination
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
BPCT	Best Practice Court Teams
CA	Compact Administrator
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CARA	Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act
CARR	Colorado Adoption Resource Registry
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBCAP	Community Based Child Abuse Prevention
CBI	Colorado Bureau of Investigation
CCIA	Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs
CCR	Colorado Community Response
CCWIS	Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System
CCWSC	The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CDEC	Colorado Department of Early Childhood
CDHE	Colorado Department of Higher Education
CDHS	Colorado Department of Human Services
CDPHE	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
CFPS	Child Fatality Prevention System
CFRT	Child Fatality Review Team
CFSP	Child and Family Services Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CHSDA	The Colorado Human Services Directors Association
CIP	Court Improvement Program
CIR	Critical Incident Reports
CISU	Colorado Implementation Science Unit

CJA	Children's Justice Act
CMP	Collaborative Management Program
CMPP	Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan
COCAP	Colorado Child Abuse Prevention
COSHI	Colorado Sexual Health Initiative
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
COYLN	Colorado Youth Leadership Network
CPA	Child Placement Agencies
CPS	Child Protective Services
CPTA	Colorado Provider Training Academy
CPTF	The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
CSU	Colorado State University
CWPTG	Child Welfare Prevention Task Group
CWTS	Child Welfare Training System
CY	Calendar Year
CYMHTA	The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act
DCA	Deputy Compact Administrator
DCP	Division of Community Programs
DCW	Division of Child Welfare
DICI	Denver Indian Center Inc.
DIFRC	Denver Indian Family Resource Center
DIHFS	Denver Indian Health and Family Services
DOH	Division of Housing
DR	Differential Response
DYS	Division of Youth Services
ECCS	Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems
EDI	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
ESEA	The Elementary and Secondary Act
ETV	Educational Training Vouchers
FAC	Family Advisory Council
FAR	Family Assessment Response
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FP	Family Preservation
FS	Family Support
FUP	Family Unification Program
FYI	Foster Youth to Independence
FYiT	Foster Youth in Transition
HCPF	Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
HFA	Healthy Families America

HIPPY	Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
HRA	High Risk Assessment
IART	Institutional Assessment Review Team
ICON	Integrated Colorado Online Network and Management Information System
ICPC	The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IOG	Interagency Oversight Groups
ISST	Individualized Service and Support Teams
JCAMP	Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance
LEAP	Lived Experience Action Panel
LFS-RM	Lutheran Family Services - Rocky Mountain
LGBTQIA2S+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, +
MAPP	Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting
MCV	Monthly Caseworker Visit
MIECHV	Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting
MST	Multi-Systemic Therapy
MSU	Metropolitan State University
NCANDS	National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
NCDR	National Center for Diligent Recruitment
NEICE	National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise
NFP	Nurse-Family Partnership
NPP	Nurturing Parenting Program
NTDC	National Training and Development Curriculum
NYTD	National Youth in Transition Database
OCR	Office of the Child's Representative
OCYF	Office of Children, Youth, and Families
OOH	Out-of-Home
OPPLA	Other Planned Permanency Living Arrangement
ORPC	Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel
PAC	Sub-Policy Advisory Committee
PAT	Parents as Teachers
PCIT	Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
PDG B-5	Colorado Shines Brighter Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five
PFS	Protective Factors Survey
PIP	Program Improvement Plan
PMO	Performance Management Outcomes
PRTF	Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities
PSSF	MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families
PSU	Provider Services Unit
PYD	Positive Youth Development
QRTP	Qualified Residential Treatment Program

RAE	Regional Accountability Entities
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
RED	Review, Evaluate, Direct
RFA	Request for Applications
RGAP	Relative Guardianship Assistance Program
ROM	Results Oriented Management
SANCA	The Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Court Act
SCAO	The State Court Administrator's Office
SCC	SafeCare® Colorado
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SILP	Supervised Independent Living Placements
SRT	Specialized Response Team
SSC	State Steering Committee
SUIT	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
TBRI	Trust Based Relational Intervention
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
UMUT	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
YAB	Youth Advisory Boards
YARH	Youth at Risk of Homelessness

Vision and Collaboration

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is pleased to submit Colorado's 2025-2029 Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP). This five-year strategic plan is administered and overseen by CDHS, and outlines the goals and actions to accomplish safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families involved, or at risk of involvement, with the child welfare system.

The CFSP describes Title IV-B (Subparts 1 and 2), the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA), Chafee Foster Care Program to Successful Transition to Adulthood, Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV), the Indian Child Welfare Act, and Title IV-E and non-IV-E foster care programs. All requirements of 45 CFR 1357 are included within the plan. The 2025-2029 CFSP is a working document that reflects changes in the CDHS Division of Child Welfare (DCW) organizational structure and culture as it builds on successful initiatives and strategies implemented since the 2020-2024 CFSP.

Colorado has a state-supervised, county-administered human/social services system, consisting of 64 counties and two federally recognized Tribes with reservation lands. Under this system, county departments are the main provider of direct services to Colorado's families. CDHS' responsibility includes rule promulgation, guidance, program oversight, and monitoring of county performance and practice, which is done by working closely with counties in collaborative workgroups. Rules are promulgated by the CDHS State Board of Human Services, created pursuant to C.R.S. 26-1-107. Statutory duties include adopting rules for programs administered and services provided by CDHS, which govern program scope and content; requirements, obligations and rights of clients; adopting non-Executive Director rules concerning vendors, providers and other acts of the State Department; and any other specific statutory provisions granting rule-making authority in relation to specific programs.

DCW monitors statewide county child welfare practice to ensure alignment with statute, rule, and memo series guidance and provides 80% of the funding for services through an allocation formula statutorily established by the Child Welfare Allocation Committee. Counties contribute approximately 20% of the funding through local revenues.

DCW is the organizational unit within CDHS that is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the 2025-2029 CFSP[1]. A Colorado counties map can be found in Appendix A, and the CDHS organizational chart can be found in Appendix B.

[1] CDHS is the grantee for Title IV-B funds. A memorandum of understanding has been established with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood to oversee the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2). For more information, see the *MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2)* section of this CFSP.

Vision Statement

The vision statement for Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP is: Colorado strives to create meaningful impact, drive positive change, and empower communities, by ensuring safety, permanency, and well-being for Colorado's children, youth, and families.

The 2025-2029 CFSP vision statement will be driven by the four CFSP goals:

- Goal 1: Colorado's child welfare workforce is strengthened and supported through intentional recruitment and retention efforts.
- Goal 2: Children, youth and families are strengthened through access to evidence-based services and resources that meet their needs at the right time and in the right place.
- Goal 3: Children and youth have safe, permanent, and stable living situations with appropriate supports to meet their individualized needs.
- Goal 4: Youth who leave foster care in Colorado have the tools necessary to be safe, healthy, educated, connected, housed, and contributing young adults.

In recognizing that collaboration is paramount to achieving the goals and objectives in the CFSP, CDHS continues to partner with a variety of stakeholders to strengthen the ability of families to protect and care for their own children, minimize harm to children and youth, and ensure timely permanency planning.

Collaboration

CDHS collaborates with other Colorado state agencies, county departments, service providers, and community stakeholders to coordinate services and programs that serve Colorado's children, youth, and families. It is important to emphasize that these partnerships are not only important in the provision of services to children, youth, and families, but also to prevent children, youth, and families from being involved in the child welfare system altogether.

The following collaborative efforts and partners are highlighted in this report due to their impact on the implementation of major initiatives:

Prevention

Colorado has been transforming its child welfare system to focus on proactively strengthening families through prevention and early intervention strategies, keeping families together safely, and only when necessary, placing children out of the home, with prioritization given to family-like settings. This intentional shift has helped reduce further child welfare system involvement and produced positive change for the state's most vulnerable children, youth, and families.

This transformation continues to be possible with the collaborative efforts of many partners and stakeholders, as represented in the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG).

The CWPTG was created as an advisory group out of the Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee (Sub-PAC) and is committed to developing a prevention infrastructure that reduces the number of children/youth in out-of-home placement, families' further involvement, and reentry into the child welfare system. Seated members represent all regions of the state's county departments of human services, community organizations and service providers, people with lived experience/family voice representation, state agency partners, and research and evaluation experts. The CWPTG operates as an advisory committee for contributing to the design of a broad statewide prevention infrastructure and is responsible for recommending updates to Colorado's Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) Five-Year Prevention Plan.

This broad collaboration creates intentional working relationships, increased communication, strategic alignment and shared resources, and fosters mutual benefit towards a common goal. Underlying conditions that are foundational to the CWPTG include ensuring equity, valuing those with lived expertise, and developing recommendations that are community-grounded, strengths-based, and inclusive throughout Colorado. This ensures that all children, youth, and families have timely access to services and supports that meet their needs and promote safety and well-being.

CDHS, in partnership with the CWPTG, the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention (COCAP) Trust Fund Board, the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), and many other partners, is working to expand the availability of Family First prevention services to:

- Increase the amount of Title IV-E reimbursement Colorado is receiving and inform future strategic investments of such funding;
- Increase access to Family First prevention services that meet the needs of children, youth, and families;
- Develop new, culturally responsive Family First prevention services, as needed;
- Support services with evidence building and/or continuous quality improvement activities; and
- Meet federal requirements regarding evidence-building, fidelity monitoring, and Colorado's Family First prevention plan.

To meet these overarching objectives, CDHS and CWPTG have identified three specific goals that, if met, may promote the effective and efficient expansion of Family First prevention services. These include:

- **Goal 1:** Scaling Existing Family First Prevention Services - CDHS is working to ensure Family First prevention services included on Colorado's Family First prevention plan are accessible to all who need them.
- **Goal 2:** Expanding The Family First Service Array - CDHS is working to expand Colorado's Family First Service Array to ensure diverse prevention services that are responsive to community needs.
- **Goal 3:** Broadening Candidacy for Family First Prevention Services - CDHS is working to expand Family First candidacy to serve families prior to child welfare system involvement.

CDEC oversees several programs that fall within the child welfare and prevention continuum. See the *Child and Family Services Continuum* section of this CFSP for further information on these programs.

CDHS is also collaborating with the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), and counties, to align funding and services. County input ensures that any changes continue to support the unique needs of Colorado's communities, including rural and frontier counties that often lack resources and providers.

The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA) (C.R.S 27-67-101, et. seq.), under the purview of the BHA, allows for families to access mental health treatment services for their child or youth, as an alternative to child welfare involvement when a dependency and neglect action is not warranted. Additional prevention efforts are also highlighted in previous Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSR), and later in this CFSP, with particular focus on efforts undertaken by the CDEC, such as the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF), the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program, and extensive early intervention and prevention services targeted at children under the age of five.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has a Prevention Services Division which houses the Child Fatality Prevention System[2] (CFPS), Colorado's public health child death review and prevention process. Established by the Child Fatality Prevention Act in 2013, this system focuses on reviewing deaths of infants, children, and youth under age 18 in Colorado that result largely from injury, violence, or undetermined causes. System partners across the state review these deaths and develop actionable child fatality prevention recommendations centered on preventing injuries, increasing child and family health and wellness, enhancing the protective factors, and reducing adverse childhood experiences. See "Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths" in the *Update on Service Descriptions* section of this APSR for more information on the CFPS. The Prevention Services Division also houses other aligned programs that support primary prevention and awareness initiatives (i.e. healthy eating and active living, motor vehicle safety, oral health, substance misuse and overdose prevention) as well as prevention services for populations that are at higher risk including Essentials for Childhood (child maltreatment prevention), Communities that Care (youth violence and substance misuse prevention), as well as Maternal and Child Health and Services for children and youth with special health care needs. The work of the division is supported by robust population health data collection and analysis to direct programming and investments.

Collaboration with the Counties

The Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA)

The Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA) is a non-profit association representing the social/human services directors from all 64 Colorado counties. CHSDA promotes a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities and

[2] https://cdphe.colorado.gov/prevention-and-wellness/injury-prevention/child-fatality-prevention-system

protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect. CHSDA works under the authority and direction of county commissioners. CDHS and CHSDA work closely together through various task groups and committees to develop policy and advance best practices for child welfare, specifically the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Child Welfare Allocation Committee.

The CDHS Policy Advisory Committee[3]

The CDHS Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) brings together state and county human services leaders to collaboratively develop human services policies that improve practice, the delivery of services, and outcomes for children/youth, families, and adults across the state of Colorado. There are four sub-PACs that generate policy and practice recommendations about a specific program area: Adult and Aging, Child Welfare, Economic Security, and Financial Management. Each sub-PAC has a county co-chair and a state co-chair, and membership of the sub-PACs includes both state and regional county representatives. Sub-PAC recommendations are submitted to and deliberated by the PAC, and then passed on to the Executive Director of CDHS for approval.

From each sub-PAC, subgroups may be convened with a multidisciplinary team of representatives from state agencies and county departments of human services. The current list of subgroups for child welfare includes, but is not limited to:

- Administrative Review Division Steering Committee
- Child Protection Task Group
- Child Welfare Prevention Task Group
- Colorado Trails User Group
- Differential Response Leadership Council
- Institutional Abuse Review Team (IART)
- Permanency Task Group
- Child Welfare & Domestic Violence Task Group
- Training Steering Committee
- Substance Use Disorder/Exposed Newborn Workgroup

Specialized Response Team

The Specialized Response Team (SRT) is a relatively new team within DCW. It provides enhanced support for counties and County Intermediaries statewide. The lead for this unit oversees and supports the DCW county intermediary role, which serves as a single point of contact for county staff to receive state information regarding statute, policy, and practice. Additionally, the SRT partners with counties and their assigned county intermediaries to better understand needs both within individual communities and regionally.

The SRT holds a generalist perspective through interactions with all units under DCW to understand statewide trends, resources, and initiatives that impact counties. This includes working with the Learning and Development Team to support implementation of coaching and

[3] https://cdhs.colorado.gov/policy-advisory-committee

continuous quality improvement. Collaborations include interactions with county-facing staff across CDHS and partners such as HCPF and the BHA, to further statewide collaboration, understanding of resources and funding, and barriers to accessing resources.

Additionally, the SRT supports the entire state by:

- partnering with assigned DCW county intermediaries when additional support is requested or necessary to meet individual county needs,
- providing regional back-up coverage when DCW county intermediaries are on extended leave or a position is vacant,
- providing case management of action plans and performance improvement plans,
- providing targeted organizational support for counties,
- holding a regional and statewide view of performance trends, using CQI to address areas of opportunity, and
- supporting county staff through coaching.

With Colorado having a state-supervised, county-administered human/social services system, the SRT enables consistency in practice across the State, and ensures communications are aligned between the state and county agencies.

Alignment with Judicial Partners

Senate Bill 19-258[4] authorized CDHS to draw down Title IV-E reimbursement funds for legal representation in foster care proceedings. A memorandum of understanding was developed with the Office of the Child's Representative[5] (OCR) and the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel[6] (ORPC) to draw down these funds. The OCR was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to improve representation for Colorado's most vulnerable children/youth through minimum practice standards, litigation support, accessible high-quality statewide training, and oversight of the practice. The OCR oversees attorneys that provide legal representation as guardians ad litem, counsel for child(ren)/youth in dependency and neglect proceedings, and child legal representatives. The ORPC was established in 2016 to support parents and ensure that parents are identified and engaged in the dependency and neglect process. By protecting the constitutional and other legal rights of parents, preserving family relationships, advocating for necessary services to support reunification and children/youth remaining home, and ensuring the provision of complete, accurate, and balanced information to courts and other parties, respondent parent counsels are an essential component of the child welfare team and can provide information that may help engage parents in the system in more meaningful ways.

CDHS participates in and continues to partner with the Court Improvement Program (CIP) to provide training throughout the year, particularly on legislative changes that impact the bench. Those trainings are documented in more detail in the annual CIP Self-Assessment, which is

[4] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb19-258

[5] https://coloradochildrep.org/

[6] https://coloradoorpc.org/

submitted separately to the Children's Bureau. CDHS continues to collaborate with CIP, court appointed special advocates (CASA), OCR, and ORPC. These agencies have committed to meeting quarterly to discuss challenges, opportunities for improvements, and successes.

Court of Appeals Workgroup

The CIP and CDHS continue to strive to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth. In April 2018, the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court appointed a Colorado Judicial Branch Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup was to consider necessary changes to practice, rules, and statutes to ensure that appeals in cases concerning relinquishment, adoption, and dependency and neglect are resolved within six months after being filed. The workgroup is composed of legal and child welfare professionals, and met through February 2021 to recommend changes in practices, policies, and procedures to streamline the appellate process. A final report was released in Spring 2021.

In Spring 2022, the Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 22-1134, which was signed by Colorado's Governor in March 2022 and aims to minimize delays in the appeals process so that children in dependency and neglect cases achieve permanency in a timely manner. House Bill 22-1113 authorized the workgroup to continue the work started in 2018 and the workgroup filed an interim report[7] on Jan 1, 2023. A final report is due to the Colorado Legislature on June 30, 2024. After considering data from the Court of Appeals, the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) has also requested funding for four new dependency and neglect staff attorneys for the Court of Appeals. Should this request be granted, the Court of Appeals believes that they will be able to meet timeframes on the appeals side. A subcommittee of the group is also considering delays that may exist on the trial court side and anticipates having recommendations based on data that they received from the SCAO.

CQI Workshops and Change Management Framework

The CIP has recently implored Best Practice Court Teams (BPCTs) to learn and use change management science in their work together. This includes engaging in Purpose 2 Practice activities to establish purpose, examine participation, determine a decision-making structure, and identify the behaviors that will be needed to fulfill their purpose. Once this has been established, BPCTs are engaging in the phases of change management to explore complex issues, utilize data, and meaningfully explore the absence or presence of best practices in their districts/ counties. To date, approximately a dozen BPCTs have engaged in this work, at and after attending the CQI Workshop.

CIP's dedication to engaging in change management will ensure that the foundations are present for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 4. Further, because the CIP is leveraging the research that established the Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP), Colorado's legal partners should be better able to engage in future rounds of CFSR activities. The CIP has reviewed reference materials such as "Examining the Child and Family

[7] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dnQUh1tGrQgdy_d81FwXcVeSI56SPnUG/view?usp=sharing

Services Review Outcomes and Systemic Factors: Legal and Judicial Perspective" document and CDHS has begun conversations with CIP on how this guidance will be used.

Children's Justice Act[8]

Section 107(c) of CAPTA requires States to create a multidisciplinary Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force composed of professionals and individuals with knowledge and experience relating to the criminal justice system and issues of child physical abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment related fatalities.

The CJA Task Force reviews and evaluates State investigative, administrative, and civil and criminal judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, federal-State and State-tribal. The task force also makes policy and training recommendations.

Please see the *Service Coordination* section of this CFSP and the CJA Annual Report and Three-Year Assessment in Appendix C for further details on how program representatives are involved in service coordination and support of mutual goals and strategies.

Collaboration with Tribes

CDHS consults, collaborates, and coordinates with both federally recognized Tribes within the state, as well as with Colorado-based organizations that serve the state's American Indian urban communities. There are two federally recognized Tribes with land bases in Colorado. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) is located primarily in La Plata County and includes 1,488 enrolled members as of June 2021. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT) is located primarily in Montezuma County with another community in White Mesa, Utah and includes 2,060 enrolled members as of June 2021. The 2020 Census Bureau reports that 74,129 people who identify as solely American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) live in Colorado. The 2020 Census Bureau also shows there are 100,000 people in Colorado who identify as AI/AN in combination with one or more races.

In addition to the two federally recognized Tribes, CDHS partners with organizations such as the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA), Denver Indian Center Inc. (DICI), Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC), Haseya Advocate Program, and Denver Indian Health and Family Services (DIHFS) to address ongoing and emerging human services concerns for the state's American Indian urban populations. To facilitate communication and collaboration, CDHS employs a BHA Tribal Liaison, a DCW Indian Child Welfare Act Specialist, and a Tribal Affairs Specialist who are responsible for nurturing and strengthening the CDHS' relationship with the Tribes and organizations that serve the state's American Indian urban communities.

[8] https://cdhs.colorado.gov/childrens-justice-act-task-force

Please see the *Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes* section of this CFSP for additional information.

Family Voices

CDHS has created a Family and Community Engagement Plan that ensures alignment with the CDHS Strategic Plan, the CDHS Equity Action Plan, Governor Polis' Executive Orders, and the Family Voice Council Plan for the Future. The three overall outcomes of the plan include:

1. CDHS Staff: Increased knowledge, skills, and confidence in engaging community and family members into program planning, implementation, and evaluation methods.
2. Family and Community: Community, families, and youth feel heard, well respected and valued and are given opportunities to be included early on in decisions that impact them.
3. System and Policy: Systems and policies are whole person, whole family and whole community-centered and all program/policy changes are informed by and reflective of community, family, and youth needs.

The Family Voice Council

CDHS recognizes the value of family participation and engaging the voices of those with lived systems experience. As reported in prior APSRs, the Family Voice Council is made up of people who have been involved with, or are currently engaged in, two CDHS services or programs. Current Family Voice Council members and alumni continue to inform and guide the department. Colorado's model of incorporating the expertise and lived experience of families and communities has received state and national recognition. CDHS has released the Family Voice Compass[9], providing information, tools, and resources to help other organizations create their own family voice councils.

The Child Welfare Family Advisory Council[10]

DCW created the Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (FAC) in 2022 to strengthen the partnership between the DCW and impacted families and their community so children can heal and thrive[11]. The Child Welfare FAC consists of 16 Coloradans with lived experience in the child welfare system, and are compensated for their expertise through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and a partnership with Illuminate CO. The group meets monthly and connects these members with policy and program staff, local departments of human services, and partner providers. The purpose of the FAC is to include family voices and those with lived experience in providing feedback on DCW planning, policies, and procedures to improve the design and delivery of high-quality child welfare services to the youth and families in Colorado.

The FAC will be conducting a statewide survey of people with lived experience of the state's child welfare system. The survey will be distributed to over 2,500 people across the state, and ARPA funds will be used to provide incentives for people to complete the survey.

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[9] https://sites.google.com/state.co.us/familyvoicecompass/home

[10] https://cdhs.colorado.gov/child-welfare-family-advisory-council

[11] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0ADXACVbmgEGAUk9PVA

Reimagining Child Welfare[12]

The Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee is committed to co-designing a future system that prioritizes keeping families together and providing support that is centered on families' needs. Over half of the Steering Committee is made up of people with lived experience, and they work alongside local and state child welfare professionals to prioritize:

1. Meaningfully incorporating lived expertise wherever policy decisions are being made that impact children, youth, and families,
2. Appropriately diverting calls from the Colorado child abuse hotline so that families can access the support they need without unnecessarily becoming system-involved, and
3. Building up alternative pathways for families to connect with needed resources and support.

Stakeholder Feedback

Child and Family Service Plan Priorities

Soliciting and incorporating stakeholder feedback remains a high priority at DCW, particularly in the development of Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP. Each priority area in this plan has been developed in partnership with state child welfare staff, county child welfare staff, out-of-home placement providers, service providers, people with lived experience, and other community partners.

A survey was sent out through newsletters and county intermediaries to share with all Colorado counties, community and tribal partners, and other state agencies in March and April 2024, to consolidate Colorado's four priorities in this plan. Survey participants included representation from county departments of human services, community partners, the judicial branch and legal partners, foster parents, child placement agencies, guardian ad litems, counsel for youth, family resource centers, academic partners, healthcare workers, respondent parent counsel, and people with lived experience.

The results of the survey found that Expanding Child Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Services and Supports, Supporting Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment and Retention, and Preventing Unnecessary Out-of-Home Placements and Increasing Timeliness to Permanency were the top priority areas that participants would like to see efforts towards improvements being made. Additionally, 37% of respondents identified Lack of Services and Supports, and 25% of respondents identified Caseworker Recruitment and Retention as the biggest challenge in child welfare system improvements. These results are reflected in the four goals of this CFSP.

A teleconference was held in June 2024 to solicit input on the CFSP draft. The draft document was sent to counties, Tribal partners, and community partners for review prior to the submission of this plan.

[12] https://co4kids.org/reimagining/

A copy of the 2025-2029 CFSP will be made publicly available on the CDHS Child Welfare Publications and Reports website[13] by September 30th, 2023, or when final approval is received from the Children's Bureau.

[13] https://cdhs.colorado.gov/child-welfare-publications-and-reports

Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

In the ongoing assessment and evaluation of Colorado's child welfare system, data is collected and reviewed through several methods to ensure a robust strategy to support the upcoming CFSR.

The Administrative Review Division

The Administrative Review Division (ARD) serves as an independent, third-party review system within CDHS. The ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and a portion of the Quality Assurance System for both the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Services. Additionally, the ARD conducts quality assurance reviews of Adult Protective Services cases.

The ARD works closely with Colorado's counties to train, measure, and assess their adherence to state and federal regulations. Such regulations are in place to help prevent unnecessary moves for children in foster care and to assess whether the needs of children, youth, and families are being appropriately addressed.

Please see the Quality Assurance section of this CFSP for more information.

Results Oriented Management (ROM) System

To promote transparency in state performance, and as a statewide monitoring tool, Colorado utilizes ROM to create performance reports based on data entered in Colorado's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, Trails. CDHS contracts with the University of Kansas to manage this software and ensure that ROM is accessible by state and county staff as a continuous quality improvement and performance management tool.

C-STAT 2.0

As Colorado has a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system, CDHS is responsible for the oversight and monitoring of county performance to ensure adherence to state and federal measures. Data from ROM is used in C-Stat, a management strategy that reviews county performance on a quarterly basis. County and statewide performance is regularly evaluated to identify areas in need of improvement and target changes in practice to improve outcomes.

The following measures are regularly monitored at C-Stat meetings:

- Average Daily Out-of-Home Population per 1,000
- Timely Initial Response to Abuse/Neglect Assessments

- Children Who Re-Enter Care within 12 Months
- Safety Assessment Completion within 30 Days Prior to Reunification
- Family Engagement at Reunification
- Monthly Contacts with Parents
- Placement Moves Rate per 1,000 Days of Care
- Monthly Contacts with Parents in Youth in Conflict Cases

CFSR Data Profiles

Colorado will use ROM and C-Stat reports in conjunction with CFSR Data Profiles to monitor and maintain data accuracy and improve outcomes. ROM and C-STAT are often closely tied to federal and state goals. These are compared with CFSR Data Profiles for alignment and used for CQI efforts across program areas. These profiles also aid in identifying data quality and practice changes that are needed to support decision-making around policy and practice.

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1.

Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Maltreatment.

- Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows that initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment was timely 85.9% of the time, per Colorado's state standard.
- Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows that initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment was timely 69.5% of the time, per the Federal standard.

Timely response and successfully making contact with children within the dispositional timeframe is an essential pillar to child protective services, not only to ensure the safety of children but also to ensure that child protection is determining the appropriate level of involvement with families with expediency.

Colorado has successfully met the CFSR Round 3 Program Improvement Plan measurement goal for Item 1, and performance continues to exceed the federal goal of 68.3%. Colorado's state standard reflects when counties successfully complete face-to-face contact with an alleged victim within the initial dispositional timeframe or successfully complete contact during a timely subsequent attempt, while the federal standard does not account for subsequent timeframes or attempts during the initial time frame.

In anticipation for CFSR Round 4, Colorado's has set its C-Stat goal for this measure to 84.3% and will incrementally increase the goal to 95%.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2.

Item 2: Services to protect children in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care.

- According to ROM, 82.5% of children/youth eligible to re-enter care (within 12 months of discharge from foster care, Jan 2023 - Dec 2023) maintained permanency. See Goals 2 and 3 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP for targeted interventions to protect children at home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care.
- According to case review data in 2023, 97.6% of children/youth in out-of-home care had their safety needs adequately addressed if a new safety concern was identified during the review period.

Differential Response (DR)

The Colorado Differential Response (DR) practice model provides counties with an opportunity to focus on child/youth safety and provide the appropriate level of support based on the needs of families. DR is an approach that aims to maximize family engagement and whole-family assessment. This requires assessing risk and safety in the same manner as required in a traditional response with two exceptions: 1) scheduling interviews with families and the alleged victim child/youth are done with the family, and 2) there is no substantiated "finding" of abuse and neglect against the family. In alignment with Family First, DR creates a more engaging opportunity to provide support and prevention services to families and prevents deeper penetration into the child welfare system by keeping children protected at home and preventing removal or re-entry into foster care.

Within DR a multi-track assessment approach can be used. One track called Family Assessment Response (FAR) for low to moderate risk referrals can be offered as an alternative to the traditional investigative approach, High Risk Assessment (HRA). FAR may be utilized to assess child safety by focusing on the environmental context and broader issues of family well-being, along with the incident of abuse or neglect, through the solution focused family centered practice supported by DR.

In the 2020-2025 CFSP, Colorado was working on statewide implementation of DR. As of early 2024, all but one county in Colorado is fully implemented or in the process of implementing DR.

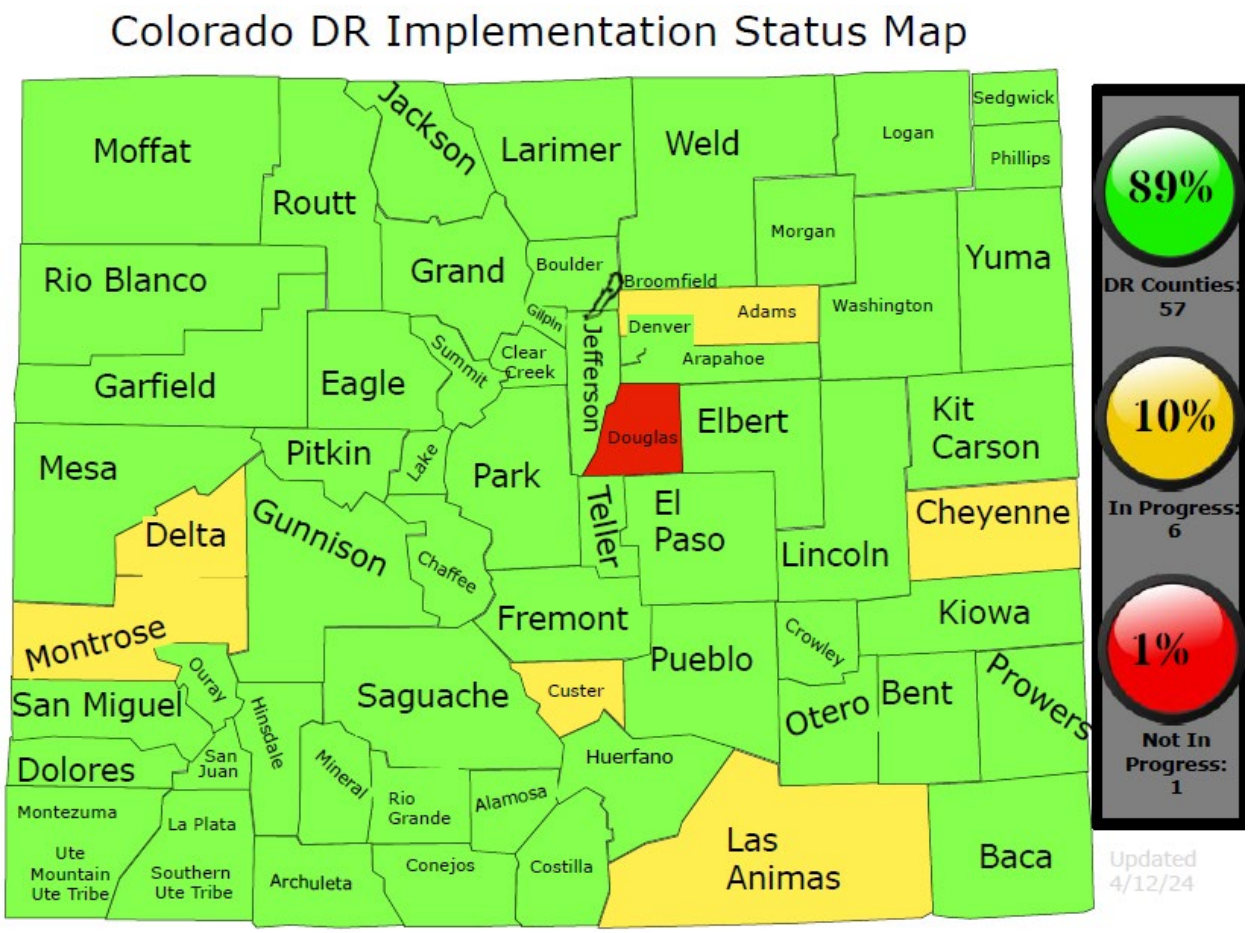

Figure 1: Map of Differential Response Implementation in Colorado.

Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management.

- According to ROM, 96.2% of children/youth involved in in-home cases (January 2023 - December 2023) remained safe (did not have a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect) while the case was open.
- According to ARD case review data for out-of-home cases in 2023, 97.7% of children/youth statewide who had a new safety concern identified had their safety needs adequately addressed during the review period.

Colorado rules provide direction on the usage of the Colorado Family Safety Assessment tool. This tool has been standardized to assess the safety of children/youth at the onset of a child protection assessment and at certain points throughout an ongoing child protection case (i.e., prior to reunification, prior to removal and at case closure).

As part of the Colorado Program Improvement Plan implementation activities, Colorado created supplemental documents to accompany the safety and risk assessment tools, in response to feedback gathered from supervisors and caseworkers across the state. An operational

memorandum was released (OM-CW-2022-0005[14]) to promote the following items[15] that were created to assist caseworkers and supervisors with assessing for safety of children/youth and documenting safety observations through the Safety Assessment Tool:

- A Safety Assessment Desk Guide for use during ongoing cases
- A Safety Assessment "Frequently Asked Questions" document
- Updated Safety Assessment instructions
- Supervisor Considerations when Assessing for Safety or Safety Planning

DCW, in partnership with counties, identified two areas that would prevent re-entry to foster care: Family Engagement Meetings at reunification, and Safety Assessments completed prior to reunification. These measures are both included in the C-Stat reports, and DCW continues to monitor these monthly and provides technical assistance and practice guidance to counties to ensure consistency and fidelity to the tool.

During the 2024 legislative sessions, Colorado passed House Bill 24-1046[16]. The bill requires that reports of known or suspected child abuse or neglect include evidence of domestic violence in a child's home whenever possible. Additionally, it requires that CDHS create a consistent screening process for county departments to follow when responding to a report from the child abuse reporting hotline, review and modify the screening process used by county departments and hotline system operators in determining demographic and ethnicity information, and develop a disclosure system that notifies callers that calls to the child abuse reporting hotline are recorded. The bill also requires the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman to contract with a third-party evaluator to conduct audits on the Colorado Family Safety Assessment and the Colorado Family Risk Assessment tools. The purpose of the audit is to ensure appropriate language and best practices are used, and assessing risk factors that may directly or indirectly cause children harm.

Domestic Violence

Previous family and community violence has been a risk factor identified in families involved in fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents of child maltreatment. Colorado has taken steps to enhance child welfare's response to families when domestic violence is an identified concern. In June 2023, CDHS concluded its year-long Domestic Abuse Task Force[17]. The task force worked to determine a recommended definition of domestic abuse to be included in C.R.S. Title 19, the Children's Code. While the group was unable to reach a consensus on a recommended definition, several promising recommendations were provided to the CDHS Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) on best practices and training guidelines for child welfare caseworkers when responding to domestic abuse.

Efforts to implement these recommendations are underway. Colorado's information-gathering processes during hotline calls when domestic violence is a reported concern is being reviewed

[14] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EVQaS-naBHrBuBklxfzRU0WUwUNsWRBI/view

[15] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VKAYpqLwA853WnJ7FwFF857Dw-waTUVp

[16] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb24-1046

[17] https://cdhs.colorado.gov/domestic-abuse-statutory-definition-task-force

and updated. Colorado is also determining how to flag information in Trails to better assist caseworkers in identifying patterns of domestic violence over time and collect data for future policy-making endeavors. Additionally, tools to aid caseworkers in decision-making and assessments related to domestic violence are being reviewed and updated based on the recommendations and feedback received.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1.

Item 4: Stability in Foster Placement.

- The placement stability rate (moves per 1,000 days in care during a rolling 12-month period) from January 2023 to December 2023 was an average of 3.45 (all children/youth).

The Placement Stability Work Group convened in November 2021 to find ways to enhance placement stability for children and youth in Colorado. The work group consisted of counties, community partners, and state agencies. During monthly meetings in early 2022, the workgroup identified strategies that contribute to this goal which included a Transition/Stabilization Visit and adjusting existing kinship tools (Kinship Needs Assessment and People Who May Be Involved In a Case) to identify and support all resources caregivers needs.

To test the efficacy of these strategies, the Placement Stability Pilot had a soft launch in February 2023 and officially began in March of 2023 with participation from counties of varying sizes and regions. Counties participating in the pilot were asked to identify a subset of new removals that would be placed in out-of-home kinship or foster care homes. For those providers included in the pilot, counties were asked to conduct an initial transition visit within the first week of placement. During some of the first visits with the provider, pilot counties were asked to conduct a Caregiver Needs Assessment with the provider and share the People Who May Be Involved in the Case document[18]. Counties were also recommended to conduct a stabilization visit if the worker determines a placement is at risk of disruption.

The pilot concluded in October 2023, and the final summary[19] was released in Spring 2024. Additional considerations and recommendations were made to promote the intentionality of the tools, and identify areas of practice improvement in the broader systemic context. The placement stability workgroup and pilot participants reconvened in late 2023 to discuss the key themes and lessons learned that may inform future strategies to promote placement stability.

[18] https://drive.google.com/file/d/17IQknSQ-GvRc9lu2APoa1eiM_nyIDN9v/view

[19] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xEPLrpR4QXPPBUWiPJC1fXw6oPrqpJsf/view

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Children.

- According to case review data from ARD in 2023, reviewers found that the primary court ordered permanency goal, at the time of the review, was appropriate for the child/youth 90% of the time.

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP focused extensively on this item, and Colorado has successfully met the PIP goal of 85% with the plateau effect adjustment in May 2023. As part of continuation of efforts, DCW has created a Permanency Status Report for counties to opt into receiving, to identify points in cases that may result in delayed permanency. DCW's county intermediaries are working closely with the counties to use the report as part of the case review process. DCW's Permanency team also created a template for caseworkers to use when meeting with providers, that helps assess the stability of placements for children in out-of-home (OOH) care. For more information on how the Permanency Status Report will be used, see intervention 3.2.1 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP.

Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (OPPLA).

- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12 months who have achieved permanency is 55.1%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12-23 months who have achieved permanency is 48.9%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 24 months or more who have achieved permanency is 47.2%.
- The percentage of children/youth adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is 49%.
- There were 57 youth who emancipated from foster care in 2023.
- According to case review data from ARD in 2023, 98% of children/youth in out of home care had reasonable efforts being made at the time of the review to achieve permanency.
- The percentage of children/youth who re-entered out-of-home placement after achieving permanency in the past 12 months is 1.1%. 0.2% of the children/youth who achieved permanency in the last 12 months re-entered out of home placement from kin custody.

DCW has begun reviewing Child and Family Studies to ensure timeliness of completion, as well as further identifying issues with the Colorado Adoption Resource Registry (CARR) process to ensure all children/youth are being excluded from recruitment or registered for recruitment; whichever is appropriate to achieve timely permanency. A new adoption assistance worksheet has also been implemented statewide for all new adoption assistance negotiations and renegotiations to better address inconsistencies and inequities for children, youth and families statewide which will assist families feel more equipped and confident in the support they will receive post-adoption.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships is preserved for children.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2.

Item 7: Placement with Siblings.

While 90% of reviewed cases for Item 7 indicated that it was a strength, Items 8, 9, 10 and 11 were not found in substantial conformity. Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows that:

- Siblings are placed together 80.6% of the time.

Item 8: Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care.

According to case review data in 2023, the frequency of visitations with family members adequately addressed the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship:

Family Member	**Visitation frequency to adequately address the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship**	**Quality of contacts sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth and to promote achievement of case goals**
Mother/Guardian/Kin	47.3%	88.2%
Father/Guardian/Kin	39%	85.5%
Other Legal Guardian	57.5%	90.2%
Sibling(s)	80.4%	N/A

Table 1: Visitation Frequency and Quality of Contacts made in 2023.

Family time is essential for healthy child development, especially for children in foster care, as it helps to maintain parent-child attachment, reduce a child's sense of abandonment, and preserve a sense of belonging as part of a family and community. Family time offers reassurance for children and their families, opportunities to strengthen cultural and kinship connections, and motivation for parents to enroll in treatment or meet other permanency plan requirements. Although there is no generally accepted way to structure family time to optimize chances for reunification:

1. Families that spend time together regularly have a greater likelihood of timely reunification, and frequent family connections may also decrease depression, anxiety, and externalizing problem behaviors in children.
2. Family time is not a special or elective service, nor is it to be used as a bonus or reward; it is a fundamental right for all children and youth in foster care and their families.

Colorado has passed House Bill 23-1027[20] and beginning January 2024, the definition of "Family Time" was clarified, new requirements were set forth for dependency and neglect court proceedings, and the bill also required the high-quality family time task force to evaluate a state study on Family Time. In 2024, the task force will identify the current strengths and needs for providing high-quality supervised family time services across the state, identify necessary measures to build capacity to provide high-quality supervised parenting time services, inventory funding sources and allowable costs for providing these services, and make recommendations regarding best practices for funding high-quality parenting time.

Item 9: Preserving Connections.

According to out-of-home reviews from the ARD, the department makes concerted efforts to maintain the child/youth's connections during the review period 99.8% of the time. The reviewer determines if there is evidence the department is making concerted efforts to maintain the child/youth's connections to his/her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, activities, rituals, traditions, tribe, school, and friends.

In 78% of cases reviewed by ARD, a child/youth stayed in their school of origin if a determination was made that it was in the child's best interest to stay. See Goal 4 for strategies DCW will use to continue maintaining a child/youth's connections.

Item 10: Relative Placement.

- In 2023, 51.3% of children/youth were placed with a relative as their initial placement.

Research[21] shows that when children and youth cannot remain with their parents, they generally have better outcomes when placed with kinship caregivers. Benefits of kinship care include:

- Reduced trauma by providing familiarity, continuity, and retention of familial ties.
- Improved mental health outcomes.
- Fewer behavioral problems and better social outcomes.
- Better educational outcomes and stability.
- Greater stability in placements and higher levels of permanency.
- Better cultural, ethnic, racial, and traditional connections to their communities of origin.
- Stronger ties to the child's biological family.

[20] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1027

[21] https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/litigation_committees/childrights/kinship-placement/memo-re-benefits-of-kinship-placement-adoption.pdf

- Greater placement satisfaction for children and youth, including feelings of love and belonging.

Colorado Kinnected

Colorado has implemented the Colorado Kinnected kinship navigator program, receiving support from the Colorado Implementation Science Unit.[22] Colorado Kinnected provides more support to kinship caregivers both within the county departments and through the use of community services. This model combines the use of Family Search and Engagement, Facilitated Family Engagement meetings, and Kinship Support (such as hard goods, transportation, childcare, respite care, and therapeutic needs).

A randomized controlled trial completed in 2022 showed that families served through Colorado Kinnected had higher rates of reunification, that children remained in lower levels of care (primarily in the care of kin), and that kinship caregivers received more support services. Hard goods (such as food, clothing, baby supplies, bedding, etc.) have been highlighted as one of the most appreciated supports, as children and youth often come with nothing, and kin are not immediately prepared to take on the care of children without these items. Colorado Kinnected was rated as "promising" in December 2022 in the federal Title IV-E Clearinghouse, and subsequently re-rated as "supported" in March 2024 after the submission of additional evaluation results. Kinnected was also designated as an Exemplary Program by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center[23].

There is no longer a federal requirement for caregivers to be a United States citizen to be certified as a foster parent. Several kinship caregivers have been providing the same level of care to Colorado's children and youth but were prevented from becoming certified and receiving the same level of support as other caregivers solely because of their citizenship status. Removing this barrier allows more of our kinship caregivers the opportunity to become certified and receive that level of support.

There has been a CDHS campaign to increase public awareness of kin. This has led to more community awareness and inclusivity of kin. Kinship families are included in statewide recognitions such as foster care and adoption appreciations as well as their impact on reunification success. There has been an increased effort to ensure their voices are included in panel discussions, legislation, rule-making, and other public forums.

Kinship Foster Care Homes[24]

Senate Bill 24-008 was passed in the 2024 legislative session to allow CDHS to promulgate rules to modify the requirements for kinship foster care homes, including training topics for kinship

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[22] To learn more about the implementation supports provided by the Colorado Implementation Science Unit, please visit: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PhFDi9xBsSUeXnTex7WlIAbWzhxzxeEX/view?usp=drive_link.

[23] https://www.gksnetwork.org/resources/colorado-kinnected-colorado-department-of-human-services/

[24] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-008

foster care certification. This bill also proposes to expand financial assistance to both kinship foster care homes and non-certified kinship caregivers.

More information on this bill will be reported in future APSRs.

Emergency And Continued Placement with Relative Or Kin

House Bill 23-1043[25] clarified the procedures for emergency and non-emergency placement of a child or youth or continued placement of a child or youth. The bill defined the criminal offenses and timeframes of such offenses that makes relatives or kin eligible or non-eligible for the placement of a child or youth. A county department may place with a relative or kin who would otherwise be disqualified if safety concerns can be mitigated as outlined in Volume 7, Colorado's regulations related to child welfare, or if a court affirms the placement.

Relative And Kin Placement of A Child

House Bill 23-1024[26] established several measures that protect the best interests of a child or youth and that will not hinder reunification with the child's or youth's family when the child or youth has been temporarily placed outside the family home with a relative or kin (relative), including:

- Permitting a relative to appeal when denied placement of the child or youth with the relative.
- Requiring the department to use reasonable efforts to help a relative whose barrier to caring for the child or youth is a lack of resources.
- Specifying what information should be included in a notice to relatives and kin when the child or youth has been removed from the child's or youth's home.
- Requiring that courts give preference to a relative unless placement with that relative would negatively affect the child's or youth's mental, physical, or emotional needs, or hinder reunification with the child's or youth's family.
- Providing options for a relative to be allowed to participate in a child's or youth's care and planning.
- Requiring that caseworkers inform the court of efforts to identify and place a child or youth with a relative.

Item 11: Relationship of Child/youth in Care with Parent.

Case review data from ARD found that in 88% and 86% of cases respectively, the quality of contacts with the mother/guardian/kin and father/guardian/kin, was sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth, and to promote achievement of case goals.

However, case reviews also found that the frequency of visitation with the mother/guardian/kin and the father/guardian/kin adequately addressed the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship only 47% of the time, and only 39% of the time, respectively.

[25] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1043

[26] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1024

Incarcerated Parents Rule

Proposed rule changes are in process related to Senate Bill 23-039[27] supporting the relationship between children and their incarcerated parents. Rules are being drafted by the Permanency Task Group under Child Welfare Sub-PAC. The Permanency Task Group includes a variety of community collaborators, county departments, local and state law enforcement agencies, ORPC, OCR, and CIP. The task of the group is to review and make modifications to rules to accurately reflect state statutes regarding incarcerated parents who are involved with the child welfare system in Colorado. These proposed rule revisions are in sections of Volume 7, including 7.000.2, 7.301.22, 7.701.3, 7.304.64 and 7.601.2.

Fatherhood Program

In 2018, Colorado was identified as performing poorly in engaging fathers by the Child and Family Services Review. The review found that the quality and frequency of caseworker visits with parents were only at 63%, while the goal was 90%. Additionally, only 54% of cases had sufficient quality and frequency of caseworker visitation for father engagement, which was 20% lower than the contacts with mothers. It was evident that the lack of engagement with fathers had a negative impact on various case outcomes, such as being less likely to reunify, instability in foster care, increased placement episodes, length of foster care stay, exits to adoption, and subsequent maltreatment.

As a result, Colorado took steps to identify the root causes, review practices, identify strengths, and explore the value of fatherhood engagement across the six participating counties in the Colorado Program Improvement Plan (PIP). A report was created in ROM to identify monthly parent contacts and then tailored to begin measuring father engagement. The tailored report was aligned with Federal and State laws and administrative rules and was able to capture the following areas: non-identified father, attempted contacts, non-face-to-face contact requirements met timely, and face-to-face contact requirements met timely. These four targeted areas help measure father identification, engagement, and the number of times the caseworker saw the father in person per month.

Colorado conducted a review of county practices to improve child welfare practices related to family involvement. Through continuous quality improvement tools, counties identified areas needing improvement, such as a lack of value in engaging fathers, a process to identify fathers early on, enhanced engagement practices with fathers, and data collection to measure the engagement of fathers. The six PIP counties developed, enhanced, and sustained practices to increase awareness of valuing father engagement. They established county-specific processes when a father was absent or unable to be located or when the mother refused to share information. The counties reviewed caseworker interviewing techniques, biases, and values when engaging fathers to create a safe space for workforce staff to unpack views and establish expectations that fathers share an equal voice in their children's lives. Lastly, data collection began to demonstrate where efforts needed to improve. All resources and tools created or

[27] https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2023a_039_signed.pdf

enhanced were stored on the Child Welfare Training System Webpage to ensure all 64 counties had access.

Colorado has taken a step towards emphasizing the importance of fathers by establishing a performance measurement to monitor fatherhood engagement for all 64 counties. In July 2022, in collaboration with county partners, DCW rolled out the new performance measure. It includes training, resources, and the Monthly Parent Contact ROM report that is customized for fatherhood engagement. The goal was set at 35% after calculating the state's average and setting the bar to increase engagement. To ensure that everyone had received adequate training to begin work to meet the goal, DCW launched virtual training, a town hall, and webinars. Fatherhood engagement is one of the focused performance measures in C-Stat.

Fatherhood engagement	**Performance by Calendar Year (As of February 2024)**
2019	32.6%
2023	36% ↑

Table 2: Fatherhood engagement performance

Colorado is focused on increasing the involvement of fathers, reducing the time children spend in out-of-home care, and minimizing the number of children who return to care after being reunited with their families. The state has made significant strides in identifying fathers, establishing consistent and effective father engagement practices, and recognizing the importance of engaging fathers in child welfare.

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1.

Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows:

- 92.3% of caseworker monthly visits with the child/youth were made as directed in rule.

Please see Goal 2 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP to find targeted interventions to ensure that children, youth, and families are strengthened through access to services and resources that meet their needs at the right time and place.

Child Support Rules

In accordance with the Children's Bureau and Office of Child Support Enforcement Joint Letter on Updated Child Support Referral Policy[28] that was released in July 2022, Colorado has passed Senate Bill 24-202[29] and made rule revisions to prevent automatic child welfare referrals to child support. Research has shown that pursuing families to recoup out-of-home placement costs can be detrimental to reunification efforts and increase the amount of time spent in out-of-home placements[30]. Additionally, not paying child support may subject parents to enforcement actions that can jeopardize reunification efforts. With the passage of Senate Bill 24-202 and the recent rule revisions, the goal is for families to be able to save the money otherwise spent on child support to meet their needs on working towards reunification efforts, to better enhance families' capacities to provide for their children's needs.

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents and Foster Parents.

● Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 51% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

Item 12A: Needs assessment and services to Children.

● Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 80% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

According to ARD case review data for out-of-home reviews, 59% of children/youth had documented services in the Family Services Plan directed at the areas of need identified through the assessment, designed to assure that the child receives safe and proper care that are also culturally and ethnically appropriate.

Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents.

● Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 51% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

Item 12C: Needs Assessment and services to Foster Parents.

● Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 79% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning.

● Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 72% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

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[28] https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/policy-guidance/childrens-bureau-ocse-joint-letter-updated-child-support-referral-policy

[29] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-202

[30] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mGEdM1X5RHN6ud974C8bP_9nGUdkt_sS/view?ts=6400bf92

According to ARD case review data for 2023, 98.5% of out-of-home providers were engaged in case planning during the review period. 99% of child/youth were engaged in case planning during the review period.

Item 14: Caseworker Visits with Child.

See the Monthly Caseworker Visits Formula Grants and Standards for Caseworker Visits section of this CFSP.

Item 15: Caseworker Visits with Parents.

In 2023, 59.9% of required face-to-face contacts were made with the mother, and 35.5% of required face-to-face contacts were made with the father. Monthly Parent Contacts remain a measure that is being monitored in C-Stat.

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

CFSR 3 Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 90% of the 40 applicable cases reviewed.

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child.

House Bill 23-1089[31] was passed in April 2023, and requires CDHS to organize a workgroup in collaboration with other state agencies to identify and address issues related to foster youth education, transportation, and stability. IM-CW-2023-0025[32] was released in July 2023 to outreach to potential participants and provide information on the workgroup statewide. The workgroup first convened in September 2023 and includes representatives from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), CDHS, Special Education Directors, county departments of human services, and other appropriate school district representatives. Appropriate data and input will be gathered through the workgroup and invited presenters, and recommendations will be provided to the General Assembly before the 2025 regular legislative session.

Fostering Opportunities

In September 2018, Colorado launched “Fostering Opportunities”, funding services in Jefferson County Public Schools to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. The final results of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted by the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (CO Lab) were released in February 2024. The RCT found students receiving the intervention passed their academic courses at a higher rate within two years of having access to the program and had statistically significant gains in student attendance rates. Additionally, the RCT found a

[31] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1089

[32] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v-L_QZ9XHfFdJWNKCPrA8uO05fW6Tj6b/view

statistically significant decrease in the number of student suspensions within one year of having access to the program. While the RCT sample size was too small to determine the intervention's impact on graduation rates, the study found that 41.86% of students who had access to Fostering Opportunities were on track to graduate, while only 32.00% of students in the control group were on track to graduate.

The success of the Fostering Opportunities pilot in Jefferson County prompted legislatively mandated state funding to support expansion of the intervention. Colorado's Implementation Science Unit (CISU) is supporting the expansion effort, and funding for additional implementation and technical assistance provided by the Division of Child Welfare Education Specialist is appropriated by House Bill 22-1374. The bill funds at least two, but no more than five, additional school districts to implement the program, and provides continued funding for Jefferson County Public Schools. Based on a site readiness assessment completed by CISU,[33] Denver Public Schools and Brighton Public Schools were selected as expansion sites in 2023. Implementation in these school districts began at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. The CO Lab continues to support the evaluation process in both the existing and new sites with fidelity evaluation; updates to the program manual are expected in spring 2024. As of January 2024, 195 students were being served between the three district sites.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental needs.

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 73% of the 60 applicable cases reviewed.

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child.

According to case review data from 2023, children/youth received regular health care (including immunizations, and/or treatment for identified health needs) 74.9% of the time. DCW County Intermediaries monitor county 90-day review compliance data, which includes health information, and provide coaching and technical assistance to county administrators to ensure all information is documented timely and accurately. As Colorado looks ahead towards CFSR Round 4, further details on CQI efforts will be provided in future APSRs.

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child.

According to case review data from 2023, mental health services were provided to meet the child/youth's needs 68% of the time.

[33] To learn more about the site readiness assessment, please visit: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GOFzjxjhH-QjYJWzX34e2EuherUBRGQ5/view?usp=drive_link

Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First)

Please see “Prevention” in the Collaboration section, “Core Services” in the Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes section, and Goal 2 in the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision section of this CFSP.

The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA)

DCW and the BHA collaborate closely on The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA). This program helps increase access to mental health treatment services for children and youth. CYMHTA is an alternative to child welfare involvement when a dependency and neglect action is not warranted. CYMHTA funding can be available when there is no other appropriate funding source for treatment, such as private insurance. In SFY 2022, CYMHTA had the highest number of children and youth served in a state fiscal year to date with 271. 83% of youth discharged in SFY 2022 had a reduced risk of involvement with Child Welfare and/or Division of Youth Services.

Children and Youth Behavioral Health Implementation Plan

Colorado State agencies have collaborated and compiled their existing efforts involving the behavioral health needs of children and youth into this single implementation plan. This plan lays out the vision and key priorities to build behavioral health services for children and youth, the role of the BHA as the single entity responsible for driving coordination and collaboration across State agencies, and the high-level priorities to act on. One key partnership is between BHA and DCW, as the plan focuses heavily on multisystem work to improve the rates, quality of treatment, workforce shortages, and access to residential treatment in Colorado. A second priority of the plan is prevention which also directly impacts children and youth involved with child welfare. This plan is a series of five, one-year plans to fully implement all the recommendations from the Behavioral Health Task Force.

Statewide Information System

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of the Statewide Information System.

Item 19. Statewide Information System.

Trails Modernization

The objective of the Trails Modernization project is to keep the concept of Trails as an enterprise-wide Human Services application using more modern technologies to meet the current and future needs of CDHS. This multi-year project transitions the current Child Welfare system to a web-based application while also bringing the Trails system into compliance as a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).

The Trails Team has now grown to include five separate scrum teams, focusing on separate components of the entire Trails product: Trails Modernization, help desk fixes, system interfaces, technical infrastructure, and the utilization of a new Microsoft Power platform. The team continues to stay agile in its deployment processes, releasing bug fixes and enhancements on a regular monthly basis.

While focusing more on the modernization of new functionality, the broader Trails Team is also tackling smaller enhancements and bug fixes to maintain the integrity of existing and legacy systems. In a truly agile approach, as issues are discovered, they are triaged to the appropriate product owner for analysis and prioritization, and eventually developed, tested, and deployed to production.

Trails collects demographic, placement, and removal-related fields and the fields below are required at time of entry whether done at Referral, Assessment, or Case as appropriate:

Demographic Information:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Sex Assigned at Birth
- Gender Pronoun
- Date of Birth
- Race/Hispanic Origin

At Removal:

- Primary Permanency Goal
- Removal Begin Date
- Removal Manner
- Child's Location at Time of Removal
- Removed by County/Agency
- Removal Reasons/Conditions

Additionally, there is a production support team that oversees all help desk tickets that users submit for issues and needed fixes. While resolving these tickets, the team identifies root causes and tracks trends in these tickets to identify system-level issues that may be causing some tickets. They pass these suggested fixes to other teams for development and implementation.

One such endeavor was ensuring the accurate entry of race/ethnicity information for all foster care providers in Trails. It was discovered that the entry of that information was not consistently required and entered. The Trails Modernization product owner worked with analysts to identify the issue, the appropriate triggers, and created user stories to ensure Trails was always prompting users to always enter race/ethnicity information for all foster parents.

The Trails Team fully modernized Assessment functionality in the summer of 2024, which modernized all child welfare intake functionality, leaving only components of Case left to

modernize. The gradual but consistent modernization of functionality allows caseworkers to navigate in a more fluid manner, taking less time to perform critical tasks, and ensuring more accurate and consistent entry of critical information. A minimum viable product of Trails Modernization as a complete system is targeted for the end of CY 2025. Further updates on the progress of Trails Modernization will be reported on in future APSRs.

SANCA

The Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Court Act (SANCA) is a law that allows for electronic data exchange between CDHS and the Colorado Judicial Branch. This exchange of court information is done through the CDHS Trails Legacy interface and the Judicial Branch's Integrated Colorado Online Network and Management Information System (ICON/Eclipse). The law only permits information to be shared about children and youth who have an open Dependency and Neglect civil case. In the past, outdated software issues prevented this electronic data exchange, but these issues have since been resolved. As of November 2022, the information exchange is fully restored, and all 64 counties that have an open D&N case will have their child welfare case connected in Trails Legacy and ICON/Eclipse program automatically.

In cases where the automatic match does not occur, the county can access a report in Trails Legacy that informs them of unmatched cases. This can happen if there are errors in the information entered, such as incorrect names, dates of birth, or other identifying information. Both agencies have a system of checks and balances to ensure that all information is accurately linked to corresponding child welfare cases and court cases.

The information deposited by ICON/Eclipse into Trails Legacy includes the case number, division, party name, address, phone number, social security number, date of birth, gender, race, scheduled events (hearings), scheduled event (hearing) status, out-of-home placement order-events, informal adjustment event, motion events, minuet order, adjudication events, deferred adjudication events, disposition event, permanent plan ordered event, order termination parent/child relationship event, change of venue events, warrant events, and case dismissed event.

This information is used by the caseworker to inform the case progress through the life of the case and ensure safety, permanency, and well-being are met. The law requires timely decision-making in proceedings to determine return home, change in the least restrictive placement, achieve legal permanency, and avoid unnecessary and lengthy stays in out-of-care and timely adoptions.

Case Review System

Colorado CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of the Case Review System. Three of the 5 items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

Item 20. Written Case Plan.

In Colorado's CFSR, this item was rated as a strength. According to ARD case review data for 2023, 99% of children/youth were engaged in case planning during the review period. Parent engagement questions on the ARD review instrument were also updated in 2023 to reflect the Volume 7 requirements for monthly parent engagement. See Item 15 in *Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.*

Item 21. Periodic Reviews.

In Colorado's CFSR, this item was rated as a strength. The ARD conducts an initial periodic review for each child who is in out-of-home care for at least six months, and then conducts a review every six months thereafter.

In late 2023, as part of the CDHS Results Driven Management System (RDMS), the ARD implemented a process to evaluate the timeliness of out of home case reviews for children in Colorado. Each month, the ARD identifies children who are eligible for an Out-of-Home review (having an open removal for six months or longer). For children who are eligible for review each month, the ARD tracks the percent of children who are current on their review status at the end of each month, defined as having a review in the past six months. The table below provides information about the timeliness of review between December 2023 and July 2024.

	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024
Review Eligible Population	2649	2687	2740	2740	2715	2683	2663	2653
Review is Current at the End of the Month	2239	2351	2376	2277	2392	2416	2360	2336
Percent	84.50%	87.50%	86.70%	83.10%	88.10%	90.05%	88.62%	88.05%

Additionally, the ARD tracks reasons why the ARD reviews may be canceled when scheduled and develops strategies to mitigate cancellations. The most frequent reasons for cancellations include ARD reviewer needing to cancel (e.g. the reviewer is out ill, canceled due to inclement weather causing county office closure or unsafe driving conditions, etc.), children/youth leaving county custody during the month they are scheduled for review, and scheduling issues on the part of the County (e.g. all required parties were not invited to the review, all required parties were not given required 14 day notice). While some cancellations are unavoidable, such as a reviewer out ill, a child returning home, or an unforeseen winter storm, other reasons for cancellations may be able to be reduced through implementation of different strategies. The implementation of this internal quality improvement process allows the ARD to identify and engage with county departments that may have higher cancellations and higher rates of untimely review to improve

our processes and ensure that children eligible for review receive the periodic review as a part of their case.

See the *Quality Assurance System* section for further information on Administrative/Periodic Reviews.

Item 22. Permanency Hearings.

In Colorado's CFSR, this item was rated as a strength. According to ARD case review data for 2023, 75% of reviewed cases where a child had been in care for 12 months or longer had a court order in the case file that was signed and dated within the last 12 months that contained reasonable efforts to achieve permanency. See Intervention 3.2.2 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP.

Item 23. Termination of Parental Rights.

According to ARD case review data for 2023, 9.1% of cases where a child/youth with a goal of adoption did not have progress being made towards finalizing the adoption, was due to a lack of timely filing of TPR. See Intervention 3.2.3 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP. CDHS, CIP, and the Colorado State University is working on publishing a Timeliness to Permanency report in the Fall/Winter of 2024. Using data from the court case management system and Trails, the goal is to identify gaps and opportunities to improve permanency outcomes for children/youth.

Item 24. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers.

According to ARD case review data for 2023, 94% of required parties were invited and given at least two-weeks' notice to the administrative reviews that were held. The Code of Colorado Regulations states foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, or relatives have the right to be heard at such hearings and reviews, and Volume 7 requires that county departments shall invite parents, the child (if age appropriate as determined by the caseworker), out-of-home care providers, pre-adoptive parents, relatives/kin who are providing out-of-home care for the child, and the guardian ad litem to the Administrative Review in order that these individuals will have a right to be heard. See "Alignment with Judicial Partners" in the *Collaboration* section of this CFSP.

Quality Assurance System

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System.

Item 25. Quality Assurance System.

Colorado's CFSR showed that this item was rated as a strength.

The Administrative Review Division (ARD)

As described in the beginning of this section, the ARD manages the qualitative case review portion of Colorado's child welfare and adult protective services quality assurance system. The ARD's vision is to create a safe and promising future for children and at-risk adults, by strengthening the communities, families, and systems that work to make that future possible.

With an ultimate passion of enhancing the safety, permanency and well-being of Colorado's children, the ARD works closely with Colorado's counties to train, measure, and assess their adherence to state and federal regulations. Such regulations are in place to help prevent unnecessary moves for children in foster care and to assess (and encourage) that the needs of the families and children are being appropriately addressed. The ARD also collaborates with the DCW to enhance policies and practice expectations designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

The ARD currently conducts reviews of the following populations:

Administrative/Periodic Reviews

The ARD reviews all children in the child welfare system who are in out-of-home care for at least six months, and every six months thereafter, if the child remains in care. Reviews are also conducted every six months for youth in DYS who are in a community placement.

Colorado's case review instrument, and process, has been established to ensure that Colorado complies with federal requirements. These include the following:

- 45 CFR 1357.15 (u)[28], which requires a quality assurance system that regularly assesses the quality of services provided under the CFSP, and
- Section 475 (5) of the Social Security Act[29], which requires the case review system to assure:
    - Each child has a case plan designed to achieve placement in a safe setting and it is the least restrictive and most appropriate setting available in close proximity to the parents' home, and meets the best interest and needs of the child,
    - Further assure:
        - The safety of the child,
        - The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of placement,
        - Extent of compliance with the case plan,
        - Extent of progress made toward alleviating/mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care,
        - Opportunities for the child/youth to engage in age and/or developmentally appropriate activities,
        - Procedural safeguards are applied specific to permanency hearings, filing petitions for the TPR, changes in placements, removal of the child from the home, etc.,
    - Health and education records are in the case file, and any identified services required for the health or education of the child are being provided,

    - When a child has been in care for 15 of the 22 past months, a petition for TPR has been filed, or a compelling reason exists for not filing,
    - Appropriate independent living and transition plans and services are in place for older youth,
    - Credit reporting checks are conducted for older youth, and,
    - The status of each child is reviewed no less frequently than once every six months.
- Section 475 (6) of the Social Security Act[30], which defines an "administrative review" as a review that is open to the participation of the parents of the child, and is conducted by an individual not responsible for the case management or delivery of services to the child or parents.

This process also meets the federal requirements outlined in 5 CFR 1355.34 (C (3))[31], which requires the quality assurance system is:

- In place in the jurisdictions within the State where services included in the CFSP are provided.
    - The ARD conducts administrative, qualitative, case reviews of children and youth placed into foster care in all 64 of Colorado's counties. Additionally, the ARD conducts these reviews for youth placed into the Department's custody with the DYS.
- Able to evaluate the adequacy and quality of services provided under the CFSP.
    - The ARD's instrument has a series of questions designed to review the adequacy of the services included in the case plan, as well as those that are being provided to each child/youth and their family, specific to their permanency goal(s).
- Able to identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system it evaluates.
    - The ARD's instrument is designed with a response set that allows for the identification of both case specific and systemic strengths and barriers to meeting the needs of Colorado's children/youth and families. Specifically, the response set items identified as within a county departments' direct influence (e.g., making a referral for mental health services) as well as those that are broader, systemic issues (e.g., families not receiving mental health services due to Medicaid issues).
- Providing reports to agency administration on the quality of services evaluated and areas of needed improvement.
    - The ARD's case review instrument, implemented within Trails, allows for the creation and dissemination of routine aggregate reports (e.g., quarterly performance reports), as well as more advanced, ad-hoc analysis. Because the case review instrument exists within the CCWIS system, it allows for advanced statistical analysis of specific case practice factors that may be related to a child/youth's safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Evaluating measures implemented to address identified problems.
    - The ARD's case review instrument consists of questions that have remained stable over time, as well as ad-hoc questions. For areas of case practice where expectations do not experience frequent change, these stable questions allow for trend analysis sensitive to how other systems-level changes impact practice in these areas. Ad-hoc questions are often added to the instrument when new practice expectations are implemented. This creates an immediate feedback loop that informs early

implementation efforts and allows for any necessary adjustments to be made in a more responsive and timely manner.

In addition to these specific areas, the ARD's qualitative case review instrument has items and response sets designed to measure the quality of case practice in the following areas:

- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Educational stability and progress
- Frequency and quality of contacts with the child/youth and parents
- Engagement of the child/youth and parents in case planning
- Adequacy of visitation between the child/youth and their siblings and parents
- Timeliness of Title IV-E eligibility

Lastly, the Administrative Review instrument has been mapped to the CFSR items. This theory-based approach focuses on mapping practice areas to specific child welfare outcomes they are believed to influence. In other words, improved practice in specific areas should result in enhanced outcomes for children and families along specific CFSR Items. Instructions for the review instrument are directly linked to Federal and State statute, Colorado's child welfare program rules, and are additionally informed by direct citations from the federal Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI).

Foster Home Certification Reviews

The purpose of the annual foster home certification review is to determine if county departments of human/social services are complying with certification requirements for foster homes and kinship foster homes as outlined in the Code of Colorado Regulations, Colorado Revised Statute, and federal law. A thorough and qualitative case review of the county certified provider case file is completed to determine if the certifying county and provider are in compliance with rules and regulations during the review period to provide a safe living environment for children in Out-of-Home care. Questions on this instrument were designed to help address CFSR Item 33: Standards Applied Equally on the OSRI regarding how well the State applies standards equally to all licensed or approved foster family homes receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds.

Any foster home or kinship foster home that is certified by a county department of human/social services is eligible for review by the ARD, Foster Home Certification Review. These reviews are conducted once a year for any county with certified foster homes (A foster home or kinship foster home can be reviewed if the Trails approval screen indicates a "Pending" and "Certify" status for a provider). Reviews are conducted on a random sample with a 90% confidence level and a 10% confidence interval.

Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) Reviews

As part of Family First implementation, the responsibility for reviewing the ongoing necessity and appropriateness of QRTP placements was added to the ARD. These reviews started during CY 2021. The QRTP Placement Review instrument is in the Trails system, so data from the reviews is stored directly in Colorado's CCWIS. Within child welfare, the courts will always conduct the

first QRTP review. Subsequent reviews, contingent on the request and desire of the case participants, can then be conducted by the ARD. For DYS, the ARD conducts all QRTP reviews. In Colorado, review of the ongoing appropriateness of QRTP placements occurs every 90 days.

Institutional Abuse Screen-Out Reviews

The purpose of the monthly statewide institutional abuse screen-out review is to determine if county departments of human/social services are appropriately screening out institutional abuse referrals as outlined in the Code of Colorado Regulations and Colorado Revised Statutes. A random sample (90% confidence level with a 10% interval) of statewide screened out institutional abuse referrals is reviewed monthly and a thorough and qualitative case review of the counties' decision to screen out the institutional abuse referrals is completed based on information contained within Trails. The source for all information used during this review is the Colorado Trails database. A review of each hotline call can be completed when needed. If the review determines the referral should have been assigned, it is then sent for a second level consideration by staff from DCW and two county departments. If the second level concurs that the referral should have been assigned, ARD staff notify the county department of the finding.

Additionally, the ARD compiles aggregate data reports on a quarterly basis and provides those to DCW.

Hotline Reviews

The ARD conducts qualitative reviews of the state's hotline system. Each month, the ARD conducts qualitative case reviews of three populations of calls (Child Welfare, Information and Referral, and Inquiries). Reviews are based on a random sample (90% confidence level with a 10% interval) of statewide calls from each population. Within this process, if the review identifies that a) a call met the definition of a referral, but was not entered into Trails as a referral, or b) a referral was screened out that was determined to have met criteria, the ARD identifies these as an Issue for Administration and notifies DCW, as well as the appropriate county (or, the Hotline County Connection Center, if they processed the call). The ARD also compiles aggregate data reports on a quarterly basis and provides ad-hoc reports to counties with results of reviews from their counties when requested. It should be noted that, as it is a statewide sample, county level results are not generalizable.

Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT)

For information on the CFRT, please see the *Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths* section of this APSR.

CFSR Round 3 Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

The ARD was responsible for the completion of the measurement methodology for Colorado’s Round 3 CFSR PIP. The CFSR PIP reviews were concluded in September 2023, with Colorado successfully meeting all of the state's performance measurement goals that were measured on the OSRI. This included conducting 65 reviews across six counties and the DYS every six months. While the ARD used the federal OSRI as a measurement tool throughout the duration of

Colorado's PIP, due to the lack of generalizability of the findings, it is not used as part of Colorado's routine CQI/Quality Assurance system. However, information from the other qualitative case review processes, administrative/quantitative data, and stakeholder feedback groups are used to provide more in-depth and generalizable information as to Colorado's statewide performance across the CFSR Items.

In planning for the CFSR Round 4 reviews, CDHS is having ongoing discussions around the ability to conduct a State Case Review process, and the continuation of aligning internal tools with the OSRI during Colorado's CQI/Quality Assurance processes.

Use of Qualitative Case Review Data

Data collected from the various qualitative case reviews are integrated into numerous CQI and CFSR PIP processes. These include:

- CFSR Program Improvement Plan Implementation Team meetings and discussions
- CDHS Results-Driven Management System (RDMS) discussions
- CDHS Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee (Sub-PAC) rule and work group assignment

Child Welfare Quality Assurance Updates

In response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Colorado made numerous changes to the qualitative case review processes to continue to provide quality assurance and continuous quality improvement assistance while ensuring the safety of state and county staff as well as the children, families, and other key case participants who are invited to reviews. Primary among these were the transition of the Administrative Reviews and CFSR PIP reviews to occurring virtually using video and teleconferencing.

Having conducted these reviews via virtual platforms for over three years, the ARD determined virtual reviews can be an effective methodology. Notably, in several county departments, participation of parents and other stakeholders increased with the transition to virtual participation. In many ways, virtual participation, through reducing the need to travel to and from a county department office, may reduce barriers to participation for families and others (such as Guardians ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates). ARD staff have also indicated that screen sharing functionality has proven an effective method of providing technical assistance and support to county staff. Examples include walking through the Trails CCWIS to locate information, and showing sections where information is required to be stored.

However, remote/virtual reviews also limit the ability to review crucial documentation in the hard copy file, which is needed to conduct a thorough review of the case record. This includes health and educational records of children, service provider reports, signed court orders, ICWA notification, and other documentation. To balance the benefits of the remote/review process with the need to verify specific documentation, the ARD implemented a hybrid review model in November 2022. In the hybrid review model, reviews alternate between in-county reviews and remote/virtual reviews, beginning with an in-county initial case review upon the child's first six

months in out-of-home placement. Approximately 70% of administrative reviews are held in-county and approximately 30% of administrative reviews are held remotely/virtually.

Additionally, conducting reviews in-county provides county caseworkers accessibility to reviewers for inquiry and technical assistance, and helps to develop and maintain meaningful professional relationships.

While extra review days have decreased since the implementation of the hybrid review model, there are still some review days gained by not traveling to county departments for each review. Additionally, the completion of the CFSR Round 3 PIP case reviews has increased staff availability to resume the reviews of the Assessment and In-Home Services populations, which were previously ceased in June 2019 to conduct the PIP reviews. The ARD conducted an ad hoc Assessment and In-Home Services Review in November 2023 and began conducting these reviews with a select number of counties monthly beginning February 2024. While the ARD may not be able to conduct these reviews with the same frequency as before, any cadence of review will begin to provide valuable information about these critical populations back into the overall CQI system for Colorado. Since re-implementing the Assessment and In-home Service case reviews in February 2024, the ARD has conducted reviews of 507 assessments and 291 in-home cases across 14 different counties.

- Assessment Reviews: The ARD will conduct reviews of a random sample of Program Area 5 – Child Protection referrals that were accepted for assessment during a six-month time frame and closed, or were open greater than 60 days. The sampling provides generalizability at a 90% confidence level with a 10% confidence interval. This includes assessments that may have closed at assessment. These reviews will be completed annually in Colorado's largest counties, and in the remainder of the state as frequently as staffing allows.
- In-Home Service Case Reviews: The ARD will conduct reviews of a random sample of In-Home cases (Program Areas 4 - Youth in Conflict, and Program Area 5 - Child Protection) with an open involvement longer than the past six months. This may include children that have previously experienced an out-of-home placement, although they have received in-home services for the six months under review. The sampling provides generalizability at a 90% confidence level with a 10% confidence interval.

Screen Out Reviews

In October 2023, the ARD conducted a Screen Out Review of child welfare referrals. The sample population for the ARD Screen Out Review includes all child welfare referrals that were screened out during a six-month period. The sampling provides generalizability at a 90% confidence level with a 10% confidence interval. The sample was stratified based on the county making the decision to screen out the referral. This gives the ARD the ability to provide each county individual data they can use to generalize to all of their child welfare screened out referrals, as well as aggregate the data to determine statewide performance. After the successful completion of the ARD Screen Out Review of adult protection reports through a virtual platform, it was determined that a shift to a virtual platform for the review of child welfare referrals would also be implemented.

The review was a success, and the ARD plans to conduct these Screen Out Reviews on an annual basis.

Staff Training

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training.

Item 26. Initial Staff Training and Item 27. Ongoing Staff Training.

See the Appendix D for the 2025-2029 Training Plan.

Item 28. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training.

Pressley Ridge

Colorado has decided to adopt The Pressley Ridge Training and Model for treatment/therapeutic foster care certification. The Pressley Ridge curriculum is guided by a common treatment philosophy called Re-Education (Re-ED). Re-ED focuses on the strengths of each child and family and holds these beliefs: It is possible to teach competence; change is possible; and the development of trusting relationships with caring, committed adults is the most significant factor in turning around the lives of seriously troubled children. Pressley Ridge is not only a curriculum, but also a model that is being implemented by many different states and child placement agencies across the nation.

The goal is to build capacity across the state to increase options for children/youth in a more family-like setting than congregate care. The Pressley Ridge training curriculum was provided to trainers and agencies in March 2022. Pressley Ridge will also be certifying master trainers to be able to coach trainers across the state. The master trainers will include representatives from DCW as well as from the county and child placement agencies (CPAs), to ensure fidelity to the model, training is up-to-date, and to provide technical assistance.

The DCW Learning and Development Team, in partnership with the Provider Services Unit and the Permanency Services Unit, requested Family First transition funds to host two cohorts of Pressley Ridge Train-the-Trainer for county and CPAs in Colorado who are interested in implementing treatment or therapeutic foster care or both.

Kinship Caregiver Certification Program[34]

This certification program—for those caring for a child/youth they are related to or with whom they have a previous relationship—comprises six courses, including Kinship Caregiver Fundamentals. This program is required for those who want to be certified kinship caregivers.

[34] https://coloradocwts.com/foster-parents/kinship-caregiver-certification-program/

Foster/Adoptive Caregiver Certification Program[35]

This certification program is for those who will be caring for a child/youth they do not know or have a relationship with. The course, NTDC Certification Training for Colorado Foster and Adoptive Caregivers, is the preferred certifying foster parent curriculum of DCW.

NTDC is five seminar sessions over a period of two to five weeks (depending on scheduling), in addition to independent learning assignments, from a self-assessment and course reading to web-based training and videos. This cutting-edge, comprehensive resource offers foster and adoptive caregivers culturally relevant education around child development and behavior, trauma-responsive care, the importance of maintaining familial connections, and the role of foster parents in the child welfare system.

Foster Parent College

County departments of human/social services and Child Placement Agencies are responsible for ensuring that the foster care and adoptive parents that they supervise are trained to meet the current and changing needs of children and young people placed in their care. Below are the Code of Colorado Regulation (CCR) requirements:

- Section 7.708.65.A (12 CCR 2509-8): The certifying authority shall have a comprehensive written plan for the orientation, precertification training, certification, and ongoing training of foster parents.
- Section 7.708.65.A.3: The certifying authority shall maintain written documentation of specific in-service training held, foster parents participating, the hours involved, and/or other on-going training activities in which foster parents were involved.
- Section 7.708.65.B: The certifying authority shall create a training development plan for each foster parent(s) to document the strengths and competencies of the foster parent(s) and to identify those areas in which additional training is needed.

In the Fall of 2023, DCW released IM-CW-2023-0040[36], notifying county departments, Colorado tribes, and licensed CPAs about online training through Foster Parent College that is available for SFY 2024. These online training opportunities aim to strengthen skill sets, knowledge, expertise, and personal growth of foster parents (non-relative and kinship foster care), adoptive parents, and non-certified kinship caregivers in order to meet the diverse needs of the children and youth placed in their care. There are over 70 courses, including approximately 20 in Spanish. Foster parents, kinship providers and adoptive parents who are licensed have unlimited access to these trainings.

[35] https://coloradocwts.com/foster-parents/foster-adoptive-caregiver-certification-program/

[36] https://mcusercontent.com/cd781c9bc8f90270567729e9e/files/46c44e69-2dc0-50bb-a8d2-7093e7349711/IM_CW_2023_0040.docx.pdf?mc_cid=cf80a6b06e&mc_eid=649d5faad5

Service Array

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development.

Item 29. Array of Services and Item 30. Individualizing Services.

In Colorado's CFSR, this systemic factor was rated as an area needing improvement. Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that although the state provides a comprehensive service array through the child welfare agency's Core Services Program and has the ability to adapt and adjust these services through flexible funding, the service array is more accessible in the larger metropolitan areas than in the more rural areas of the state.

Core Services

The Core Services Program was established within CDHS in 1994 and is statutorily required to provide strength-based resources, support, and rehabilitative services to families when children/youth are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement, when they are in need of services to return home, or to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible. The flexibility of Core funds provides county staff with the opportunity to customize supports according to the complexity and variability in the needs of children, youth, and families across the diverse regions of Colorado. The program is structured as a state-supervised, county-administered system with CDHS overseeing funding allocations and working with county staff to set policies and procedures.

The statewide Core Services Program is built to address four priorities: (1) Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth; (2) Prevent out-of-home placement; (3) Return the child/youth in placement to their own home, or unite the child/youth with their permanent families; and (4) Provide services that protect the child/youth.

The Core Services Program is based on a foundation of research and practice in family preservation. Family preservation services are generally short-term services designed to support families in crisis by improving parenting and family functioning while keeping children/youth safe. Family preservation services grew out of the recognition that children/youth need a safe and stable family and that separating children/youth from their families and communities removes them from natural supports and often causes trauma, leaving lasting negative effects.

In Colorado, legislation defines "family preservation services" as assistance that focuses on a family's strengths and empowers a family by providing alternative problem-solving techniques and child-rearing practices, as well as promoting effective responses to stressful living situations for the family. This assistance includes resources that are available to supplement existing informal support systems for the family. There are 10 designated types of "family preservation services" and this array of services constitutes the Core Services Program. Through ongoing

conversations, counties are always encouraged to identify and utilize evidence-based programs and promising practices with their Core Services Program funding. Each of the 64 counties and one Colorado Tribe (the Southern Ute Indian Tribe) annually develop plans to address family preservation efforts through locally tailored strategies and services.

- **Aftercare Services:** Any of the Core Services provided to prepare a child/youth for reunification with his/her family or other permanent placement and to prevent future out-of-home placement of the child/youth.

- **County Designed Services:** An optional service tailored by the specific county in meeting the needs of children/youth and families in their community in order to prevent the out-of-home placement or facilitate reunification or another form of permanence. County designed services encompass components of the menu of Core Services, yet are structured in their delivery and tracked uniquely to gain detailed data on evidenced-based programs, as well as programs that are providing positive outcomes in communities around the state. County-designed services allow counties the flexibility to design services that are unique to their needs and community.

- **Day Treatment:** Comprehensive, highly structured services that provide education to children/youth and therapy to them and their families.

- **Home-Based Intervention:** Services provided primarily in the home of the client and include a variety of services, which can include therapeutic services, concrete services, collateral services and crisis intervention directed to meet the needs of the child/youth and family.

- **Intensive Family Therapy:** Therapeutic intervention typically with all family members to improve family communication, functioning, and relationships.

- **Life Skills:** Services provided primarily in the home that teach household management, effectively accessing community resources, parenting techniques, and family conflict management.

- **Mental Health Services:** Diagnostic and/or therapeutic services to assist in the development of the family services plan and to assess and/or improve family communication, functioning, and relationships.

- **Sexual Abuse Treatment:** Therapeutic intervention designed to address issues and behaviors related to sexual abuse victimization, sexual dysfunction, sexual abuse perpetration, and to prevent further sexual abuse and victimization.

- **Special Economic Assistance:** Emergency financial assistance of not more than $2,000 per family per year in the form of cash and/or vendor payment to purchase hard services.

- **Substance Abuse Treatment Services:** Diagnostic and/or therapeutic services to assist in the development of the family service plan, to assess and/or improve family communication, functioning and relationships, and to prevent further abuse of drugs or alcohol.

In 2023, the Core Services Program served 9,781 children and youth across the state. The Core Services Program is an effective approach to strengthening Colorado families by keeping or returning children/youth home or in the least restrictive setting while maintaining safety. For example, in 2022, 99% of children/youth who received prevention services remained home, which also indicates that the Core Services Program is serving the population targeted by the legislation. Furthermore, the Core Services Program is clearly providing the appropriate levels of support, as evidenced by the findings that only 4% of children/youth had a subsequent placement after receiving or benefiting from Core Services.

The Collaborative Management Program (CMP)

The Collaborative Management Program (CMP) was developed in 2004 as a result of the passage of House Bill 04-1451. The program was created to manage and integrate the treatment and services provided to children and families who would benefit from multi-agency services. The legislative declaration states, “The development of a more uniform system of collaborative management that includes the input, expertise, and active participation of parent advocacy or family advocacy organizations may reduce duplication and eliminate fragmentation of services; increase the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of services provided; encourage cost sharing among service providers; and ultimately lead to better outcomes and cost-reduction for the services provided to children and families in the state of Colorado.”

CMP is delivered at the county level through Interagency Oversight Groups (IOGs) and Individualized Service and Support Teams (ISSTs). IOGs focus on the leadership-level collaboration while ISSTs collaborate on the direct service level with families. IOGs have mandated partners including county departments of human/social services, local judicial districts including probation offices, division of youth services, health departments, school districts, community mental health centers, managed service organizations, regional accountable entities, and domestic violence providers.

When CMP began in 2004, only six counties were participating in CMP; in 2024, fifty counties are participating in the program. In 2014, the Colorado Office of the State Auditor audited DCW including CMP. The audit identified that CDHS lacked processes to ensure that the local CMP sites were accomplishing the intent of the program. The recommendations and subsequent changes impacted how the CMP operated statewide. These changes included improvements to the memorandum of understanding templates and collection processes, the development of standard performance measures, the establishment of a monitoring process, and the revision of the allocation methodology. In 2023, House Bill 23-1249 was passed, removing the performance measures mentioned above and adding new data collection requirements.

The CMP has a State Steering Committee (SSC), an open meeting, that allows for peer learning and feedback from stakeholders. There are also subcommittees of the SSC that focus efforts on a specific topic and create deliverables for the SSC. For example, the Onboarding Subcommittee created a handbook for CMP Coordinators and the Outcomes Subcommittee developed the 24-25 SFY outcomes for sites to choose from.

CMP is also required to hold an annual meeting called the Executive Director Review to review the activities and progress of counties and agencies engaged in collaborative management of multi-agency services provided to children and families. The purpose of the meeting is to identify barriers encountered in collaborative management and discuss solutions to achieve greater efficiencies and better outcomes for the state, for local communities, and for persons who would benefit from multi-agency services. The following persons or their designees must attend the meeting:

I. The Commissioner of education;
II. A Superintendent of a school district that has entered into a memorandum of understanding, as such Superintendent is selected by the Commissioner of education;
III. A Director of a county department of human or social services that has entered into a memorandum of understanding, as such Director is selected by the Executive Director of the state department of human services;
IV. The Executive Director of the department of health care policy and financing;
V. The Executive Director of the department of human services;
VI. A Director of a local mental health center that has entered into a memorandum of understanding, as such Director is selected by the Executive Director of the department of human services;
VII. A representative from a statewide parent advocacy or family advocacy organization who participated in the development of a memorandum of understanding, as such representative is selected by a Director of a county department of human or social services chosen by the state department of human services;
VIII. The Executive Director of the department of public health and environment; and
IX. The Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court.

CDHS must ensure that an annual evaluation of CMP and each county or regional program is conducted by an independent outside entity. Currently, the Colorado State University Social Work Research Center completes the external evaluation annually. The evaluation helps the CMP State Steering Committee and the Executive Director Review team determine how the CMP can improve and what supports are necessary.

Although the program was hosted in DCW for 19 years, it was moved to the Division of Community Programs (DCP) within the OCYF at CDHS in 2023. CDHS leadership acknowledges that CMP is not just a child welfare program, and strategically moved it to DCP to highlight the collaborative nature of the program.

In the next five years, CMP hopes to continue to serve multi-system involved children, youth, and families. Through evidence-based tools, practices, and programs, CMP would like to improve the

quality of the services provided to children, youth, and families in Colorado. By developing a fidelity assessment and implementing CMP site monitoring, CDHS will support the development of strong CMP sites.

Agency Responsiveness to Community

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community.

Item 31. State Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR.

This factor was rated as a strength overall and continues to be an area that Colorado values as reflected in the many collaborative and cross-system workgroups throughout the child welfare continuum. Please see Stakeholder Feedback in the Collaboration section of this CFSP.

Item 32. Coordination of CFSP Services with Other Federal Programs.

See “CBCAP”, “CIP”, and “MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2)” in the *Services* section of this CFSP.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

CFSR 3 State Outcome Performance: Colorado is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.

Item 33. Standards Applied Equally.

Colorado has two avenues for foster parent certification. The first is certification through a private or nonprofit CPA, and the second is certification through a county department of human/social services. CPA foster homes are reviewed for compliance with certification standards through the licensing and monitoring teams inside of the Provider Services Unit (PSU) of DCW, in addition to rule and regulation set forth in state and federal requirements. County foster homes are reviewed for compliance with rule and certification standards initially by the county department staff and ongoing annual audits by the Administrative Review Division (ARD), also in accordance with rules and regulations in state and federal requirements.

In 2019, the Office of Performance and Strategic Outcomes performed an audit focused on identifying the differences between the ARD and PSU review processes. The
audit focused on two objectives:

1. Examine regulations and methods used to evaluate foster care homes and identify any possibilities for efficiencies in the certification review process.
2. Review foster care home certifications to assess whether standards are applied in a similar manner.

Although the State regulations for county and CPA-certified foster care homes appear in different sections of the Code of Colorado Regulations (C.C.R.), the requirements for certification are similar. All regulations for county-certified homes are equally applicable to CPA-certified homes: "The law states that foster care certificates issued by CPAs are considered licenses; the regulations which are established by the State Department for foster care homes are therefore applicable to any such facility being certified by a licensed CPA." 12 C.C.R. 2509-8 7.710.32.B[37]. There are two significant differences of note:

1. CPA-licensed homes must have an unannounced annual agency inspection rather than an announced annual home inspection. 12 C.C.R. 2509-8 7.710.33.M[38] (CPA inspection); 12 C.C.R. 2509-6 7.500.313.A.2[39] (county inspection).
2. A CPA holds a license and, according to the Child Care Licensing Act, is regulated as though it is a child care center. Therefore, CPA staff, and by extension, foster parents certified by a CPA, are considered child care staff. This imposes additional federal background check requirements as required by 45 C.F.R. § 98.43(b)(3)[40] .

Despite the similar requirements for foster care homes certified by either counties or CPAs, the certification reviews by ARD and DCW use different review instruments. This audit found that both reviews are completed utilizing the state and federal requirements for certification of a foster home in Colorado.

Item 34. Requirements for Criminal Background Checks.

Colorado rule (12 CCR 2509) includes requirements for background checks including a fingerprint-based criminal history check with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), court case management system, and the Child Abuse and Neglect and Sex Offender Registry. Adherence to the rule requirement is included in certification reviews.

Item 35. Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes.

Please see the "Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan" in the *Targeted Plans* section of this CFSP.

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37 https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=7520&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-8

38 https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=7520&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-8

39 https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=6561&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-6

40 https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2016-title45-vol1/pdf/CFR-2016-title45-vol1-sec98-43.pdf

Item 36. State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements.

The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) created the 2023-2024 Business Work Plan. The AAICPC has identified the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) processes for completing home studies as a cause for delays in the placement of children across state lines. Public, private, and tribal child welfare agencies and stakeholders nationwide have long recognized that the timeframe for a child's permanency must be shortened. The National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) was developed as the national electronic system for quickly and securely exchanging all data and documents required by the ICPC to place children across state lines.

In December 2023, Colorado made the initial steps to join the NEICE by implementing the NEICE Secured Document Portal to better transmit ICPC documents between the state of Colorado and the other states who have implemented the NEICE.

On April 23, 2024, Colorado passed Senate Bill 24-125[41] "Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children", making Colorado the 17th state to have passed the revised ICPC federal language. Although the revised compact requires 35 states to pass the federal legislation before it is officially enacted, it shows Colorado's commitment to ensuring that the placement and support of children and families across state lines is done in a safe and collaborative manner with a federally supported structure. It will also help to support a timelier ICPC process and collection of data via the NEICE system.

CDHS' ICPC Compact Administrator (CA) and ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator (DCA) provide ICPC training, technical assistance, and support to Colorado counties, CPAs, residential facilities, Medicaid providers and administrators, as well as family members. The CO DCA assisted Colorado counties with their year-end 2023 ICPC entries and error corrections during January 2024 through March 2024 to correctly report ICPC cross-jurisdictional involvement to ensure data accuracy. The CO DCW will be working with counties and the state Learning and Development Team to establish formal training modules for ICPC.

The CO ICPC CA and ICPC DCA have been working with internal technical support partners to streamline the tracking of ICPC home study requests, placements, supervision, and closure workflow. Colorado is also incorporating an expansion in tracking illegal placements and disruptions with this tool. As this is implemented, it will establish front-end data integrity for ICPC processing into the data system, providing standardized emails and timely alerts for the ICPC workflow.

CO ICPC also continues to be actively involved in national committee work and training to promote ICPC knowledge, tracking trends, and providing leadership in addressing removal of barriers/obstacles to permanency for children placed in all states. CO ICPC has continued to work

[41] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-125

with the AAICPC office, participating in the Compliance Committee, Safe & Timely Sub-committee, and the New Revised ICPC Committee, showing CDHS's commitment to prioritizing the permanency of children involved in the interstate jurisdictional process.

Plan for Enacting the State's Vision

The following goals and strategies have been designed to improve programming, services, and outcomes for children and families, in alignment with federal and state priorities. Staff training needs are incorporated into the training plan, and additional implementation supports and technical assistance activities have been woven into the narrative below.

Goal 1: Supporting Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment and Retention Efforts.

In CY 2023, caseworker turnover rate has continued to decrease, and exceeded the 2020-2024 CFSP goal of less than 24%. The interventions in this goal have been designed to address recruitment and retention strategies that were identified in the Colorado Child Welfare Workload Study[42] final report, to stabilize the turnover rate and ensure long-term sustainability of the recruitment and retention efforts.

Objective 1.1: Leveraging existing recruitment supports to build upon lessons learned and opportunities to promote recruitment efforts.

Intervention 1.1.1: Identify opportunities to include qualified applicants from the Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC)[43] who would otherwise not receive education stipends and scholarships into Colorado's child welfare workforce, decreasing the number of applicants who were turned away by 10% each year.

In the 2020-2024 CFSP, intervention 1.1.1 was targeted at increasing the number of IV-E education stipends awarded each year in Colorado. As a continuation of these efforts, DCW is monitoring the number of education stipends and scholarship applicants who were turned away due to funding constraints. Colorado aims to decrease the number of qualified applicants turned away by 10% year over year, to ensure that recruitment into this program, and subsequently the child welfare workforce, continues to be bolstered.

Key findings from an alumni study[44] conducted by CCWSC showed that in looking at career paths to and within child welfare:

- 41% of survey respondents reported they were currently working at a Colorado child welfare agency (county, state, or other).
- Survey respondents reported working in Colorado child welfare for an average of 4.8 years after graduating. In total, they worked in child welfare for an average of 7.3 years (43% had previous child welfare work experience when they started receiving their stipend/scholarship).

[42] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-b8dk_CNxVZvlPT2nIBdP47uRQr8OT4I/view?usp=sharing

[43] https://www.msudenver.edu/ccwsc/

[44] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LFrw7eHpBH2rnz9DqFm3Wm6czob6cp1h/view

- Those currently working in child welfare reported significantly longer time in child welfare work post-graduation (6 years), and in total years in child welfare work (8.7 years), than did alumni that have since stopped working in child welfare (3.8 years and 6.2 years, respectively).

Intervention 1.1.2: Increase utilization of the educational waiver to promote county caseworker recruitment efforts.

If proven recruitment difficulty exists, county departments may request a temporary waiver of the educational requirements by submitting a request to DCW. To support counties in identifying qualified applicants to join the child welfare workforce, DCW is going to increase utilization of the educational waiver[45] to promote a wider candidate pool for county child welfare jobs.

Strategies may include proactive county intermediary outreach and support to counties, dissemination of resources on the CWTS site, and clear communication tactics. DCW will monitor the rate of successful waiver completion, solicit input from counties to identify additional proactive opportunities, and promote inter-county learning opportunities, to continuously improve on the effectiveness of the educational waiver program.

Intervention 1.1.3: Increase CCWSC student participation in rural communities.

Through ongoing conversations with rural county departments, workforce recruitment and retention has been an area of focus. Targeted outreach to rural communities may include engagement with local high schools and community colleges, encouraging participation from additional universities with social work programs, and ensuring the availability of stipends and scholarships specifically for those who reside or intend to work in a rural community.

DCW will also be developing and sharing resources about child welfare careers, including updating the "Realistic Social Caseworker Job Preview" video on the CO4Kids Careers[46] page, to further promote child welfare career opportunities through targeted outreach avenues as well as for the public.

Objective 1.2: Develop resources and tools in collaboration with county departments of human services, to support workforce retention that is responsive to counties across the state.

Intervention 1.2.1: Bolster and centralize workforce resiliency resources for child welfare staff.

In recognizing that addressing workforce resiliency contributes to workforce retention and maintaining the wellbeing of child welfare staff, DCW, in partnership with CWTS and CHSDA, is working to develop a dynamic menu of workforce resiliency resources to be shared across county and other agency partners. To centralize these resources, better publicize them, and make them

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45 https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=11414&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-7

46 https://co4kids.org/careers/

easily accessible, these resources will be made available on the CWTS website and the CO4Kids site, so that child welfare staff can access them at any time. The resiliency resources will also be promoted during caseworker and supervisor academy training sessions, and feedback will be continuously gathered from caseworkers and supervisors, through various platforms, to make refinements as needed.

DCW continues to promote additional resources that are available to child welfare staff. In 2023, DCW hosted a virtual town hall[47] to promote the secondary trauma resources available to counties. The Alvarado Consulting and Treatment Group provides webinars, on-site and virtual trainings, coaching, practical tools, and resources that provide the knowledge and skills necessary for organizations to integrate a trauma-informed paradigm of healing and to address the secondary trauma needs of their staff, and retention challenges. The THRIVE Program provides vicarious and secondary trauma training and consultation for child welfare workers throughout the state to support resiliency and mitigating the impacts of secondary trauma.

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP, DCW created and facilitated Supervisor Learning Exchanges for supervisors to participate in a mutual exchange of ideas, strategies, and processes by utilizing data to improve outcomes. This has proved to be highly successful across the state, and DCW heard additional feedback from the counties around the need to develop Caseworker Learning Exchanges to provide support for caseworkers. Caseworker Learning Exchanges were created in September 2023, and provide an opportunity for caseworkers to participate in focus topics, sharing best practices, professional development opportunities, support each other, and connect in a group setting.

During Employee Appreciation Month in 2023, the SRCT led an effort for counties to nominate staff from their county child welfare agencies for recognition. All nominated county staff received a certificate of recognition from DCW, and the winners received a plaque and a gift. DCW staff visited the counties and participated in a local celebration. Future efforts to continue this event may include creating regional appreciation events, coordinating media stories with OCYF's communications team, and designing additional retention-focused appreciation events with local county engagement.

Intervention 1.2.2: Develop a new Child Welfare Training Academy to update and clarify the objectives and expectations of Caseworkers and Supervisors.

DCW has begun efforts to review the core competencies for New Worker Academy. DCW, in partnership with CWTS, will update the curriculum with the input of the Training Steering Committee, to clarify and align the objectives and expectations of the Academy, engage participants with lived experience, and to be responsive to continuous feedback loops from child welfare staff.

DCW's Learning and Development team will create a consistent approach to reviewing course content and evaluating course effectiveness on a regular and ongoing basis. This intentional

[47] https://coloradocwts.com/secondary-trauma-resources-for-caseworkers-town-hall/

feedback loop will be brought to the Workforce Recruitment and Support Workgroup to inform future adjustments that may be needed.

Intervention 1.2.3: Develop a structured coaching program for counties to assist in supporting their child welfare staff.

The CCWSC is designing a structured coaching program to support the field instructors, county intern supervisors, and alumni, as the scholars embark on their child welfare careers. DCW offers a coaching group for the field instructors and supervisors, who are supporting the CCWSC interns. This will be piloted in 2024, and feedback will be gathered from the participants and alumni to make refinements in the coaching structure to meet the needs of the field instructors, scholars, and future alumni.

DCW has engaged in different tiers of coaches' training, to develop skills for those who choose to pursue coaching, and to use the coaching tools to engage with stakeholders and partners in a coach-like way. In close partnership with the Specialized Response Team (SRT), DCW has identified opportunities, particularly in rural counties, who may have struggled with staff retention and child welfare practice, to work with staff in promoting resiliency, identifying areas of practice improvement, and developing skills to enhance their effectiveness as leaders. This may be reflected in coaching relationships, or engaging conversations in a coach-like way.

DCW is aiming to increase the internal capacity to build a more robust system to incorporate coaching practices across the state, in a sustainable way to be responsive to the unique needs of different counties, as well as within DCW itself.

Measures of Progress:

1. Through 2029, stabilize the caseworker turnover rate to between 18% and 21%, with a baseline of 20.8% in 2023.
2. By 2029, maintain an 80% completion rate of approved educational waivers.

Goal 2: Children, youth and families are strengthened through access to evidence-based services and resources that meet their needs at the right time and in the right place.

Objective 2.1: Colorado has a wide array of evidence-based services available aimed at keeping families safely together and preventing out of home placement.

Passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) spurred increased focus and investment in evidence-based services aimed at preventing out-of-home placement. While CDHS is fully committed to increasing access to evidence-based services, expanding the services array, and continuing to build evidence, CDHS also recognizes that this focus needs to be balanced. Namely, CDHS is just as committed to building out a continuum of diverse services and

supports that are responsive to the needs identified by communities across Colorado; ensuring equitable access and building up services that are culturally responsive; and collaborating closely with cross-system partners who are best positioned to proactively serve families not involved in child welfare.

Intervention 2.1.1: Collaborate with cross-sector partners at all levels to identify and address service gaps and needs.

In early 2024, the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (Colorado Lab), a state government strategic research partner, conducted a comprehensive analysis of statewide service gaps and needs to help guide prevention investments for the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board.

Major themes where the data suggest the largest gaps and opportunities include:

- Mental health of children and youth;
- Sexual abuse and sexual violence prevention;
- Substance use and mental health of caregivers;
- Economic security and concrete supports;
- Perinatal (prenatal, postpartum) health for maternal-infant dyad;
- Community-based supports and access points; social cohesion;
- Culturally responsive services and workforce development; and
- Family functioning; parent-child relationships.

Across the above themes, the following populations and geographic areas were identified as priorities:

- By Age: prenatal to one; under eight; 15 to 19 years old.
- By Race and Ethnicity: American Indian/Alaska Native; Black, Latinx (children and caregivers).
- By Geography: rural and frontier, especially: San Luis Valley, Southeast.
- By Language: caregiver primary language other than English.
- By gender identity and sexual orientation: Transgender youth, LGBTQIA2S+ families.

This analysis, along with continuous input and recommendations from other groups and partners, will serve as the basis for guiding CDHS's continued efforts to address the needs of Colorado's children, youth, and families. In partnership, CDHS will determine what services, resources, and support are best suited to meet these needs, and what agencies, organizations, or approaches are best suited to deliver them. Groups and forums where such strategies will be discussed include the following:

- The Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG), described in the "Collaboration" section of this CFSP, is a primary mechanism for bringing together key partners to continue building statewide prevention infrastructure and to hear about gaps and needs from multiple perspectives, including counties, state program intermediaries, community providers, and people with lived expertise.

- CDHS and county representatives sit on the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board, alongside other key partners. This group is especially critical, as it helps set a coordinated policy agenda around prevention, and informs investment decisions of prevention funds, including IV-E reimbursement for Family First services.
- CDHS works closely with CDEC and BHA, as they also administer key prevention services, resources, and support to children, youth, and families. CDEC administers prevention programs for families with children ages 0 to 13 years old. The BHA administers community-based mental health and substance use prevention programs to people in Colorado at various stages of life.
- In addition to CDEC and BHA, CDHS will deepen its relationships with other state agencies and partners that are doing work essential to supporting the comprehensive needs of families (e.g., The Department of Local Affairs and its many initiatives to promote affordable housing and prevent housing insecurity and homelessness).
- The Colorado Lab serves as the Family First Evidence Building Hub for CDHS. In this role, the Colorado Lab provides ongoing analysis and strategic guidance around investments in evidence-building for services/programs positioned to meet the needs of Colorado's children, youth, and families.

Intervention 2.1.2: Ensure equitable access to evidence-based services, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

One way to increase equitable access to evidence-based prevention services is to ensure families are effectively paired with services that align with their needs and circumstances. CDHS will continue to promote caseworkers' use of an online decision-making tool that helps match families to appropriate services in the Family First Services Array, considering unique needs and service eligibility requirements.

CDHS will continue to consult with CISU and the Colorado Lab to provide dedicated implementation support and build evidence for services that meet the unique needs of Colorado's communities. CDHS will also explore opportunities to scale and/or adapt existing services to promote equitable access. One example of this is a current evaluation for a telehealth-enhanced adaptation of Multisystemic Therapy (MST). CDHS heard from many rural communities that MST would help fill important gaps in their services array, but they lacked the workforce and caseload to make it feasible. It is the hope that including a telehealth adaptation to the service will make it more accessible to underserved communities while still maintaining the desired outcomes.

In the longer term, the goal is to help communities develop and evaluate more culturally responsive programs as well. Family Spirit is an example of a promising, culturally specific home visiting program designed for young American Indian mothers/pregnant persons that targets both adult and child well-being. This program is not yet in Colorado and will require significant implementation support before being ready for rigorous evaluation.

CDHS, through the CWPTG, released a services screening process, by which any community or provider can nominate a service to be screened for possible inclusion in Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan. This will be an important mechanism to hear directly from communities what

services are important to them and align implementation and/or evidence-building support as appropriate. Additionally, by tracking the use of evidence-based services across the state, particularly in rural and underserved communities, the data gathered will help to inform future expansion of evidence-based services.

Intervention 2.1.3: In collaboration with counties and state agency partners, identify opportunities to streamline and leverage available funding streams to maximize access to services and the potential for service expansion.

During Colorado's 2011 Legislative Session, House Bill 11-1196, Flexible Funding for Families, was passed into law. The language allowed county departments to provide prevention and intervention services with existing funding sources, such as the State Child Welfare Block, Core Services program allocation, and the Colorado IV-E Waiver funding. With so many funding mechanisms, and each county designing services to meet specific community needs, there are instances where leveraging dollars remains confusing, and opportunities are missed.

CDHS is committed to providing ongoing education and guidance to ensure different financial mechanisms are understood and adequately utilized by county and state agency partners. Workgroups, such as the Core Services Quarterly and the CWPTG, are prime settings to share knowledge about braiding and blending funding streams. Through virtual town halls and additional information-sharing events, counties have learned and continue to improve their use of flexible funding to the fullest extent, and are encouraged to identify and utilize evidence-based programs and promising practices with their Core Services Program funding. DCW will continue to promote consistency and clarity around funding streams, and work with counties to identify opportunities on blending and braiding funding to maximize access to services.

Current and future learning opportunities are focused on addressing long standing challenges in using Medicaid to pay for timely services and resources. Rural counties in Colorado have experienced difficulties when trying to locate a Medicaid provider, especially for in-home or intensive services. Counties and providers have also experienced inadequate and inconsistent reimbursement rates across the state. To effectively leverage and maximize the use of all available funding streams, collaboration between the HCPF, Regional Accountability Entities (RAEs), the BHA, CDHS, and counties is vital. There is an increased interest in how some prevention-based programming is covered by Medicaid and in other situations, private insurance. Learning how Medicaid and private insurance can be used to support specific services and resources that prevent further penetration into the child welfare system will maximize additional funding streams to be used for prevention services.

Several programs within the state have comparable target populations that are identified as potentially benefiting from prevention-based services. A prime example of one is Colorado's Collaborative Management Program (CMP), which streamlines access to supportive services through collaboration at the county level. CMP encourages cost sharing among providers and counties to increase quality of resources, cost-reduction in services, and accessibility to community-based support. Each year, CMP communities submit cross-agency agreements and goals they strive to achieve in their programming. Based on attainment of goals and collaborative

efforts among agencies, a yearly allocation is received to incentivize CMP communities in building partnerships and cost sharing efforts. CMP is a solid example of where blending funds with other avenues, such as Core Services, would have a positive impact on funding community-based services for families. To educate county and state partners about existing collaborative funding opportunities, CDHS will review additional programs in Colorado that have similar target populations and identify funding restrictions that may exist. Findings will be shared in state and county facing meetings, as well as state-wide education opportunities and newsletters.

Objective 2.2: Create an interagency proactive prevention system to prevent child welfare involvement.

Intervention 2.2.1: Operationalize "Community Pathways" beyond Family First.

Colorado's bold vision and definition of candidacy for Family First has remained intact since the beginning. However, operationalizing this definition in a way that meets the various requirements of the federal law has been a challenge. During Phase One of Family First implementation, candidates eligible for federal drawdown were limited to those with open child welfare or juvenile justice involvement. Colorado is currently exploring expanded implementation and moving into Phase Two. Since each service in Colorado's Family First prevention plan is different, CDHS is taking a service-specific approach to expanding candidacy implementation, beginning with SafeCare® Colorado.

CDHS, with the CWPTG and research partners, will also explore prioritizing PA-3 families—those at risk of child welfare involvement—in expanding Colorado's approach to candidacy and claiming, since they are already identified in Trails. These efforts will not only result in increased access to evidence-based services, but also increased Title IV-E reimbursement for future strategic investment.

Intervention 2.2.2: Identify and promote supportive practices for children, youth, and families prior to child welfare referrals or further involvement.

The Colorado Prevention Services Continuum includes all programs/services, across primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, that contribute to strengthening families. Once involved with the child welfare system, tertiary prevention services are designed to:

- Prevent further child abuse and neglect from recurring.
- Prevent the separation of children from their families, and
- Prevent more intensive and potentially traumatic interventions.

This is the space where child welfare is most directly involved. The preference, however, is for there not to be a need for families to become involved in the child welfare system (primary prevention). Primary/universal prevention is a space where child welfare can be a strong collaborative partner and advocate for approaches that promote the overall well-being of children, youth, and families. For families that are not system-involved, however, child welfare does not play a direct role in designing or delivering services, resources, and support. This is not just a matter of capacity or function, but also one of equity. DCW is committed to not expanding the

involvement of families in the child welfare system unless there is an imminent risk to a child's safety.

In between primary and tertiary is the secondary prevention space, where services and support focus on individuals or families with elevated risk factors. The services in this space may be effective with child welfare-involved families as well, and therefore child welfare has an interest in investing in and increasing access to services such as home visiting, parent skill-building, mental health, and early childhood programs. Child welfare may also be a referral source for community partners when families are referred to child welfare but not assigned for further assessment.

Thus, while child welfare is committed to strengthening the entire prevention services continuum in Colorado, its role looks different across the spectrum, from being a collaborative partner and advocate to more direct involvement and oversight. The continuum also includes programs/services that cross state agencies—including the CDEC, BHA, CDPHE, and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) —as well as those that are county-designed and community-based.

An example of a primary prevention program that CDHS has a great interest in supporting is Family Connects, an evidence-based universal home visiting model. This model connects parents of newborns to the community resources they need through postpartum nurse home visits. It is intended to be offered to every family who delivers at a partnering hospital. Research has shown that for families involved in this program, there was a 44 percent decrease in rates of child welfare investigations for suspected child abuse or neglect through children aged two. Research has also shown significant reductions in race disparities for maternal anxiety and depression, and child maltreatment investigations[48]. The program is not yet to scale in Colorado, but CDHS and CDEC are supportive in working towards additional funding for the program and adding more hospitals to participate.

In addition to leveraging partnerships to continue expanding the statewide Prevention Services Continuum, CDHS will provide support at the community level by reviewing Core and CMP annual plans to learn about new and innovative programs the counties are putting in place, and work with those counties to build evidence around those programs.

Objective 2.3: Improve outcomes for child welfare involved children, youth and families with high substance use needs in Colorado.

Intervention 2.3.1: Use a data driven and family centered approach to inform Colorado child welfare substance use policy and practices.

Substance use is a primary driver for child welfare involvement, child removal and child welfare case complexity in Colorado. In Colorado, parental alcohol or drug abuse was identified as a condition in 41-50% of all removals of children. When breaking out the age of the child, parental

[48] https://familyconnects.org/impact-evidence/the-evidence/

alcohol or drug abuse was identified as a condition for removal of children under the age of one over 60% of the time[49].

Recent Colorado reports support national data indicating that substance use is a driving factor in child welfare involvement, increased case complexity, and poorer outcomes.

- The 2021 Child Fatality Review Team Annual Report found that of the fatal child maltreatment incidents reviewed, 56.3% (9/16) of the incidents reviewed had some identified caregiver history of substance abuse issues. Additionally, fentanyl exposure/ingestion accounted for 35.3% (6/17) of near fatal child maltreatment incidents and 15.6% (5/32) of fatal incidents of child maltreatment incidents.
- A 2021 update from the Marijuana Health Monitoring Program found that of the marijuana exposures reported to Colorado's Poison Center, 48.7% were for children 5 years old or younger. This represents a continued increase year over year.
- The Colorado Child Welfare Workload Study[50] found caseworkers identified substance use as one of the main case complexity factors requiring additional time and effort to effectively support the case.
- In 2022, BHA staff pulled a preliminary look at deidentified Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) summary data specific to the Substance Use Domain of the CANS data from all youth that had gone through the independent assessment up to that point since Family First was implemented. That early and limited snapshot showed a significant need for substance use disorder treatment for many youths going through the independent assessment process and especially for youth that qualified for residential treatment in a QRTP (or higher) setting.

In response, CDHS will convene a workgroup of county and state agency partners to review data, research, anecdotal experience, and best practices to better understand the impact of substance use and to generate concrete recommendations for enhancing child welfare practice. In collaboration, CDHS will explore opportunities to increase access to resources and support for families by addressing key barriers.

CDHS will also enhance data collection and monitoring to examine the impact of substance use and substance use services/interventions on child welfare involvement and outcomes. Current policies will be reviewed to increase alignment with research and best practice.

Intervention 2.3.2: Increase completion and consistent implementation of Plans of Safe Care for families impacted by prenatal substance exposure across Colorado.

Over the next five years, Colorado will improve and develop training and resources for caseworkers to support the consistent implementation of Plans of Safe Care. DCW will also be enhancing the functionality in Trails to support the timely completion and use of a Plans of Safe Care, and develop distinct pathways for identification, notification, and reporting, to achieve

[49] https://www.cffutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NCSACW_SafetyRiskWebinar.pdf

[50] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-b8dk_CNxVZvlPT2nIBdP47uRQr8OT4l/view?usp=sharing

broader engagement of other systems to meet the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) amendments to CAPTA.

Intervention 2.3.3: Address the Rise in Accidental Marijuana Exposure in Children Under 6 Through Expansion of Safe Storage.

DCW will be increasing training opportunities and resources for county child welfare staff to engage in conversations with caregivers about safe storage and safe caregiving practices to prevent accidental marijuana exposure in young children. In collaboration with other state agencies and cross-sector partners, DCW will also be expanding statewide prevention and education efforts specifically for marijuana edibles and accidental ingestion.

Intervention 2.3.4: Enhance child welfare practice related to working with families impacted by substance use.

In 2022, there were 1,578 infants in reports for substance-exposed newborns, 78% of those newborns were specifically identified as exposed to a substance, and 39% had plans of safe care completed. Colorado child welfare staff have identified a need for more effective, practical training and education designed to address specific areas of casework such as kinship, placement, and alcohol/drug impacted families (Colorado Child Welfare Workload Study[51]). In continued efforts to support child welfare practice around working with families impacted by substance use, DCW will develop more effective and practical training to increase awareness around working with families impacted by substance misuse or abuse. The Substance Use Disorder Specialist will work in partnership with the Child Welfare Sub-PAC Substance Use Disorder workgroup, the Training Steering Committee Substance Use Disorder workgroup, lived experts, and other key state and local partners to inform the development and delivery of training. Colorado will measure the number of substance use trainings/tools developed or updated, number of participants, and staff understanding of practice and policy. Colorado will also measure the percent of Plans of Safe Care completed for infants identified as being impacted by prenatal substance exposure.

Measures of Progress

1. Decrease recurrence of repeat maltreatment within twelve (12) months of a substantiated report of abuse or neglect to from 10.7% to 9% by 2029.
2. Increase the percentage of children exiting in-home child welfare involvement who were maintained with their family from a baseline of 73.7% in FFY 2021-2022 to 75% by 2029.
3. Increase the percentage of children, who are currently meeting the definition of a Prevention candidate per the prevention plan, who remain in-home after receiving an evidence-based service from 75.5% from FFY 21-22 to 78%.
4. Develop expansion and sustainability plans with all nine evidence-based service program intermediaries[52] to ensure that existing program sites can accept referrals when they are made.

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[51] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-b8dk_CNxVZvlPT2nIBdP47uRQr8OT4I/view?usp=sharing

[52] At the time of writing this CFSP, there are currently nine evidence-based services on Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan.

5. Develop 5 rigorous evaluation plans to build evidence for promising, supported, and well-supported programs across Colorado's evidence-based service continuum.

Goal 3: Children and youth have safe, permanent, and stable living situations with appropriate supports to meet their individualized needs.

Objective 3.1: Ensure children/youth are able to remain safely at home, whenever possible, with appropriate support.

Intervention 3.1.1: Maintaining consistency and fidelity of Differential Response statewide.

The Colorado Differential Response (DR) practice model provides counties with an opportunity to focus on child/youth safety and provide the appropriate level of support based on the needs of families. In alignment with Family First, DR creates a more engaging opportunity to provide support and services to families and prevents deeper penetration into the child welfare system and unnecessary family disruption. For more information on Colorado's DR program, see Item 2 in the Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes section of this CFSP.

Through efforts made in the 2020-2024 CFSP, DR is nearing statewide implementation, with all counties but one either fully implemented, or in the process of implementation. DCW's DR Specialist continues to provide technical assistance and guidance to all counties who have implemented DR. Efforts will shift towards increasing flexibility of the DR model, while maintaining fidelity and consistency across the state.

DCW has also been tracking the disproportionality outcome data of Family Assessment Response (FAR) assessments and found that white children are heavily overrepresented in FAR assessments by almost 10% in 2023. Black/African American, Hispanic, & Multi-Racial children are underrepresented in FARs, and overrepresented in HRAs. The racial disproportionality for the state is higher due to two large counties with some of the most diverse populations not offering FAR assessments in 2023 in their county. This is driving up disproportionality and likely causing a higher distribution of "founded" findings (confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect) for families of color due to FARs not being offered. Data being gathered in 2024 will help further assess the impact DR has on reducing disproportionality, as DR implementation continues across the state.

Intervention 3.1.2: Expanding resources to kinship providers.

Kinship care is important to the well-being of Colorado's families. "Kin", for purposes of a kinship foster care home or non-certified kinship care home, means a relative of the child and/or youth, a person ascribed by the family as having a family-like relationship with the child and/or youth, or a person that has a prior significant relationship with the child and/or youth. These relationships

consider cultural values and continuity of significant relationships with the child and/or youth. Placement with kin caregivers when children/youth cannot live safely with their parents can minimize the trauma of removal. When children/youth are removed they often lose everything they know—their parents, their home, their siblings, friends, school, pets, etc. Placing a child with family diminishes this loss. Kinship care also helps to preserve children's cultural identity and relationship to their community. Children/youth in kinship homes are more likely to stay connected to their extended family and maintain their cultures and customs. Overall, research shows that family connections are critical to healthy child development and a sense of belonging. Kinship care allows for maintaining these critical family connections. See Item 10 in the Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes section of this CFSP for details on the importance of placing children with kin, when out-of-home placement is necessitated.

House Bill 23-1024[53] outlined additional requirements to clarify expectations of notifying kin of their rights and potential impact. Colorado's kinship rule is currently being revised to include language regarding the expectations of House Bill 23-1024 including the notice to kin, rights of kin (such as kin voice in case planning and service delivery) and requiring courts to give preference to relatives and kin unless it would be detrimental to the child/youth. Counties are supporting intense and early family search and engagement efforts (this is monitored through ARD out-of-home kinship reviews and in the future will be through Kinnected fidelity reviews) to ensure the continuity of Colorado's kin-first approach. House Bill 23-1043 also clarified the procedures for emergency and non-emergency placement of a child or youth with a relative or kin.

Colorado is currently working on identifying opportunities for financial support for kin with Senate Bill 24-008. More information will be reported in future APSRs.

Intervention 3.1.3: Examine the outcomes of families who have had child welfare system involvement that resulted in a substantiated allegation of "neglect" to identify disproportionality & disparate interventions.

In recognition that families of color are overrepresented in Colorado's child welfare system, DCW will research the impact of its current definition of neglect, with an equity lens, to identify instances of over- and under-representation of families served when neglect is a concern. The goal is to identify whether certain families involved with the child welfare system receive a "founded" finding for neglect and what services and further intervention by the child welfare system takes place after that finding. This would include pulling child welfare data to identify whether a family received in-home services, an out of home placement occurred, and/or a Core service was provided to the family, and which families are over-represented within each of those potential outcomes.

[53] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1024

Objective 3.2: When children/youth must be temporarily removed, timeliness to permanency remains a priority.

Intervention 3.2.1: Create a process for counties and county intermediaries to monitor the permanency status report (proactively addressing and identifying areas of action before permanency status is out of compliance)

In efforts to achieve the goals for Items 4, 5, and 6 in the CFSR Round 3 PIP non-overlapping measurement period, DCW has created a Permanency Status Report for the PIP counties to identify points in cases that may result in delayed permanency. Aggregate data can be used to identify trends that may need process improvements or next steps and can also serve as a streamlined method to notify county caseworkers and supervisors of approaching deadlines.

Measures that are included in the Permanency Status Report include:

- Initial Permanency Goal: whether the initial permanency goal is approaching, overdue, or if it was assigned prior to placement.
- Permanency Goal Status: whether the permanency goal is current.
- Primary/Alternate Permanency Goal: identifies and cautions any permanency goals approaching or overdue based on the federal timeframe expectations in months from date of placement (reunification < 12 months, guardianship < 18 months, adoption < 24 months).
- Family Service Plan: identifies a child approaching/overdue for an initial treatment plan or overdue for a 90-day review.
- Return Home Parent Contact: identifies when clients have a return home goal and no parent contact has been made in the last 90 days since the report was pulled.
- 15/22: Identifies when clients need a 15/22 months completed in Trails (Before the end of the 15th month out-of-home, when out of home 15/22 months).
- ARD Goal Progress: Identifies when clients receive a “No” response to whether progress is being made towards permanency goal(s) on their most recent ARD review.

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Usage of the Permanency Status Report will be promoted statewide, as an example of a tool for county intermediaries to work collaboratively with their assigned counties in monitoring permanency statuses, and proactively identify data entry issues, and processes that are within the counties’ control.

Intervention 3.2.2: Identify gaps in court processes to ensure timeliness to permanency is not delayed.

Through efforts made in the 2020-2024 CFSP to develop processes to improve timeliness of permanency hearings with CIP and BPCTs, DCW is working with the Colorado Court of Appeals and CIP to review court data on areas that may affect timeliness to permanency and cross-referencing the data with Trails. CIP assisted in the formation and management of an appeals working group in 2018, that was designed to examine how to reduce appellate delays. This group will transition to a Best Practice Appellate Court Team in late 2024. Additionally, a subcommittee will continue working on a Timely Permanency data project. Court data will also be assessed to

find whether the overall time to permanency and the time to key court events in dependency and neglect cases have changed over time by county/judicial district, so that targeted interventions can be designed in different localities. Additionally, court data may be used through SANCA to ensure ICWA compliance is being met and identify other opportunities to support better ICWA practice across the counties.

Please see the SANCA section of this CFSP for further details.

Intervention 3.2.3: Decrease time from TPR to finalized adoption.

Counties are beginning to create their own post-permanency teams which allow families more support and feel more comfortable moving towards adoption. Additionally, the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet was created in 2023, to assist families with various support to help them feel more prepared to care for a child/youth without involvement from the child welfare system.

The Child and Family Study is required to be completed within 90 days of termination or relinquishment of parental rights and should be completed timelier in cases moving towards adoption. DCW continues to monitor the timeliness of child and family study completions.

Objective 3.3: When it is necessary to place children and youth out of home, ensure they are in a family-like setting or least-restrictive, high-quality treatment setting.

CDHS is making significant efforts to transform the out-of-home placement continuum to be more responsive to the needs of the children and youth in care, ensure every child/youth is in the least-restrictive setting, family-like setting, or high-quality treatment facility, and that all children/youth have access to appropriate, responsive, and effective services at every level of the continuum.

Intervention 3.3.1: Increase the use of therapeutic foster care and treatment foster care as alternatives to congregate settings.

Colorado is committed to addressing the needs of children and youth in the least-restrictive setting possible. When it is not possible to keep children/youth with their parents or kin, foster homes are preferable to other residential options since they maintain a more family-like setting. CDHS continues to prioritize increasing the number of skilled, therapeutic, or treatment foster care options across the state so that children and youth with complex behavioral health needs can still receive treatment services and support in a family-like setting. Colorado has made great strides in growing this capacity. From July 2023 through March 2024, CDHS increased their therapeutic and treatment foster beds by 144. Colorado is strongly encouraging staff across the state to engage in Pressley Ridge training, which is the only evidence-based pre-service training specifically designed for treatment foster parents. Please see “Staff Training” in the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes section of this CFSP.

Intervention 3.3.2: Build out a respite program to help sustain children/youth in their certified foster or kinship placement.

In 2021, Colorado passed Senate Bill 21-269[54] into law. This act allows for the creation of respite childcare centers and adds them to the definitions section of 26-6-903, C.R.S. This creation of a new license type for respite-focused programs was aimed at building a safety net for children/youth who need a break from their current certified foster or kinship placement. Since 2021, rules for this license type continue to exist in draft format but are continuing to be worked on to build this capacity for our youth.

In coordination with this law, the CDHS contracts team continues to attempt to build capacity for respite in existing licensed facilities by contracting for respite only. One full respite contract was initiated this year with hopes of contracting another program for respite only, to provide necessary reprieve for children/youth in out-of-home placement.

Intervention 3.3.3: Support Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) in providing high-quality, treatment-focused practice.

CDHS launched a new Performance Management Outcomes (PMO) team within its Provider Services Unit (PSU) to better support residential treatment providers and promote high quality practice. The PMO team proactively partners with providers through coaching, training, and technical assistance so that they can live into the vision of all children/youth having access to appropriate, responsive, and effective services.

More specifically, the PMO team is focused on building provider capacity to:

- Ensure all children, youth, and families have co-developed, child-individualized plans that are responsive to their individually assessed needs, regularly monitored, and revised as needed. This requires developing a common language to use for youth and families to understand and fully participate in the development of individualized plans.
- Develop comprehensive discharge and aftercare plans that provide for continuity of services as children/youth transition out of residential care.
- Review and incorporate the latest evidence-based treatment methods and promising practices, and integrate trauma-informed principles and cultural considerations into care.
- Ensure completion of follow-up assessments using the CANS tool within the prescribed timeframes to support the placement of children and youth in the least restrictive level of care. To support this, CDHS will develop a database that tracks initial CANS assessments and required CANS assessment updates completed by QRTPs for all children and youth in QRTP residential placements.

[54] https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_269_signed.pdf

Intervention 3.3.4: Ensure Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) providers receive quality, trauma-informed training through the Colorado Provider Training Academy for all residential staff, clinicians, and supervisors who provide direct care within licensed facilities.

To further support providers in all these areas, PSU has developed the Colorado Provider Training Academy (CPTA) for all QRTP and PRTF providers. Specific training modules will be developed to support high-quality practice, including one on the use of common language for treatment planning and one on developing discharge and aftercare plans. The CPTA will also include an online resource library with an updated collection of trauma-informed interventions and treatment models, with the associated evidence and research.

Intervention 3.3.5: Capture and share data related to youth who have unmet out-of-home treatment needs to identify trends and meaningful strategies.

Currently, Colorado's placement continuum lacks the correct number and composition of beds to be fully responsive to the needs of Colorado's children and youth, which can result in high numbers of children/youth on waitlists in need of appropriate treatment and placement.

DCW revisited the detention utilization review process in 2019 as a result of concerns regarding releasable youth being detained without available placement. These reviews were the foundation for future analysis of youth with unmet treatment needs, many of which would fall into what was later defined as youth with high acuity needs.

HCPF, BHA, and CDHS began a cross-agency collaboration in 2023, to review and analyze the needs faced by children and youth. The team focuses on situations where providers have already been outreached while the child/youth remain in an inappropriate placement setting (for instance, in a hospital, hotel, county office, or detention).

As a result of the consultation, the following may occur:

- Determine appropriate level of outreach from state contributors to a county, provider, agency, or other community partner to address barriers for a referred child/youth. If outreach is determined necessary, it will be done by the best suited contributor.
- Review the list of providers outreached by the referring agency to determine if there are missed opportunities to review or other known specialist providers to contact.
- Review the list of providers outreached by the supporting referral agency to determine if there are providers who have issued denials for services which the child/youth may benefit from a reconsideration of or an escalation of the appropriate grievance process.
- If appropriate and not already scheduled, initiate Colorado's multi-agency Creative Solutions case staffing process to ensure all possible support and care coordination entities are involved to address the identified needs.
- Consult with the DCW Foster Care Administrator to determine if this form is appropriate to send through the Foster Care Listserv.

- Determine if the supporting case coordination entities need technical assistance or coaching to better understand the benefits and services options and associated processes.
- For child welfare staff, this support occurs through subject matter experts in permanency and youth programs, or through their county intermediary.
- Support efforts to ensure youth are in the appropriate level of care based on their individual needs.

Trends will be identified and targeted strategies will be enacted to decrease the number of youths with unmet out-of-home treatment needs.

Objective 3.4: Prevent Re-entry to Out-of-Home Care

Intervention 3.4.1: Develop a communication plan to celebrate permanency outcomes with communities.

The OCYF communications team and program managers at DCW will collaborate with county and community partners to celebrate different permanency outcomes, such as Adoption, the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP), Kinships, and Reunification. For instance, to mark National Foster Care Month in May 2023, and encourage more Coloradans to become foster parents, the CDHS recognized five foster families during a luncheon at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. In June 2024, CDHS collaborated with the ORPC, the CIP, CASAs and the OCR are recognizing the collaborative efforts that help families stay together; they will host an event at a local theme park to celebrate Reunification month. By celebrating successes with community members, county, state, and other external partners, this intervention aims to empower communities to celebrate with their own families.

Intervention 3.4.2: Support youth in achieving their permanency goal of “return home” or permanency in a “family-like” setting in a timely manner.

The QRTP Lifetime Limit Waiver Request Review process is a federally required waiver request review and approval process that Colorado follows to extend the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) children or youth are receiving when their ongoing clinical need supports extension of this type/level of treatment. This process reviews the Independent Assessment (a comprehensive psychosocial assessment with the inclusion of a Family Permanency Team Meeting and use of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths instrument) as well as subsequent quarterly CANS reviews, clinical treatment, and casework documentation to determine whether this level of treatment is most appropriate for the needs of the child or youth and their family. In a few instances, formal permanency goal recommendations are made if the review supports a plan other than those the county has currently been pursuing.

The multi-agency review process for all children/youth, regardless of Title IV-E status evolved from the ongoing discussion around helping children and youth achieve permanency goals which allow them to experience the benefit and protection of growing up in their family or family-like setting as soon as possible. Youth who have been residing in a residential setting for more than

a year are reviewed to see what support is needed to assist counties in finding an appropriate family/family-like permanency option within their community. The reviews are conducted on selected youth on a bimonthly/quarterly basis, and counties are contacted directly and engaged in scheduling the review of their child/youth. The county is encouraged to invite those who they wish to participate in the review. The review includes a multidisciplinary discussion, which reviews the casework and services the child or youth has received in light of their permanency goals. Support is offered to the county in whatever means to best support achievement of the child/youth's permanency goal while meeting their treatment needs.

Measures of Progress

- Decrease the percentage of children/youth who re-entered out-of-home placement after achieving permanency in the past 12 months from a baseline of 1.1% in FFY 2022-2023 to 0.8% by 2029.
- Increase the number of kinship foster care homes by 15%, from 594 in 2023 to 683 by 2029.
- Increase the number of counties implementing Kinnected, from 5 counties in 2024 to 15 counties by 2029.
- By 2029, increase the percentage of children/youth adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) from 49.3% to 55%.
- Colorado will increase the percentage of children/youth in a family foster care setting, including placements with relatives, by 1% year over year from a baseline of 87.4% in 2023.
- 70% of QRTP and PRTF providers will have reduced child and youth crisis-oriented incidents by 30% as measured by Critical Incident Reports (CIRs) by June 30, 2029.
- 90% of residential providers will have at least 50% of their direct care staff trained in the Colorado Provider Training Academy Curriculum by June 30, 2029.
- 90% of QRTP providers will have completed updated CANS assessments within the timeframe required in state rules and regulations by June 30, 2029.

Goal 4: Youth who leave foster care in Colorado have the tools necessary to be safe, healthy, educated, connected, housed, and contributing young adults.

Objective 4.1: Youth currently and formerly in foster care have access to developmentally appropriate life experiences and services.

Intervention 4.1.1: Increase utilization of Supervised Independent Living Placements for youth 18 and older, who participated in the Foster Youth in Transition Program.

It is essential that young people have a safe and stable home with supportive connections and resources as they prepare for independence. Youth who were previously in foster care have been

shown to be more likely to experience homelessness and many do so within one year of emancipation.

Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) is a voluntary extended foster care program wherein young people work with a county child welfare agency and caseworker to support their successful transition to adulthood, which includes identifying and securing safe, stable and affordable housing in the least restrictive option to meet the young person's needs. The young person is an active partner in this collaborative process that offers support as they can opt into different housing options, including but not limited to college dormitories, kin homes, transitional living programs, apartments, private homes or another age or developmentally appropriate placement. Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs) offer flexibility, encouraging and incorporating youth voice in final decision-making, and providing a stipend towards living expenses based upon individual needs.

Through ARD and ROM data reports, counties are monitored for their use of SILPs with youth participating in the FYiT program. Through ongoing coaching and engagement efforts with their caseworker, young people will continue to be offered an opportunity to receive housing support throughout their participation in the FYiT program.

The Youth Services Specialist within the DCW facilitates regular and consistent open office hours statewide to answer questions around housing concerns and barriers, and meets with counties individually to staff more specific needs. Technical assistance sessions are offered to counties ongoing to ensure that housing is addressed as a priority for all youth. Counties will be offered training opportunities in coachlike approaches when working with young people. This will encourage supportive dialogue and positive relationships during a critical time of life following a young person's time in foster care, which likely had an impact on emotional and social development.

Intervention 4.1.2: Ensuring Post-Transition Housing Success through the Fostering Success Voucher Program.

The Fostering Success Voucher program was established by Senate Bill 23-082[55] in 2023 and provides funding for up to 100 housing vouchers and case management for Chafee eligible youth until the youth reaches the age of 18. Youth who are eligible for the Fostering Success Housing Voucher Program will receive mandatory case management support services through the case management agencies. Case management agencies are county departments of human services receiving Chafee funding and/or vendors contracted with CDHS through the Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood state grant program, which was established by House Bill 21-1094[56] in 2021. The inclusion of developmentally appropriate, youth-led case management is intended to increase meaningful support for youth who receive the voucher and improve their outcomes. The development and implementation of this intervention is being supported by the Colorado Implementation Science Unit and will measure the percentage of youth who receive this

[55] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-082

[56] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1094

voucher and eventually move on from the voucher in a manner that reflects success. The measures will include the percentage of youth who moved on without experiencing an eviction, termination due to non-compliance with the program, or experienced a mutual rescission due to factors under the youth's control.

Objective 4.2: Youth currently and formerly in foster care have access to services that support them to earn a high school credential and/or pursue post-secondary education.

Intervention 4.2.1: Provide mandatory educational training called, "Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care" for certified child welfare caseworkers and supervisors.

In 2022, Section 22-32-138[57], C.R.S. was updated to include professional development opportunities for both school staff and child welfare professionals. Training was mandated to occur and be reviewed every two years. In 2023, the training was launched and both CDE and CDHS worked closely with the Colorado Child Welfare Training System (CWTS) to host the "Educational Right for Students in Foster Care" training. CWTS tracks training participation and sends it out to both agencies respectively. The training includes but is not limited to information on legislative background and requirements around the Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings.

In 2015, there was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now referred to as the Every Student Succeeds Act. With this legislation, there were many provisions included to support vulnerable students including students in foster care. According to Section 1111. [20 U.S.C. 6311] (g)(E) of ESEA and House Bill 18-1306[58], it is the legal presumption that remaining in the school of origin is in the child or youth's best interest in the event of an initial placement or a change in placement. Statistics have demonstrated that the more school moves a student experience has a strong correlation with that student's likelihood to graduate. Thus, BID meetings are vital for students experiencing foster care.

DCW will utilize reports from the ARD and ROM to explore if students are being offered these meetings when a school move is being discussed. DCW will also utilize the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) to gather students' self-reports of graduation and continuation to higher education. DCW is also exploring available data to see if there are any unconscious biases that occur that could lead to more targeted interventions. If there are any found results showing that students are not being served in an equitable manner, solutions to overcome these concerns will be discussed and implemented. The success of this intervention will be measured by the overall completion rate of BID meetings.

[57] Section 22-32-138(1.5)(A)(II)(B), C.R.S.

[58] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb18-1306

Intervention 4.2.2: Support continued implementation of the program in school districts.

In September 2018, Colorado launched “Fostering Opportunities”, funding services in Jefferson County Public Schools to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. The program provides individual specialists who advocate for, support and mentor students using trauma-informed and evidence-based approaches, to ensure better coordination between teachers, families, foster parents, social workers, and other systems involved in the students’ lives. An initial evaluation of the pilot site found that students receiving the intervention passed their academic courses at a higher rate within two years of having access to the program, had statistically significant gain in student attendance rates, and found a statistically significant decrease in the number of student suspensions within one year of having access to the program. The success of the Fostering Opportunities pilot prompted legislatively mandated state funding to support expansion of the intervention to at least two, but no more than five, additional school districts. DCW will partner with an evaluation team to further assess the outcomes for students who receive the intervention, including continued evaluation of the intervention’s impact on graduation rates for students who have experienced foster care. See Fostering Opportunities under the Service Array section of this CFSP for further details.

Intervention 4.2.3: Ensure all youth and young adults in current or prior child welfare involvement who are eligible will be offered Chafee or Chafee-like support services to support their future stability.

Chafee is a federal voluntary program where young people work with a Chafee Worker to identify what goals the young person wants to work towards including but not limited to housing, employment and education. Through the Chafee Annual Report, counties will report what educational needs they have helped serve while also requesting feedback from young people about how they felt their educational needs were met. Through Chafee services, young people will be aware of education and training vouchers (ETV) and FosterEd, both scholarships that are available for them to pursue post-secondary education. Further information on ETVs can be found in the “John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (section 477 of the Act)” section of this CFSP. The Transition Services Administrator holds quarterly Chafee meetings throughout the state to discuss programming, technical assistance sessions are offered when new programming is offered, and individual sessions are created on an as needed basis.

Intervention 4.2.4: Youth will be provided with documentation that verifies their experience in the child welfare system to ensure they have the ability to apply for financial assistance when pursuing educational goals.

“Confirmation of Foster Care" is a document that can be utilized to access ETV and FosterEd without young people having to wait for a report through the court system. Young people have provided feedback on the language of the report. The report will be updated to incorporate their recommendations. CDHS will meet with young people to evaluate if the changes met their needs and update the form as necessary.

DCW will explore internally within our data team how to pull utilization rates for this report using ROM. DCW has historically provided technical assistance sessions as well as releasing memos

to educate child welfare staff of the report, how to access it, and when to provide it to young people. DCW also has incorporated this document in the Roadmap to Success, ensuring young people are receiving it along with other vital documents.

Through partnership with Colorado Department of Higher Education, DCW will be able to get documentation on how many students are receiving ETV and FosterEd in an academic term. To be eligible for these programs, a young person must provide their “Confirmation of Foster Care” report.

Measures of Progress for Goal 4

1. Increase utilization of Supervised Independent Living Placements for youth 18 and older who participated in the Foster Youth in Transition Program from 74.1% in CY 2023 to 90%.
2. Increase the completion of a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting when required from the statewide average of 55.9% in CY 2023 to 75% by 2029.
3. Decrease the reported rates of homelessness from 36% to 20% through National Youth in Transition to Adulthood (NYTD) outcomes for the follow-up populations (19- and 21-year-olds).
4. Increase Roadmap to Success completion rate from 84.53% in 2023 to 95% by 2029.
5. By 2029, 80% of youth who move on from the Fostering Success Housing Voucher Program will be considered successful graduations without experiencing an eviction, termination due to non-compliance with the program, or experienced a mutual rescission due to factors under the youth’s control.

Services

Child and Family Services Continuum

CDHS and other collaborating departments support a broad services continuum. The continuum is a flexible spectrum of services that is modified according to the needs of children, youth and families. Services in one segment of the continuum are also provided in other segments (e.g., many of the services in Early Intervention and Family Preservation can be provided in Child Protection Services). The segments of the continuum are as follows:

1. Prevention and Family Strengthening Services
   Services in this category strengthen all families in Colorado and help prevent child maltreatment and child welfare system involvement. These services, supports, and dedicated funding streams include:
   - Promoting Safe and Stable Families
   - Family Resource Centers
   - Universal home visiting programs[59]
   - Colorado Fatherhood Program[60]
   - Universal Preschool[61]
   - Quality Childcare and Early Learning
   - Colorado Child Care Assistance Program For Families[62]
   - Colorado Works/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
   - Medicaid
   - Housing Services and Supports
   - Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Testing
   - Child Support
   - Parenting Classes
   - Support Groups
   - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

2. Early Intervention and Family Preservation Services
   Early intervention and family preservation services are designed to address the needs of families at risk or in crisis, to strengthen and stabilize families and prevent entry into out-of-home care. These services include:
   - Family First Evidence-Based Services Array
   - Core Services
   - Kinship Supports
   - Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program (described below)
   - Home-Based Interventions

[59] https://www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org/s/Final-COHomeVisitingPrograms.pdf
[60] https://childsupport.state.co.us/support-colorado-dads
[61] https://cdec.colorado.gov/universal-preschool-colorado
[62] https://cdec.colorado.gov/colorado-child-care-assistance-program-for-families

- Sexual Abuse Treatment
- Day Treatment
- Life Skills
- Intensive Family Therapy
- Behavioral Health Services
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- County-Designed Programs
- Special Economic Assistance
- Child and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act
- Children's Habilitation Residential Program, Home and Community Based Services Waiver
- Aftercare Services

3. Child Protective Services

   Child Protective Services (CPS), housed within the Child Protection and Prevention Services Unit at the DCW, are where the assessments of allegations of suspected abuse and neglect as well as the provision of treatment services for children, youth and families are offered. Child protection services are provided to protect children whose physical, mental or emotional well-being is threatened by the actions of parents, legal guardians, custodians, or persons responsible for providing out-of-home care. Some of the components of CPS are the following:

   - Statewide Hotline
   - Review, Evaluate, Direct (RED) Teams
   - Differential Response
   - Assessment of Safety
   - Assessment of Risk
   - Assessment of Family Strengths and Supports
   - Dispositional Findings of Abuse and Neglect
   - Family Engagement Strategies: Team Decision Making Meetings, Facilitated Family Engagement Meetings, and Family Group Conferences
   - Safety Planning
   - Support Planning
   - Service Referral and Provisions
   - Community-Based Services and Resources
   - Core Services
   - Human Trafficking Screening
   - Collaborative Management Program (CMP)
   - County-Designed Programs

   Youth in Conflict services reduce or eliminate conflicts between youth and their family members or the community when conflicts affect the youth's well-being, the normal functioning of the family, or the well-being of the community. Additional services may include:

   - Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood Services

- The Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program
- Housing Supports
- Employment Supports
- Educational Supports
- Youth Leadership Programs
- Foster Youth in Transition

4. Foster Care Services
   Foster care services are for the placement of children and youth in out-of-home care with services designed to meet the child's/youth's needs for safety, permanency and well-being. Higher levels of residential care focus on treatment services. Following are the components of Foster Care Services in place:
   - Kinship Placement
   - Kinship Foster Care
   - General Foster Care
   - Specialized Foster Care
     - Therapeutic Foster Care
     - Treatment Foster Care
     - Professional Foster Care
   - Residential Child Care Facilities
   - Specialized Group Facilities
     - Specialized Group Homes or Group Centers
     - Specialized Group Centers
   - Qualified Residential Treatment Programs
   - Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities
   - Respite Services
   - Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

5. Kinship Care Services
   Kinship care services are for the placement of children and youth in out-of-home care with kin designed to meet the child's/youth's needs for safety, permanency and well-being and to support the kinship placement.
   - Kinship Case Management Services
     - Coordination of Services
     - Strength-Based Support and Consultation
     - Benefits Navigation
   - Kinship Support Services
     - Basic Needs/Hard Goods
     - Respite Care
     - Transportation
     - Therapeutic/Educational Needs (not covered elsewhere)
   - Attendance at Family Meetings, Court and/or Individualized Education Program Meetings
   - Kinship Navigator Programs

- Kinship Adoption Program

6. Permanency Services
   Permanency services determine and implement permanent plans for children and youth. The spectrum of permanency options organizes these services:
   - Reunification with the Family of Origin
   - Permanency with Relatives or Kin (Adoption or Guardianship)
   - Permanency with Someone Other Than Kin (Adoption or Guardianship)
   - Relative Guardianship Assistance
   - Other Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (OPPLA) with Kin
   - OPPLA with Someone Other Than Kin
   - Permanency Roundtables
   - Independent Living/Emancipation
   - Expedited Permanency Planning
   - Reinstatement of Parental Rights

7. Post-Permanency and Aftercare Services
   Post-permanency and after-care services support permanent placements for children and youth and include:
   - Post-Legal Adoption Services
   - Reunification Services
   - Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP)
   - Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood Services
   - Core Services Program (including County Designed Programs)
   - Kinship Caregiver Supports
   - Adoption Assistance
   - Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers for Youth
   - Trauma-Informed/Evidence-Informed Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Training for families and professionals
   - In-Home Coaching to assist TBRI-Trained families in successfully implementing the parenting model
   - Implementation and Connection Groups on a regional basis to provide ongoing support, learning opportunities and natural points of connection for families
   - Access to a pool of TBRI-trained families and/or individuals to provide respite care as needed for program participating families
   - Online directory of mental health professionals available to offer crisis intervention and ongoing therapeutic services for families
   - Resource navigation and referral for post-permanency families, and,
   - Specialized in-person and web-based training for families and professionals.

Service Coordination

Coordination with the Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan

Please see "Prevention" in the Collaboration section, "Core Services" in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section, Goal 2 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section, and "Services for Children Under the Age of Five (section 422(b)(18) of the Act)" in the *Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (Title IV-B, Subpart 1)* section of this CFSP.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program

Colorado's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program provides a continuum of home visiting programs with the goal of ensuring that all vulnerable families can find a program that fits their needs and eligibility. Colorado's MIECHV federal grant funds voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs in 21 of Colorado's highest-risk counties: Adams, Alamosa, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Denver, Dolores, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Las Animas, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, and Teller.

Programs include Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Parents as Teachers (PAT). Together, they serve families from the prenatal stage to kindergarten entry. The programs are administered by 16 local implementing agencies, and the following table provides information about the geographic distribution of the programs and their approximate caseloads.

Program	No. of Counties Served	Caseload
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)	10	386
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)	2	362*
Parents as Teachers (PAT)	18	748
Total	21**	1,496

Table 3: Number of counties where MIECHV programs are available and have funded caseloads in FFY 2022-2023

*Includes caseload funding from the American Rescue Plan Act
** Nine counties are served by more than one home visiting model

For more information on how NFP and PAT is used to serve children under the age of five, which have been identified as the population at greatest risk of maltreatment in Colorado, see the *Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (Title IV-B, Subpart 1)* section of this CFSP.

CBCAP

For FFY 2023, CDEC served as the lead agency for the Community-Based Grants for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. The grant is managed out of CDEC's Division of Community and Family Support's Family Strengthening Unit as the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program and funding stream.

Research has shown that early childhood services, including childcare and education, have considerable implications for the prevention of child maltreatment.[63] Colorado's strategic choice to center child maltreatment prevention at CDEC allows CBCAP support to range from individual programs to funding systems-level initiatives at the community and county levels to bolster direct services.

The 2018-23 cohort of CBCAP implementation sites ended its grant cycle this fiscal year. Over five years, each site received $250,000 to implement a part of their Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan (CMPP). These plans are created and updated using the Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action and its corresponding Toolkit. All implementation sites also integrate and reinforce the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) through their work, whether it be systems-level change or direct services.

While communicating with county and local partners, it once again became clear that coordinating community stakeholders to create a shared vision for child maltreatment prevention is a large task that requires its own time and consideration before approaching an implementation strategy.

In response to this need, CDEC provided financial support through the CBCAP funding for experienced facilitators and county staff to manage logistics, conduct a parent and community survey in partnership with the Butler Institute at Denver University, and use the Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action Toolkit to create a community-wide Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan. Four facilitators were trained, and seven communities gathered data from families and compiled a local community profile which together illuminated community protective factors and expanded understanding of community risk factors. Those communities will have an established plan allowing them to apply to receive implementation dollars for their identified goals in FFY24.

CBCAP also supports Child Abuse Prevention Month activities across the state through implementation site funding and a media campaign run through Illuminate Colorado, a CDEC intermediary. Illuminate leads the Pinwheels for Prevention® Campaign to draw attention to the prevention of child maltreatment in Colorado.

[63] Henry T. Puls, Paul J. Chung, Clare Anderson; Universal Child Care as a Policy to Prevent Child Maltreatment. Pediatrics August 2022; 150 (2): e2022056660. 10.1542/peds.2022-056660

Additional initiatives that used CBCAP funds include: The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF), Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund, Colorado Shines Brighter Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5), and the Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant.

Federal stimulus funds were used to further bolster the following efforts: Child Maltreatment Prevention (CMP) Planning using the CMP Framework for Action, Expansion of Healthy Steps, Community Norms Campaign, Circle of Fathers/Circle of Parents, Roots / Home Visitation, Local Organizational Capacity Mini-Grants, Parent and Staff Leadership Training, ECCS Evaluation, Motivational Interviewing Training, and personnel costs.

The Children's Justice Act (CJA)

The Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force includes the following members: defense attorneys, child advocates, medical professionals, mental health professionals, prosecuting attorneys, parents group representatives, child protection, law enforcement, civil court judges and former victims of child abuse and/or neglect, per Section 107(c)(1) of CAPTA). The CJA meets on a quarterly basis. Through a request for application (RFA) process, the CJA funds projects to meet the requirement of CAPTA 107(e)(A)(B)(C). All grant sub-recipients align with one of the three categories outlined in CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)(A)(B)(C):

(A) Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal in a manner which reduces the additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused;

(B) Experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused; and

(C) Reform of State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children from abuse, including sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.

In addition, all grant sub-recipients must also align with at least one of the CJA recommendations:

1. Ensure that all professionals involved in the assessment, investigation and judicial handling of child abuse and/or neglect throughout the State of Colorado are well-qualified.
2. Ensure that all resources and trainings have the maximum impact.
3. Ensure that CJA-supported trainings do not duplicate other trainings available in Colorado.
4. Increase the dissemination and replication of effective models, programs and trainings.
5. Increase the rate of successful prosecution of child abuse and/or neglect.

Please see the CJA Annual Report and Three-Year Assessment in Appendix C.

The Court Improvement Program (CIP)

See “Alignment with Judicial Partners” in the *Collaboration* section of this CFSP.

Service Description (45 CFR 1357.15(o))

Please see the Services Array section of this CFSP.

Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (title IV-B, subpart 1)

Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries (section 422(b)(11) of the Act)

All children, youth, and their families who are identified in reports of child maltreatment, regardless of their familial status or countries of origin, are eligible for child welfare services. Colorado’s CCWIS (Trails) system requires the county department to identify whether a child/youth that was removed had previously been adopted. However, an additional field capturing inter-country adoptions is not mandatory, and as a result, CDHS does not have accurate data on children/youth who were adopted through the intercountry adoption process via Trails. CDHS continues to address this gap in data collection and is still working to change Trails to mandate this field when a previous adoption has been identified.

However, data collection for child placement agencies who focus on private and international adoptions is still being conducted via Salesforce as well as an annual report submitted to the Department of data for the previous year as it relates to private and international adoptions. CDHS’s goal is to gain access to Salesforce to improve the data tracking system currently being utilized along with making fields mandatory in Trails to better track inter-country adoptions.

Colorado is in its sixth year of a contract that gives Lutheran Family Services - Rocky Mountain (LFS-RM) the authority to provide oversight of the inter-country adoption home study process. LFS-RM is responsible for ensuring that applicants wanting to adopt from other countries meet suitability and eligibility criteria, as required by Colorado statute and federal law. This oversight includes fingerprint background checks, child abuse and neglect background checks, Colorado and national sex offender registry checks, and home study requirements. LFS-RM also leads the state in adoption and post-adoption support to families of children adopted from other countries.

In 2022-2023, 225 foreign nationals requested approval to move adoption applicants to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for approval. Of these, 219 were initial approval requests. In addition, there were 13 children reported as arriving in Colorado for adoption. 269 children were adopted from other countries, and zero children entered Colorado state custody, as there were no reported disruptions of a placement for adoption or the dissolution

of an adoption for intercountry adoptions in Colorado. Nine child placement agencies were open who handled the domestic or international placement or adoption.

Between 2022-2023, one licensed child placement agency who provided inter-country adoption services closed their agency. Their agency records for all adoptions they had completed were forwarded to CDHS for storage and access as allowed. CDHS was able to implement a data system to track records for adoptions completed through the county departments of social services as well as closed child placement agencies. This new system ensures more timely research and access to adoption records for those allowed to receive them under state statute. As of writing this report, CDHS has two contracted staff digitizing paper adoption records back to the year 1890 to be included in this database and hopes to have all private and international adoption records digitized in 2024.

Services for Children Under the Age of Five (section 422(b)(18) of the Act)

Developmental Screenings

Developmental screening is a way to determine if a child's physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and adaptive development is typical for their age and if there is a need for further evaluation. In Colorado, there are two distinct requirements related to developmental screening and children involved with the child welfare system:

- Federal requirement: The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-36) amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to include the requirement that states implement "provisions and procedures for referral of a child under age 3 who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse and/or neglect to early intervention services funded under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act" (§106(b)(2) 3 (A)(xxi)).
- State statute: Colorado statute (C.R.S. 26-5-108) requires children under the age of five with a founded case of abuse or neglect be referred by child welfare to an entity that conducts developmental screening.

The CAPTA and Beyond Workgroup works to improve the developmental screening and referrals system to ensure that children birth through five (0-5) involved in Colorado's child welfare system have their needs identified and are connected to relevant family-driven services and supports.

The group was established in 2013 as a partnership between the CDEC and CDHS to ensure compliance with both Federal CAPTA regulation (P.L. 111-320 Section 106(b)(2)(B)(xxi)) and Colorado Revised Statutes (26-5-108). The legislation ensures that children under the age of three with founded instances of child abuse/neglect are referred to the appropriate agency for developmental screening.

The workgroup is composed of a Core Team and the larger Advisory Work Group. The Core Team includes representatives from CDEC, CDE, CDHS, and CDPHE, and is tasked with

planning and final decision making. The larger Advisory Workgroup includes partners from county child welfare agencies, local public-school partners, local early intervention service agencies, pediatricians, local public health agencies, and the CDHS Family Voice Council.

Previous activities include integrating the developmental screening referral process into Trails and creation of an online frequently asked questions document and webinar.

To improve Colorado's system for screening and referral for children birth through five (0-5) involved in child welfare system the workgroup is seeking to:

1. Identify where screening for children birth through five (0-5) involved in Colorado's child welfare system occurs.
2. Identify which entities have the capacity to provide screening.
3. Develop recommendations to ensure sufficient resources (i.e. funding, staffing, training) to support the effective implementation of current policy at the state and local level.
4. Build on existing capacity and systems strengths.
5. Identify, define, and agree upon standard referral and screening practices.
6. Disseminate and support standard referral and screening practices to be implemented.

Preschool Development funds will be used to collect data and evaluate the cost to implement community screening solutions in 2024. Additionally, the CAPTA & Beyond Advisory Group will make recommendations for state-level expectations for making and responding to referrals and developmental screening from child welfare. These would include the requirements and a menu of options for exceeding expectations. Considerations will also be made for how communities may implement these requirements.

Alignment with Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan

Colorado identifies and understands the specific risk factors that increase vulnerability to maltreatment and subsequent removal for children 5 and under, including: parental challenges (substance abuse, mental health issues, intimate partner violence), parental characteristics (young age, low income, low education), and social isolation child behavioral and developmental challenges, and lack of parenting knowledge and skills. Meeting the prevention needs of families with young children requires a suite of in-home parent programs in each county and tribal community across Colorado. The broader continuum of prevention services is enhanced through six Family First programs in Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan:

- **Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)** is a home visiting program that serves young, first-time, low-income mothers/birthing parents. NFP is currently available in all 64 Colorado counties as well as the two Tribes in Colorado.
- **SafeCare® Colorado** is an in-home behavioral parenting program that targets risk factors for maltreatment by teaching parent/caregiver skills in home safety, child health and parent-child/parent-infant interaction. This program is implemented in Colorado as a voluntary service for families to prevent entry or re-entry into the child welfare system. SafeCare® Colorado is available in 41 counties and one Tribe in Colroado.
- **Parents as Teachers (PAT)** is a home visiting parent education program that teaches new and expectant family's skills to promote positive child development and prevent child

maltreatment. PAT is currently available in 35 counties in Colorado as well as both recognized tribal communities.

- **Child First** is a two-generation mental health intervention offered in the home to serve young children and families who are most impacted by systemic and structural inequities. The practice aims to promote child and parent emotional health, improve child development and learning, enhance parent and child executive capacity, and prevent child maltreatment. Child First targets children from the prenatal stage through five years of age who have experienced disruption in secure attachment with their parent. Child First is available in 24 counties in Colorado.
- **Healthy Families America (HFA)** is a home visiting program for new and expectant families designed to build and strengthen nurturing parent-child relationships, promote healthy child development, and enhance family functioning. HFA is available in 4 counties in Colorado.
- **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)** is a parent coaching program that aims to decrease externalizing child behavior problems, increase positive parenting behaviors, and improve the parent-child relationship. PCIT targets families with children who are two to seven years of age and experiencing frequent, intense emotional and behavioral problems. PCIT is available via telehealth in all 64 Colorado counties and has sites across 10 counties in Colorado.

Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths (section 422(b)(19) of the Act)

To prevent child maltreatment fatalities, Colorado recognizes that there must be significant efforts to prevent child maltreatment. There is currently no ability to detect meaningful differences between child maltreatment and child maltreatment fatalities prior to their occurrence. Child maltreatment must be understood within a full ecological framework and recommendations from the CDHS Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) must then occur across all socio-ecological levels.

The ARD is responsible for managing the CFRT, which is composed of up to 20 multidisciplinary team members including the child ombudsman, medical professionals, law enforcement, child advocacy and public health, etc. The CFRT works closely with county and state human services agencies to ensure incidents that are egregious, near fatal, or fatal are documented correctly and timely into the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data is also used and cross-referenced with CFRT data to ensure accuracy in reporting for both CFRT and NCANDS purposes. CFRT reviews incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect determined to be a result of child maltreatment, when the child or family had previous involvement with the child welfare system within the last three years. The process includes a review of the incident, identification of contributing factors that may have led to the incident, the quality and sufficiency of service delivery from state and local agencies, and the families' prior involvement with the child welfare system. After considering the identified strengths, as well as systemic gaps and/or deficiencies, recommendations are put forth regarding policy and practice considerations that may help prevent future incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect, and/or strengthen the systems that provide direct

service delivery to children and families. Each incident reviewed by the CFRT results in a written report that is posted to the CDHS public notification website (with confidential information redacted)

The CDHS CFRT operates under relevant criteria for excellence in child death reviews, as published by the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention in 2018. Recent understandings have emerged on a national level that reviews should focus on system level changes and the CDHS CFRT has also come to understand the importance of adopting a systems model approach to case reviews; an approach that helps create a space to have vulnerable conversations with counties of human or social services about their practices and lessons learned from these tragedies, while keeping children and families at the center of the review. While child welfare is responsible for intervening with families when there is an allegation of child abuse or neglect and providing appropriate and necessary services to families to keep children safe, all systems and communities have a responsibility to help make families healthier and more resilient.

Reviews of fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents of child maltreatment have shown that prior concerns which were reported to child welfare initially appeared as episodic events; however, timelines leading up to a fatal, near fatal, and egregious incident of child maltreatment share a different story; they often illustrate complex families systems and relationships, layers of stressors, trauma histories, extensive risk factors, patterns of abuse or neglect, and patterns of caregiver behaviors, etc. Child welfare needs to have adequate time and staffing to be able to sort through, assess, and provide effective services to children and families. Additionally, previous family and community violence is a prevalent risk factor identified in the histories of the families involved in fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents of child maltreatment, and research indicates that violence is a predictor of future maltreatment. Families' histories often involve domestic violence, and it is evident that Colorado needs more resources for victims, and a system that holds perpetrators accountable for their actions. Please see "Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate" for information on efforts to enhance child welfare's response to families when domestic violence is an identified concern, in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this APSR.

In 2020, a Steering Committee was formed, with a vision to ensure each CFRT recommendation is prioritized, acted upon, and implemented in a timely manner to address known systemic gaps and prevent future child deaths. The Committee is responsible for providing high level strategic direction for each CFRT recommendation and oversees and supports implementation of recommendations. The relevant group to review and act on CFRT recommendations will vary and will often involve participants from multiple offices, agencies, or sectors. The current committee has 11 members from OCYF, ARD, CDEC, BHA, Community Partnerships, two county departments, and a representative from the CDPHE Child Maltreatment Prevention Unit.

The CDHS CFRT works closely with the CDPHE's CFPS team to consider data from each system and make joint recommendations based upon these findings. Each review process serves a different purpose, and each process is supported by the respective agency. The CFPS staff

members at the CDPHE serve as the two state appointees from the CDPHE to the CFRT, and the CFRT staff are involved with and participate in CFPS workgroups and state review meetings. Senate Bill 13-255 requires that the two child fatality review teams make joint recommendations. These recommendations are submitted in an annual legislative report to the Colorado General Assembly each July 1st. The most recent joint recommendation can be found on Page 38 of the CDHS CFRT 2022 Annual Report. Recommendations have ranged from promoting safe sleep practices, supporting policies and procedures that support quality and affordable childcare, to developing universal home visiting programs that would be accessible to all children and families. A guide about Colorado's Child Fatality Review and Prevention System[64] was created to explain the CDPHE and CFRT processes.

Statute requires that county departments provide notification to the CDHS of any suspicious incident of egregious abuse or neglect, near fatality, or fatality of a child due to abuse or neglect within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. County departments have worked diligently to comply with this requirement.

Please see the *Service Coordination* section of this CFSP for information on how the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program will be used to support counties and Tribes in developing Child Maltreatment Prevention Plans.

MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2)

The PSSF program in Colorado is managed through CDEC. The funding enables local community agencies and county departments of human/social services to provide services to families that focus on the following objectives:

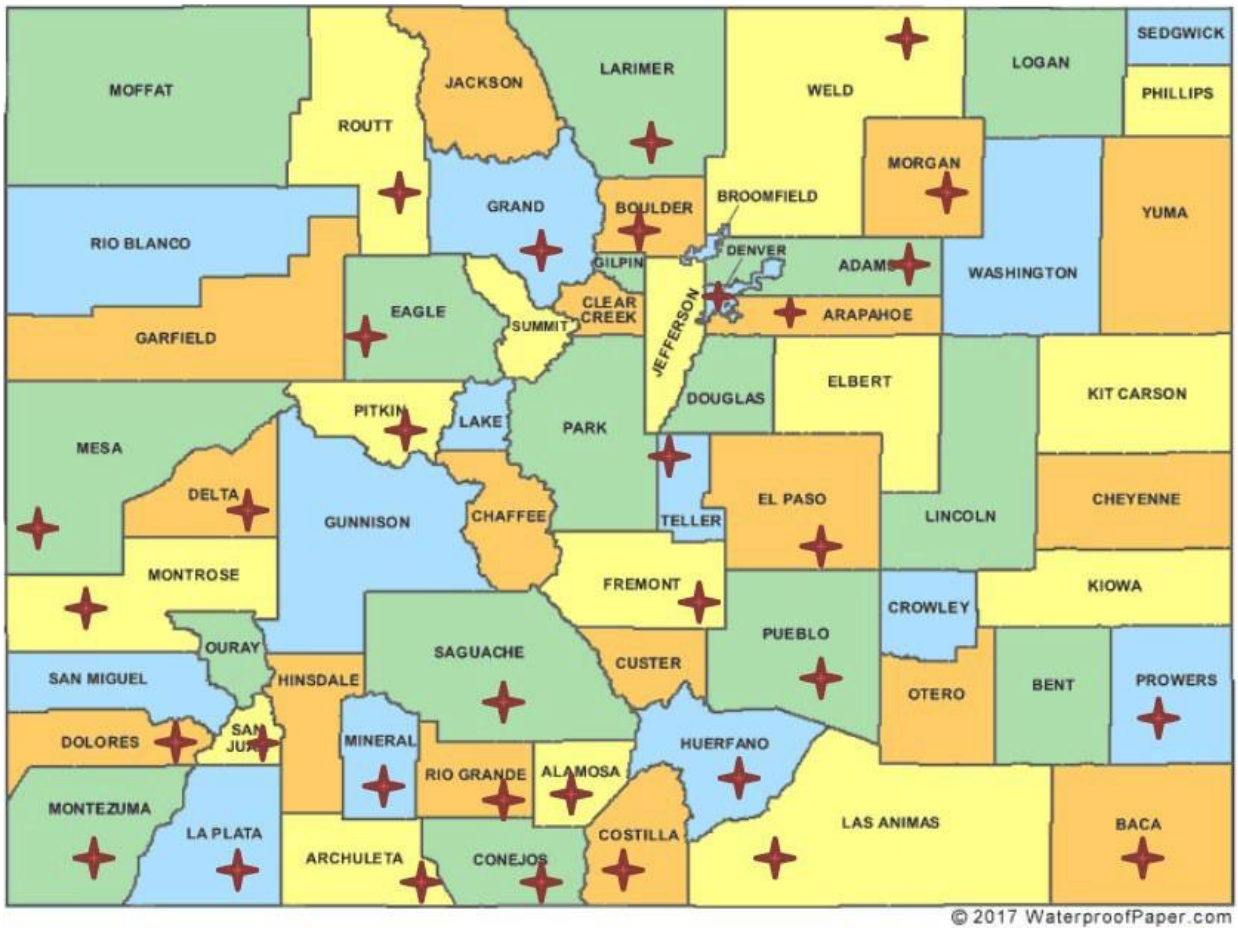
- Secure permanency and safety for children by providing support to families in a flexible, family-centered manner through collaborative community efforts.
- Enhance family support networks and services to increase well-being.
- Prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families.
- Reunite children with their parents or provide other permanent living arrangements through adoption or kin.
- Support preservation efforts for families in crisis who have children at risk for maltreatment or re-abuse.

PSSF aims to serve families through four service areas: family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services.

PSSF grants are currently awarded through five-year contracts, and grantees have completed the third year of the five years. Services within each program have not changed apart from shifting slightly to address staff vacancies and capacity challenges in programs.

[64] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M1gVOJFkW7sUczCwGyat3XpfHCOPMOyG/view

Colorado PSSF sites include local government agencies, private non-profit or not-for-profit community-based organizations, or tribal nations, with a focus on child safety, permanency, or child well-being. There are 22 PSSF contracted sites, and those sites serve 35 counties across Colorado. Sites include rural, frontier, and urban communities. The dispersed locations of PSSF sites allow for widespread access to PSSF services. The Family Strengthening Unit within the CDEC has family support programs that cover most of Colorado.



= PSSF Counties Served through 5-year contracts

Figure 2: Map of PSSF counties served through 5-year contracts.

Towards the end of the fiscal year there were three additional PSSF sites that were selected based on community need and established capacity to provide services fitting within the PSSF priorities that received PSSF resources on a short-term basis, three months. The sites included:

1. The Family Resource Center, Sterling, which serves Logan County. They received PSSF funds to support a Nurturing Parenting and Nurturing Fathers class addressing the service target areas of Family Support, Family Preservation, and Family Reunification.

2. The Prairie Family Center, which serves Kit Carson County. This site received PSSF funds to support Nurturing Parenting along with an experiential garden where parents and children could grow things together addressing the service target areas of Family Support, Family Preservation, and Family Reunification.
3. Raise the Future, which was funded to provide support in the Metro area for kinship navigation services and post permanency/adoption services. Including case management working with Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) strategies addressing the service target areas of Family Reunification and Adoption Support Services.

PSSF funds were also made available to the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes but neither tribe accessed those resources during the last year. The opportunity to support both tribes with PSSF funds has been an opportunity every year in Colorado.

Funded PSSF service priorities for PSSF for the 5-year contracts were selected prior to the release of the request for proposals. The decisions were based on evaluations of different curricula and best practices available, input from communities and parents, and service providers around the State. The service priorities for PSSF remain the same and all PSSF sites provide services within one or more of the following:

Service Priority	**Model(s) Allowed**	**Service Population/Category: (service areas: FS-Family Support, FP-Family Preservation, R-Reunification, A-Adoption)**
Intensive Family Case Management	1. High Fidelity Wraparound 2. Child First (limited to certain activities) 3. PSSF Case Management Guidelines	FS, FP, R, A
Family Engagement Meetings	Must identify the model to be used. Family Team Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making; Permanency Teaming, etc.	FP, R, A
Incredible Years Program	1. Parent Group 2. Dinosaur School	FS, FP, R, A
Parenting Education Models	1. Nurturing Parents/teen module 2. Parents as Teachers 3. Child First	FS, FP, R, A
Fatherhood Programs	1. Nurturing Fathers 2. Caring Dads 3. Inside Out Dads	FS, FP, R, A

Respite Care	Emergency or planned.	FS, FP, R, A
Colorado Community Response (CCR)	Prescribed Colorado model	FS
Post Adoption/Post Permanency	1. Adoption Navigator 2. PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship Guidelines 3. MAPP 4. NTDC	FP, R, A
Kinship Navigation	PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship guidelines	FS, FP, R, A
Parent Peer Support Programs/Mentoring Programs	1. Parent Cafes 2. Circle of Parents	FS, FP, R, A

Table 4: PSSF Service Priorities

Although some priorities have not been empirically validated, they are an integration of other curricula that have been evaluated and shown to have evidence or promising practice. PSSF provider agencies must implement assessment tools and surveys with fidelity, to assess families' progress and the effectiveness/appropriateness of the service offered. Tools used with the families guide discussions around family goal setting and engagement.

PSSF providers have had varying degrees of training in CQI and practice implementation processes. During the past year, the programs that have implemented the intensive case management PSSF guidelines and the Adoption/Post permanency/Kinship navigation PSSF guidelines have participated in a “community of practice” where there is discussion regarding meeting the requirements and implementation of program components. Programs exchange ideas and experiences about challenges, successes, and service implementation. Sites reported the time spent is meaningful and they learn from each other. PSSF programs have been working on an identified focus to improve practice.

Program participant data is collected to evaluate activities in achieving program goals and service delivery. Data is collected in the CDEC Salesforce database for most PSSF programs. There are a few outlying programs that are collecting data through a different method than Salesforce for various reasons.

Data reporting over the last year for PSSF improved and there have been changes in the method sites are documenting PSSF activities. The result is increased consistency and accuracy in the collected information. Current data is no longer inclusive of old cases that remained open for years where there had been no activity, the result could be that service numbers look different than in previous years, especially in each service priority.

There was no significant change in the overall number of families and individuals served.

In FFY 2023, Colorado PSSF programs served 1,397 individuals in 1,204 families. 1,753 services were delivered in total, and the PSSF service areas breakdown is as follows:

PSSF Service Area	Numbers Served FFY 2023
Family Support	1190
Family Preservation	304
Time-Limited Reunification	97
Adoption Promotion and Support	162
Total	1753

Table 5: PSSF Service Area Breakdown

Service Provided	Total Services
County Design Service	5
Family Team Decision Making	1
Incredible Years Parent Program	82
Intensive Case Management	523
Kinship Navigation	92
Mentoring Programs	43
Not Entered	59
Nurturing Fathers	16
Nurturing Parenting	128
Parent Peer Support Programs	524
PAT	51
Post Adoption Support	43
PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency Guidelines	33
Respite Care	153

Table 6: PSSF Service Priority Breakdown

In addition to the total numbers served listed above there are three agencies supported by PSSF that are not using the Salesforce data system to collect information. The agencies serve families for a shorter period or just on an emergency basis or are not able to enter the data for other reasons. These agencies track the families and services provided through PSSF resources. The information from those sites is reported below and is not included in the numbers provided in the above tables.

Agency	Service Provided	# of Services	# of unique families	Service Target Area
Safe Families for Children	Crisis Respite Care and one-time tangible needs	132 separate instances of	28 (not unique, not tracked)	50% Family Support; 50%

		respite care for families		Family Preservation
Lutheran Family Services	Crisis Respite	9067 hours of respite care provided	151	Mostly Family Preservation, but some in all four service areas
Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC)	Nurturing Parenting classes	90 separate instances of services.	10 Adults in NPP; 80 Adults for general family support services	Mostly Family Reunification; some Family Preservation

Table 7: Agencies using other data systems to track PSSF services provided to families.

Community Based Services

PSSF sites include agencies located in the community such as Family Resource Centers, a behavioral health center, and one program that is co-located in a high school. Other sites run out of local county departments of human/social services in partnership with a community provider or through prevention/family support teams within the county. All applicants were eligible to apply to provide services in any or all four service target areas: Family Support, Family Preservation, Time-Limited Reunification, and Adoption Promotion and Support Services. PSSF programs in Colorado are providing a higher rate of family support services than any other service target area.

Service Area Targeted Populations

Similar to prior reports, there is a discrepancy in the funds spent and services provided in the four service areas of Family Support, Family Preservation, Family Reunification, and Adoption Support. There is a much higher rate of services and funding spent in Family Support Services and Family Preservation Services. It is believed that due to additional stress families have been experiencing they have been reaching out more frequently and earlier for support. There is also an increased focus on prevention services which is provided more often in community-based settings. Sites are interacting with families earlier prior to reaching a crisis level. The level of spending in each service area is based on community needs and departmental resources for other families who may be receiving services for reunification and adoption through other funding streams. There is also a tendency to report the family as receiving family support services as they deem all services as being supportive to the family and it encompasses all work that is being done through PSSF.

Training and Conferences

The PSSF programs attend semi-annual, quarterly, or bi- annual conferences/meetings where advocates can share learning of best practices, get program updates, and connect through networking opportunities. Sites provided year end reporting that included highlighting program successes and identified challenges, like staffing retention, that help guide conversations at the meetings.

The PSSF sites also attended a CDEC grantee meeting this year that included participants from SafeCare® Colorado, Colorado Community Response, and the Family Support Services programs. Topics included family engagement strategies, growth mindset, Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and secondary trauma.

PSSF sites had access to the following training topics as well as any training that was approved to be relevant to programming during the past year:

- CQI
- Family Engagement
- Motivational Interviewing
- Economic Well Being
- Salesforce data system
- TBRI
- Nurturing Fathers
- Nurturing Parenting
- Reflective Supervision
- Responding to solicitation

Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants and Standards for Caseworker Visits

In FFY 2023, Colorado exceeded the federal goal of 95% by successfully completing 96% of required monthly caseworker visits with children. The state completed 89% of those visits in the child/youth's residence.

In FFY 2023, grant funding opportunities through MCV to increase the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and youth in OOH care and to promote workforce retention were not utilized by counties. Several counties reached out for information about the grant process, but no completed applications were received. Turnover remains high across the state of Colorado and counties continue to struggle with hiring. There was an increase in requests for secondary trauma services to county casework staff. MCV funds are blended and braided with other funding sources to ensure services are delivered to county partners as effectively as possible. The following table highlights several organizations that had received MCV Grant funds for FFY 2023:

County/Agency	Award	MCV Expenditures
THRIVE MSU	$29,044	Secondary Trauma Services
Alvarado Group	$69,648	Secondary Trauma Services
Illuminate Colorado	$31,944	Secondary trauma services, trauma informed yoga
Thomson Reuters	$52,593	CLEAR software for the following county departments of human services: Baca, Bent, Archuleta, Chaffee, Cheyenne, Clear Creek, Crowley, Elbert, Gilpin, Otero, Teller, Moffatt, Montezuma, Morgan, Park, Yuma, Washington, Fremont, Kit Carson, Phillips, Rio Blanco, Prowers, and Saguache
CSU/Summitstone	$5,500	Applied Research in Child Welfare (ARCH)

Table 8: MCV awards and expenditures.

Colorado's standards for the content and frequency of caseworker visits for children who are in foster care under the responsibility of the state, require that these visits are well-planned and focused on the safety, permanency and well-being of the children. State permanency specialists created templates for contact notes that include each area to be focused on in the visit. This helps guide newer workers, and helps to remind more seasoned workers, to address each item on the treatment plan during the visit. In this way, DCW continues to ensure that there is continued momentum to move cases toward reunification and case closure. Implementation of these templates have become a normal part of training and technical assistance provided to counties by county intermediaries and subject matter experts.

DCW also believes that access to resources to combat secondary trauma are critical for the retention of the workforce. These resources are offered from two community partners to all 64 counties in the state so that caseworkers can use services free of charge and ask for individually tailored services for themselves and their teams. The Alvarado Group provides 10 annual training days in 7 locations across the state to make this accessible for our rural and frontier counties. They provide cohort coaching and debriefing regarding critical incidents, processing the trauma of client's work, case review and planning support, secondary trauma relief work and ongoing support toward staff well-being. Regular office hours and leadership coaching are also included. The THRIVE program provides three-hour trainings on vicarious trauma, indicators of vicarious trauma, techniques to mitigate vicarious trauma, which can be infused throughout work and personal time and is low or no cost. These trainings are for caseworkers and supervisors as well as managers. The training for supervisors and managers emphasizes the differences between task, clinical, and vicarious trauma, supervision and how to target the supervisor's role in vicarious trauma, supervision. They also provide coaching and debriefing. During FFY 2023, research-based, trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness practices were also offered to caseworkers across the state.

For the next five years, DCW will continue to award grants to counties to purchase technology to make documentation of the required visits in the field more efficient for caseworkers and will also continue to award scholarships to caseworkers to attend valuable training from various professionals to enhance their skills and decision making and to improve the quality of caseworker visits.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (section 477 of the Act)

DCW supervises and oversees the Chafee program for the state. Each federal fiscal year, all counties and tribes within the state have the opportunity to complete the services plan to access Chafee funds allocated through CDHS. The application states the requirements to operate a Chafee program. Through this plan, the counties and Tribes identify how they or their contractors will implement the Chafee program. All counties implementing Chafee programs must also submit an end-of-year report summarizing service delivery. The DCW Chafee Program Coordinator provides scheduled technical assistance calls for additional guidance to counties as they are developing and implementing their annual plans. The oversight includes the approval and evaluation of the annual plans with collaboration of other youth serving entities, including other state departments and local nonprofits. DCW also facilitates quarterly meetings to provide technical assistance and peer-to-peer support and networking.

DCW continues to utilize the Former Foster Care Steering Committee report[65] that was published in 2019, as a template for the specific recommendations to improve services and outcomes for youth currently and formerly in foster care throughout the state. One of these recommendations is to ensure Chafee services are available statewide and accessible to all eligible youth. Since the state's federal award for Chafee has continued to decrease, DCW has supplemented with state funding through legislation that has created two additional programs. The Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood state grant program (State Grant Program, House Bill 21-1094) was created to increase the funding for existing Chafee programs as well as expanding services to areas of the state that don't currently have coverage. This expansion will continue during this planning period until there is statewide coverage for eligible youth. The Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program (Senate Bill 23-082) is currently being implemented by DCW and will provide up to 100 state housing vouchers to eligible youth throughout the state of Colorado. The bill provided additional funds specifically for case management services for youth who are eligible for this program as well as youth who are receiving Family Unification Program (FUP), Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), and other housing vouchers. Programs that are eligible to apply for case management funds are existing Chafee programs and/or State Grant Program recipients and can serve eligible youth ages 18 up to their 26th birthday. See Goal 4 in the *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision* section of this CFSP for details on how the activities designed as part of the Chafee oversight and coordination by DCW align with interventions set forth in the 2025-2029 CFSP.

The new Chafee model in Colorado will incorporate the Pathways to Success model of coach like engagement, which is currently in the final phase of the Children's Bureau's Youth at Risk of

[65] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gOeSeo5j6PV88dGoMYhL4XJwcThEM-Za

Homelessness grant (YARH). CDHS will continue to use the Chafee annual plan, technical assistance, Chafee Quarterly meetings, and trainings offered through CWTS to further strengthen the services and approaches of the Chafee program as well as providing guidance on how to integrate the new programs (State Grant Program and the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program) into existing Chafee programming.

Chafee integrates youth voice throughout service planning and delivery. In the annual plan for Chafee services, the county identifies how it integrates youth voice into these focus areas: education, employment, permanent connections, housing and health.

CDHS coordinates the quarterly Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COYLN) where staff members from Youth Advisory Boards (YAB) throughout the state develop strategies for sustaining their YAB and elevating youth voice. The COYLN and individual youth from YABs provide feedback to state and county departments on policy and practice issues that impact youth. CDHS, CDE the CDPHE, and the Colorado Judicial Branch regularly engage youth from COYLN.

The COYLN also represents foster youth voices with a conglomerate of 17 states via the Selfless Love Foundation based out of Florida. The COYLN members participate in the national Think Tank discussions as well as the Foster Youth Voice Month activities in November.

The YABs provide input in evaluating annual Chafee plans and provide advocacy and testimony for legislation. The YABs are listed below:

- Metro Youth Alliance (encompassing Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties as well as youth representatives of the Division of Youth Services).
- Elevating Connections Youth Council
- Boulder County Youth Advisory Board
- Youth MOVE CO!
- Fostering Great Ideas!
- LEAP (Lived Experience Action Panel)[66]
- Prowers County Youth Advisory Board
- The Pathways to Success project maintain an active group of youth advisors and a youth partner is on the Pathways project management team. Youth advisors who are engaged in work with CDHS receive compensation for their contributions, either through gift cards or cash.

The Chafee program integrates the principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD) throughout the planning and implementing process, with a focus on respecting youth as the experts in their lives. The Chafee workers create a collaborative relationship with the youth to achieve their goals. The Chafee program builds on the strengths of the youth and supports them to overcome any barriers. Youth participate in the Chafee program voluntarily and the workers rely on the positive relationships they have forged with the youth.

[66] https://coloradochildrep.org/about/leap/

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) information is sent out to a broad audience. The communication stream uses the CDHS website, newsletters and blogs to provide information to the courts, foster parents, child placement agencies and other community members. CDHS will continue to use the website and blog posts to summarize the data and outcomes while raising awareness of how services are preparing youth in foster care for adulthood. DCW staff will present the NYTD outcomes data at various conferences throughout the state. Specifically, the Chafee Program Coordinator presents at the annual Think Big Conference, which is organized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This population is a focus area for WIOA programs throughout the state.

NYTD data will also be presented at Youth Services and Chafee quarterly meetings as well as YABs. The Former Foster Care Steering Committee used NYTD data to identify needs of youth self-identified in their survey responses. NYTD data will be used to track and measure the effectiveness of the recommendations included in the report. CDHS will work with CWTS to integrate more information about NYTD into the new caseworker training. This will ensure that new caseworkers understand the importance of NYTD and how it can be used to improve services for youth in foster care.

CDHS continues to collaborate with other agencies and community partners to share data and better locate youth who are scheduled to complete the NYTD survey. CDHS coordinates with partners who have separate information systems to help locate youth. CDHS also coordinates internally across all programs to ensure that all eligible youth are located. CDHS leans heavily on the local caseworkers and the Chafee workers who have a relationship with the young people who are eligible for the surveys and utilizing youth feedback CDHS has increased the incentive amounts to engage youth in completing the survey. CDHS will continue to utilize the newly implemented BHN Rewards[67] collaboration to provide electronic gift cards to youth who have completed the survey.

The NYTD Review kickoff, a planning call for the full NYTD review team (state and federal), was held in January 2024, and the official onsite visit from the ACYF took place from June 24th to June 28th, 2024. CDHS will utilize the feedback that it receives from the review through the PIP process to make the necessary changes to the implementation of the NYTD process.

Trails Modernization efforts are still in process. A new NYTD platform will be developed and streamlined for youth, caseworkers, and Chafee coordinators. This new functionality has not been released yet, so the results from the changes cannot be evaluated yet. DCW staff continue to work with the Colorado Office of Information Technology to successfully implement the new survey instrument and ensure that it has interoperability with the Trails system and will not cause data quality issues with DCW streamlined a new incentive payment process for youth participants

[67] https://www.bhnrewards.com/

called BHN Rewards. Youth participants can select e-gift cards from Amazon, Target, Walmart, and King Soopers after survey completion.

DCW is also in the process of expanding the organizations that it collaborates and creates formalized agreements with. DCW will include language that will enable us to utilize those connections in outreaching youth for the purposes of NYTD as well as ensuring youth are linked with eligible services.

Serving Youth Across the State

Since the state's federal award for Chafee has continued to decrease, DCW has supplemented with state funding through legislation that has created two additional programs. The Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood state grant program (House Bill 21-1094) was created to increase the funding for existing Chafee programs as well as expanding services to areas of the state that don't currently have coverage. This expansion will continue during this planning period until there is statewide coverage for eligible youth. The Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program (Senate Bill 23-082) is currently being implemented by DCW and will provide up to 100 state housing vouchers to eligible youth throughout the state of Colorado. The bill provided additional funds specifically for case management services for youth who are eligible for this program as well as youth who are receiving Family Unification Program (FUP), Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), and other housing vouchers. Programs that are eligible to apply for case management funds are existing Chafee programs and/or State Grant Program recipients and can serve eligible youth ages 18 up to their 26th birthday.

The DCW collaborates with HCPF to ensure medical coverage is provided to individuals who are under the age of 26 and were in foster care on or after their 18th birthday. Now that the state is consistently meeting its response rates, the data that is obtained through the NYTD process is more meaningful. CDHS will use the data that is obtained through NYTD to help county departments of human/social services, Chafee programs, and stakeholders evaluate their services and improve programming. Additional data sources will focus on the secondary academic achievement of youth currently and formerly in foster care. CDHS is collaborating closely with the CDE to implement the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Part of this collaboration is obtaining annual data on the graduation rates for students in foster care. That data is broken down into different school districts and provides a statewide comparison of the graduation rate of the general population to that of the foster care population.

Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence (section 477(b)(2)(C) of the Act).

Through the state's implementation of the Division X funding and changes DCW became aware of the ongoing struggles former foster youth were experiencing across the state. The passage of House Bill 21-1094 provided the state the ability to implement the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) program which is the state's version of extended foster care and re-entry. As of this writing 628 have participated in this program since it was launched. This has enabled county departments

to have access to additional resources in supporting youth as they transition to adulthood. The local Chafee programs can provide supplemental services to FYiT and/or an alternative for youth who do not wish to participate in the program.

Colorado is also implementing the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program (Senate Bill 23-082) that provides up to 100 state housing vouchers along with case management services for youth who are 18 up to their 26th birthday. The case management will be provided through the local Chafee and/or FYiT state grant program. The legislation also allows the programs to assist youth in other housing voucher programs (FUP and FYI). This ensures that supportive services can be provided for a longer period of time if needed for eligible youth.

Chafee programs apply for funding on an annual basis and within that application they identify which services they will provide for different populations. Since the state expanded eligibility for the program as wide as possible to accommodate eligible youth the state implemented service prioritization for youth that are most at-risk of homelessness which means prioritizing older youth that are no longer eligible for FYiT services.

Colorado coordinates regularly with Independent Living Coordinators from other states to verify foster care experience and then link youth with the local program. Youth sometimes reach out to staff members at DCW and then they are linked with a local Chafee program or sometimes the youth connect with the local program and DCW staff assist in the outreach to other states. This goes for youth who are applying for the Education and Training Voucher Program as well.

Collaborating with Other Private and Public Agencies (section 477(b)(2)(D) of the Act)

On a county level, the individual Chafee programs form collaborations with local businesses, youth serving nonprofits, runaway and homeless youth providers and other state agencies. DCW staff continue to participate in the following statewide collaborations:

1. Well-Being Outcome Area Partnerships
    - Under 26 Work Group
        - A sub-committee of the Behavioral Health Transformation Council with a mission to develop an effective, culturally responsive, community-based, integrated and accessible system of care for transition-age youth and young adults, ages 14 to 25.
    - Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (COSHI)
        - COSHI provides access to training in comprehensive sexual health curricula to the state and will continue to be utilized by Chafee and county staff.
2. Permanency Outcome Area Partnerships
    - Permanency Task Group, a work group of county and state representatives focused on improving permanency outcomes for youth.
3. Housing Outcome Area Partnerships
    - Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Advisory Board.

        - The board was created through legislation (House Bill 21-1094) to guide decisions on the creation of the Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood state grant program and more recently has been utilized to provide recommendations on the implementation of Senate Bill 23-082 programming. The board needs to include the following members:
            - 2 Directors of county departments of human/social services (or their designees)
            - 2 Directors of Runaway and Homeless Youth providers (or their designees)
            - 2 Youth who have received Chafee services in the past
            - 1 CDHS employee who administers the Chafee program
            - 1 Managing Director of the Colorado Workforce Development Council or their Designee.
            - The Executive Director of the Department of Higher Education or their designee.
    - Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth (ACHY)
        - Strategic planning and action body focusing on preventing and addressing youth homelessness in Colorado. Committee members advise the Office of Homeless Youth Services and work collaboratively to carry out Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan activities.
    - Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, Family Unification Program (FUP) for youth formerly in foster care.
4. Education Outcome Area Partnerships
    - My Colorado Journey (Formerly College in Colorado)
        - My Colorado Journey is a key partner to improving educational outcomes for youth, with their comprehensive package of web-based tools and supports that assist youth to prepare for and navigate college.
    - Colorado Department of Education
        - The Foster Care Education Coordinator position was created through a joint venture from CDHS and CDE to implement the requirements around Every Student Succeeds Act and reduces the barriers that youth in foster care experience in secondary education.
5. Employment Outcome Area Partnerships
    - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)/Workforce Centers/Department of Labor and Employment
        - The Chafee program is working with the Department of Labor and Employment to increase usage of WIOA resources to support transition-age youth. This includes increased attention on youth with foster care involvement who access WIOA services.
    - State Youth Council
        - Focuses on Colorado's youth initiatives and how they can best access training, education and workforce assistance through the workforce development system. This group works to connect local youth councils to

the resources necessary to help youth find meaningful employment and gain the experience necessary to compete in Colorado's global economy.

In January 2023, eligibility for Former Foster Care Medicaid was expanded to include youth who would otherwise be eligible but had been in care under the jurisdiction of another state. DCW and HCPF worked together during 2022 to ensure that there is a process in place for those newly eligible youth to access Medicaid benefits. HCPF issued guidance to counties who issue those benefits via HCPF OM 23-010[68] on January 1, 2023. DCW in coordination with HCPF also sent out a follow-up informational memorandum IM-CW-2024-0012[69] to provide additional clarification on the new requirements for Former Foster Care Youth access to Medicaid services. The Colorado State Independent Living Coordinator coordinates with other state's Independent Living Coordinators to confirm eligibility and ensure that Chafee workers are aware that youth moving to other states are eligible for this benefit.

The Jefferson County Chafee program was one of the first locations in the nation to implement the new program and has become a resource for other programs that are wanting to implement the vouchers. The number of programs and counties providing FYI vouchers have steadily increased. DCW will continue to provide technical assistance and guidance to county programs that would like to integrate the FYI vouchers into their menu of services.

DCW staff have worked to collaborate with the Division of Housing (DOH) through the Department of Local Affairs and new staff at DOH and have met individually to talk about how the two teams can best support each other. This has enabled the DOH partners to provide technical assistance and guidance around pertinent housing resources for eligible youth. DOH presented at the Chafee quarterly meeting in January 2022 and shared information about resources and programs available for youth. It was also an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Chafee workers throughout the state.

Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services (section 477(b)(2)(E) of the Act)

In FFY 2023, 779 youth were served through the Chafee program. In accordance with the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Section 477 (42 U.S.C. 677) (a) of the Social Security Act, Colorado defines eligible youth as those in either the child welfare or youth services systems (DYS), who are one of the following:

Youth who are currently between the ages of 14 and 23, and:

- Youth who experienced foster care after their 14th birthday; or
- Age 16 to 21 who entered adoption assistance or relative guardianship assistance on or after their 16th birthday.

[68] https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/HCPF%20OM%2023-010%20Out%20of%20State%20Former%20Foster%20Care%20Youth%20Guidance.pdf
[69] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-IkWUXKBiunWzS03ASEhIxXcNFTIPzyc/view

CDHS is updating the rules that dictate Chafee services in the state to expand to better align with the eligibility criteria in Family First.

Cooperation in National Evaluations (section 477(b)(2)(F) of the Act)

Colorado will cooperate in any federal national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of Chafee.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program (section 477(i) of the Act)

Colorado's Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program supports self-sufficiency by providing financial support, coaching and guidance to youth pursuing post-secondary educational goals through accredited colleges, universities or career and technical schools. For FFY 2022 DCW created an interagency agreement with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) to administer the ETV program. This was done to ensure that ETV can be utilized for eligible youth alongside state funding that was created through Senate Bill 22-008. Colorado continues to increase efforts to connect youth receiving ETV support with local Chafee programs and school or community-based resources. CDHE has access to four Foster Youth Navigators that support and advocate for youth who are eligible for the ETV and FosterEd programs in the state.

ETV eligibility mirrors that of the Chafee program, which includes:

- Youth who experienced foster care after their 14th birthday; or
- Youth aged 16 to 21 who entered adoption assistance or relative guardianship assistance on or after their 16th birthday.

Specific goals for the ETV program include:

- Increase the awareness of the ETV program throughout the state as well provide education around the updated eligibility criteria for the program.
- Coordinate the utilization of the ETV funds with other financial assistance that youth currently and formerly in foster care are eligible for to stretch the ETV funds further.
- Increase the retention of ETV recipients between school years and ultimately improve the rate of postsecondary degree completion.

Prior to awarding ETV funding, the program confirms the student's enrollment status to see if they are part- or full-time students. The amount of aid they are receiving from all other sources and college's published cost of attendance are compared to confirm that the ETV award and other dollars do not exceed the cost of attendance. Through a two step-process, students' financial aid award package and their budget for the semester are reviewed to calculate the amount of federal funding they are receiving and if they are receiving a federal benefit service. This review is done prior to ETV funding being allocated each semester. The ETV program and the many public and

private scholarships and grants, as well as campus-based programs coordinate outreach, so youth are aware of all the resources available to them. To protect students' privacy ETV will forward targeted messages to students advising them of opportunities at their college, in their county, etc.

CDHS is and will continue to coordinate with CDHE to administer the ETV program as well as the FosterEd program. The two departments have bi-weekly meetings to provide updates on the programs and problem solve how to best support the implementation of the programs. CDHS staff assist in troubleshooting difficult eligibility decisions and helping youth from other states that are eligible for ETV navigate the application process.

Over the next five years, training will be provided for counties, Chafee caseworkers, CASAs, workforce center staff, higher education staff and the Colorado State Foster Parent Association that covers:

- Positive Youth Development (PYD),
- Trauma informed care,
- Permanency and Chafee/ETV Wraparound Supports, and
- NYTD.

Youth Voice/Youth Advisory Boards, Permanency, and Normalcy Chafee funding has been utilized to integrate more youth focused classes into the Child Welfare Training System (CWTS). The trainings provide tailored approaches for Chafee workers, county caseworkers and foster parents. The five curricula available are:

- Adolescents: The 411!
- Supporting Youth in Achieving Permanency
- Motivating Positive Outcomes with Adolescents
- Power Outage
- Education Stability

DCW plans to update the curricula to ensure youth voice is integrated into the trainings in a more meaningful way. DCW will promote the trainings to the state workforce. DCW will continue to hold quarterly meetings to provide targeted technical assistance and training pertaining to youth in and formerly in foster care.

Consultation with Tribes (section 477(b)(3)(G) of the Act)

CDHS representatives have annual Tribal Consultations with Tribal leadership of both the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes. CDHS takes this opportunity to provide information on many programs but specifically about the Chafee and ETV programs. DCW staff will continue to coordinate with CDHS's Tribal liaison to connect with the tribal representatives about the application process for accessing Chafee funding and ensuring that the tribes know about the application process for ETV. The La Plata County Chafee program covers both tribes to ensure that their eligible youth have access to services while the tribal department of human services builds capacity to take on their own program.

Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes

CDHS had an in-person consultation with the Southern Ute Tribal Council on October 25, 2023, at the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum in Ignacio, CO. The Ute Mountain Ute Council members that attended were Chairman Melvin J. Baker, Treasurer Marvin Pinnecoose, Council member Linda Baker, and Council member Dr. Stacey Oberly. SUIT Tribal Services Director Shannon Eastwood and Executive Director Kathryn Redhorse with CCIA also attended. CDHS was represented by Kevin Neimond (Chief Policy & Communications Officer), Yolanda Webb (Office of Adult, Aging & Disability Services), Minna Castillo (Executive Director of Community Partnerships), Shelley Banker (Office of Economic Security), and Phillip Gover (Tribal Affairs Specialist, Community Partnerships). The agenda of the consultation included presentations of all CDHS programs currently utilized by the SUIT and included a printed document of one-page descriptions for each member at the meeting. The presentations allowed for questions and answers in a free flow format during the presentations. The presentations were followed by a review of action items from the previous year's consultation. The review included open discussion and questions and answers regarding the action items. There was also an open discussion of any areas of interest or concern to the SUIT Tribal Council. Following the open discussion, a new set of action items were created based on the complete consultation and placed in a log to capture the information, which was subsequently emailed back to the consultation attendees.

The CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist, in collaboration with the Southern Ute Tribe’s Tribal Services Director, Shannon Eastwood, has set a weekly online standing meeting to update and implement the consultation action items log. The meetings may also include additional CDHS staff implementing the action log items. In addition to the online weekly meetings, the Tribal Affairs Specialist makes monthly in-person visits to the SUIT Tribal Services department, weather permitting. The partnership of the weekly action items review will lead to creating deeper specific item discussions for future consultations and a year-round continuous review and relationship.

The CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist has also reached out to the UMUT, regarding an in-person consultation. In that effort, the Tribal Affairs appeared in-person at the UMUT Tribal Council scoping meetings. The UMUT Social Services Director, Saleena Boyington, and the Tribal Affairs Specialist also have set weekly online standing meetings. A process similar to the one utilized with SUIT is being implemented and will include an action log review once a consultation occurs. The Tribal Affairs Specialist will communicate updates on a regular basis, including ongoing opportunities to provide feedback and input for the CFSP and subsequent APSRs.

DCW has solicited feedback and input on the CFSP through CDHS’s Tribal Affairs Specialist, and met with the director of the SUIT Tribal Services, Shannon Eastwood, in March 2024 to discuss the importance of the CFSP and APSR and identify opportunities for ongoing engagement and collaboration in the implementation and assessment of the 2025-2029 CFSP. This also included

ensuring that tribal leaders have updated copies of the 2020-2024 CFSP, and all APSRs related to that CFSP cycle.

A draft of the APSR and CFSP was sent to the two Tribes in Colorado for their feedback. The CFSP and the final APSR will be shared with the SUIT and the UMUT after submission via email.

CDHS remains in active discussions with SUIT and UMUT to create a regularly scheduled meeting to coordinate and collaborate on an ongoing basis. There are no anticipated barriers at this time. These discussions will include the implementation and assessment of CFSP interventions and APSR updates. Meeting at a regular interval with the consultation team ensures continuity in collaboration and communication between CDHS and the Tribes, through events such as election cycles, as members of the consultation team may not be appointed positions.

All training through CWTS is open to staff of the Tribes' departments of human/social services. Additionally, CDHS reimburses all travel expenses to support tribal staff's access to these trainings. CDHS continues to work with the Tribes to reduce barriers to receiving further training from CWTS.

DCW awards $950,000 to SUIT and UMUT through four-year child welfare contracts that are renewed annually. The eligibility requirements have been updated to allow the Tribes the flexibility to utilize the funds for both out-of-home placements, but also in-home services. This flexibility supports the tribal human/social service agencies with maintaining children/youth in their home while allowing for the provision of child welfare services. SUIT and UMUT both have separate contracts with CDHS to access this funding. The CDHS Tribal Liaison and CDHS Indian Child Welfare Specialist continue to field questions the staff of both Tribes have about allowable expenditures. Both Tribes are billing CDHS for prevention and intervention services related to child welfare, including:

1. Focus on the family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and/or protect the child/youth,
2. Prevent out-of-home placement of the child/youth,
3. Return children/youth in placement to their own home,
4. Unite children/youth with their permanent families,
5. Promote the stability of children and youth in their own homes, and
6. Protect children/youth from neglect and harm.

Additional funding sources from CDHS and CDEC include:

Name of Funding Source	Allowable Expenses	Amount
Domestic violence funding	Can use for printing community awareness materials, training domestic violence staff, and other uses upon request. In addition, the domestic violence program and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe established an agreement in July of 2023 that provides SUIT with $35,000 for flexible financial assistance. The Tribal Victim Services team has set up internal protocols and their advocates have begun using the funds to meet the safety and stability needs of domestic and sexual violence survivors.	$5,000 for materials as needed. $35,000 via a contract agreement.
Core Services Funding	Provides funding for resources and support to families when children/youth are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement, in need of services to return home, or to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible.	$25,000 each state fiscal year.
Tony Grampsas Youth Services	Project Venture (through Southern Colorado Community Action Agency) is an outdoor, adventure-based experiential learning program designed to promote the positive and holistic growth of Ignacio middle school youth. The program provides youth with a culturally based opportunity to experience a wide variety of outdoor recreation adventures. The Boys & Girls Club Experience (through Boys & Girls Club of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, a sub-grantee of the Boys & Girls Clubs in Colorado) provides out of school time programming to engage and empower youth in a safe and nurturing environment that guides each young person on their path to developing good character, respect of culture, diversity, academic excellence and development of a healthy mind, body and spirit.	$100,000.00. $24,707.55.
SafeCare® Colorado (SCC)	To implement SafeCare® Colorado, which is a flexible, free, and voluntary home visiting parent support program for parents and caregivers with children ages five and under who need extra support	$50,000 available each year.

	to keep their families safe and healthy. SafeCare® Colorado's goal is to increase parenting skills and to prevent families from entering or re-entering the child welfare system. SafeCare® Colorado offers one of the shortest parent support programs in the state – completing the entire program typically takes 18-20 weekly visits (about 4-6 months). SafeCare® Colorado is delivered by trained parent support providers, who use a proven process to help at-risk parents and caregivers build on their existing skills in three topics, including home safety, child health and parent-child interactions.	
Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)	Family Support, Family Preservation, Time-limited Reunification, Adoption Promotion and Support	$24,999.00 available each state fiscal year.

Table 9: Programs and services available to Colorado Tribes, per funding source.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

There are three types of jurisdictions in ICWA cases:

- Exclusive jurisdiction. Tribal courts have exclusive jurisdiction over a proceeding if the child resides or is domiciled on tribal land or if the child is a ward of a tribal court.
- Concurrent jurisdiction. If the child does not live on tribal land and is not a ward of a tribal court, the case falls under ICWA's concurrent jurisdiction provisions. The parent or the tribe may request transfer to tribal court.
- Emergency jurisdiction. Though emergency and dependency phases are not clearly distinct, ICWA treats emergency situations as separate proceedings. The emergency proceeding ends when a continued custody proceeding is initiated, the child is physically returned, or the case is transferred to tribal court.

A transfer to tribal court can be requested by any of the following:

- Parent
- Indian custodian
- Child's tribe

Volume 7 Rules in the Code of Colorado Regulations provide explicit guidance to state and tribal jurisdiction over child custody proceedings[70]. 7.309.1 K provides the statutory definition of Tribal Court, 7.309.31 B. 8 outlines the Tribe's right to intervene at any time in a state-court proceeding for the foster care placement or termination of parental rights to an Indian child, and 7.309.4

[70] https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/DisplayRule.do?action=ruleinfo&ruleId=2823&deptID=9

outlines the transfer of jurisdiction from state court to tribal court, and requirements during the transfer.

To comply with ICWA, DCW has taken various measures to monitor and work to increase compliance. DCW's ICWA Specialist holds regular office hours available to all counties and community partners. The purpose of ICWA office hours is to provide a space with the opportunity to discuss all areas of ICWA such as providing support or guidance or to discuss what outreach, resources, and training opportunities for counties might look like to better help support counties. There has been an increase in the number of participants that show up for these ICWA office hours which has increased the opportunity to have further conversations with counties regarding their individual practice with ICWA cases and what support might be needed. By working individually with counties regarding their ICWA practices, the goal is to build a coalition of strong subject matter experts across Colorado.

In September 2022, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) included an update to increase the record of data for ICWA components. The importance of this update was a major change to the functionality of ICWA sections including an ICWA determinations panel, family inquiry and ICWA judicial determinations, and ICWA Tribal correspondence. This change will ultimately provide better data reporting for families involved in Child Welfare that identify as having American Indian/ Alaska Native ancestry.

Compliance with ICWA can be individualized per each county as well as monitored across the state. The ARD is responsible for the federally required case review system and quarterly reports track the results of compliance in various areas pertaining to ICWA. The intent of this area of the ARD screening process is to determine if specific ICWA requirements have been met for a child in care, so that later permanency is not delayed for the child. Due to the pandemic, there was approximately a three-year gap in monitoring of ICWA compliance as ARD was unable to conduct in-person reviews. March 2020 was the last report that included ICWA reviews prior to the pandemic which showed an overall statewide compliance being relatively low at 23.3%. Prior to ARD resuming in-person reviews, the tool that is utilized to complete reviews with each county was adjusted to reflect areas that counties do not have control over such as the response that is received back from Tribes which heavily impacted compliance to ICWA. Over the past year, in-person reviews have resumed and statewide ICWA compliance has varied between each quarter but typically shows county performance between 75-90%. This will be monitored and reported in future APSRs.

DCW's ICWA Specialist has taken various avenues to understand each county's practice for ICWA cases including meeting with counties to discuss their individual practice in ICWA cases. Part of efforts to help increase compliance across Colorado and to create more consistent practice for all ICWA cases, an ICWA Supplemental Tool was developed and approved to distribute to

counties[71]. The Supplemental Tool includes essentially a checklist of areas that must be completed during an ICWA case as well as timelines for each step. This tool is also helpful to utilize as a reminder for important areas such as ICWA preferred placement preferences and helpful avenues for counties to pursue in terms of placements.

Lastly, DCW's ICWA Specialist and In-home Permanency Specialist have put together a project with the intent of requesting to ask for additional court information from judicial court partners via the Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Act (SANCA). Currently, Colorado does not receive data from judicial partners informing which American Indian/ Alaska Native families are involved in the judicial court system via a dependency and neglect court case. The data points requested to be added to the SANCA agreement will help better inform child welfare practice by monitoring active efforts to achieve permanency, Tribal involvement/partnership, and strengthening family engagement of American Indian/ Alaska Native Families. This project and proposal are in process, however, should this proposal be approved, the data will be used to track and monitor how many ICWA cases are open in Colorado at any particular time and allow counties to verify and assure information is correct pertaining to an open dependency and neglect case. Above all, the goal is to give families a voice, identify any barriers and/or strengthen processes to enhance practice.

71 https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TYSTp5rhlB1H401zN9qS0zuvn7U3fpscHirFsI_nVQU/edit#gid=0

Targeted Plans

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Foster care programs may be administered by county departments and licensed child placement agencies (CPAs) in Colorado. The combined certification of foster care homes by county departments and CPAs, is necessary to ensure a sufficient number of appropriate and skilled foster homes (see "Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention" in the *Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this CFSP). Currently, county departments are the entities that primarily certify kinship foster care homes, however this may be changing with new state legislation that allows CPAs to certify this type of foster care without first receiving a county department request or approval to do so. Further information will be provided in future APSRs.

There are approximately 35 CPAs across Colorado that primarily provide foster care home services for county departments. The county departments contract with CPAs when they need a foster care home, if the county department doesn't have one available that can meet the needs of the child/youth, or their foster care homes are at capacity. There are also 10 private adoption CPAs that are not required to have a diligent recruitment plan (providing non-public inter-country and non-public adoptions). Of 64 county departments, there are approximately six county departments that contract solely with child placement agencies when a foster care home placement is needed rather than administering their own foster care programs. Those county departments are mainly located on the western slope of the state. In the southeast, a designated county department staff certifies foster homes on behalf of five neighboring county departments. In the Denver metro area, three large county departments have a combined foster care program. The county department and CPA diligent recruitment plans are on a two-year cycle with the new plans beginning June 2024-June 2026. This allows the agencies time to evaluate and make improvements as needed during the two-year timeframe.

DCW will work with the National Center for Diligent Recruitment (NCDR) for at least the first two years of the plan to develop a sustainable and flexible five-year Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan. The major goals include:

- Exploration of the impact of a kinship-centered system,
- Customer service and services based on the voice of foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers, and,
- A foster care system with sufficient placement resources to meet the needs of children/youth in care that promote placement stability and timely permanency.

The guiding principles for this plan include:

- Use the diverse learning of those who provide out-of-home care and those who have been in out-of-home care to shape outcomes,

- Be adaptable to adjusting when conditions and circumstances change, while maintaining the integrity of the plan,
- Partner to develop mutual agreement and support for strategies for desired change, and,
- Promote creativity and innovation to accomplish the work.

DCW is also exploring a collaboration with the National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services, an organization that is also affiliated with the NCDR. The National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services works with States, Tribes, and Territories to improve and enhance the collaboration between the child welfare and mental health systems and to improve mental health outcomes for children and families that experience the child welfare system.

Direct diligent recruitment occurs primarily by the county departments and CPAs to promote their agencies' goals. There are two state staff that have broad responsibilities for recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents. Their role is to be the connectors for diligent recruitment with the county departments and CPAs in a peer-to-peer model to support interagency networking.

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment plan will continue strategies that have been useful, explore and/or adopt additional strategies to support federal and state priorities, and ensure a focus on promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). For example, storytelling tools, blogs, and videos highlighting Colorado foster parents add perspective for viewers on the CO4Kids website. Digital advertising campaigns specific to the LGBTQIA2S+, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latinx, African American and Spanish speaking communities will also continue to highlight the need for foster and adoptive parents that reflect the communities from which children/youth in foster care are removed. DCW will continue work with a contractor to promote the Colorado Heart Gallery and the Rapid Response Team through AdoptUSKids. The CO4Kids website houses the messaging for foster care and adoption, community partners, as well as resources such as a foster care/adoption inquiry form and the application to provide care to children/youth. There will be increased engagement with young people who are in or have been in foster care to gather information about their experiences, and recommendations for improvements.

Messaging will highlight state and national visions about positive outcomes for placement stability, timely permanency and well-being. State efforts will support work related to county departments and CPAs' expansion of therapeutic and treatment foster care to meet the more intensive behavioral and mental health acuity levels experienced by many children/youth that must be served in foster care homes. There will also be messaging to increase availability of respite foster care homes. The recruitment strategies will be targeted to needing individuals who can meet the needs of children/youth with complex needs, affirming foster and adoptive parents for children/youth that identify as LGBTQAI2S+, Spanish speaking applicants, and foster parents from BIPOC communities.

Kinship-Centered Practice

In the first two years of the plan, there will be extensive exploration of the impact of kinship-centered practice and trends that may emerge. This will include seeking feedback from non-certified kinship and kinship foster parents about changes in practice and their needs. Exploration will also include the effects on traditional foster parents regarding their roles, their needs, and rate of retention. The plan will include the exploration of organizational culture (i.e. customer service) and factors that are identified by caregivers as the most impactful for the retention and support for foster parents (traditional, kinship foster care, treatment, and therapeutic foster parents) and adoptive parents. This feedback loop will guide next steps to make recommended adjustments.
The changes in practice will impact the preparation needed for prospective adoptive, foster, as well as relatives/kinship caregivers. Their feedback will be explored through forums and surveys regarding what they wished they had known and what/how others could benefit from this experience. This will be valuable in providing training that meets their needs. For example, key concepts could mean having a deeper understanding of trauma on the children/youth in their care, identifying past trauma of the caregiver, family dynamics and loyalty, parenting styles, grief and a sense of responsibility, and how to ask for help without fear, etc.

The roles of traditional foster parents need to be redefined and focus more on modeling, mentoring, supporting permanency, and exploring post-permanency relationships. Feedback and recommendations will be gathered from foster, kinship foster, and adoptive parents, as well as non-certified kinship caregivers about the supports that help them to be successful. This will guide county departments, community partners, and the state in identifying, developing/adjusting, and providing the right array of services and supports, while driving positive outcomes in permanency, placement stability for the children/youth in foster care.

Family Search and Engagement

To support family search and engagement, DCW will continue to offer access to mid-size and small county departments to an online search system to identify and locate relatives and others connected to children/youth for possible support, placement, and/or permanency. This is provided when it isn't feasible for the county department to contract for these services, generally due to a low rate of removals. Technical assistance will be provided to county departments to promote and support the intent and spirit of family search and engagement efforts in casework practice.

Family search and engagement also facilitates cross-jurisdictional placements by county departments with relatives through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). County departments manage the process for children/youth coming to Colorado from another state for non-certified kinship and kinship foster care. The county departments also manage ICPC for out-of-state placement of the children/youth the county departments are responsible for. DCW manages incoming residential requests from other states, as well as domestic foster care to adoption placements between another state and a licensed foster care child placement agency in Colorado. The state contracts with an approved entity per statute to manage the non-public intercountry and non-public adoptions through ICPC. For more information, see "Item 36. State

Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements" in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this CFSP.

An equity, diversity, and inclusion lens will be incorporated based on Colorado's experience, so that foster parents reflect the communities from which the children/youth are removed. This will include reviewing data regarding the amount of time in placement with kinship foster parents and non-certified kinship caregivers, and the length of time to permanency by race and ethnicity.

Recruitment and Retention

Colorado will increase messaging to encourage county departments and child placement agencies to apply for approval for designation as a treatment and/or therapeutic agency, to increase the number of treatment and therapeutic foster care homes. This will better support the needs of children/youth that do not qualify for residential services or to divert them from higher levels of care. System changes required in the Family First Prevention and Services Act, resulted in DCW requesting legislative approval and funding to develop state-contracted therapeutic and treatment foster care resources through requests for proposals to supplement the existing pool of these types of foster care homes. The contract process has also included a number of contracted respite beds for breaks for foster parents.

DCW facilitates a master trainer program for the Pressley Ridge Curriculum for treatment and therapeutic foster parents' intensive training needs. Please see "Item 28. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training" in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this CFSP for more information.

State Agency Supports

Two staff are employed at DCW to support recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents on a broader statewide basis. Staff will review county departments and child placement agency diligent recruitment plans to determine trends, recruited populations, and needs, based on the size of the agencies. Throughout the five-year plan, they will facilitate ongoing discussions, provide resources, and peer to peer networking opportunities through quarterly Recruitment and Retention meetings with county departments and CPAs and in other venues. The intent is to improve recruitment and retention strategies that meet the needs of agencies and the foster, kinship foster, and adoptive parents with consideration that adjustments may be needed. The staff directly participate in key recruitment activities with county departments, CPAs, and community organizations for events such as Juneteenth, Pridefest, Denver March Powwow, Cinco de Mayo, and the Pueblo Chile Fest.

The state recruitment and retention staff will organize an event with county departments and CPAs in 2025 to review and share promising recruitment and retention strategies/practices learned or achieved. They will also encourage and promote customer service strategies that foster, kinship foster, and adoptive parents, as well as non-certified kinship caregivers identify through surveys and/or other forums as meaningful and that add value. This may lead to adjusting and/or developing different approaches to retention and recruitment.

Please see Appendix E for the 2025-2029 Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan.

Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan

As discussed in the *Collaboration* section of this CFSP, DCW has launched two family voice initiatives, the Family Advisory Council and Reimagining Child Welfare to inform policy development and implementation across the state. These family voice initiatives focus on lessons learned from families and individuals with lived experiences in the child welfare system. Their insights are key to expanding understanding and informing strategies for improving behavioral, physical, and mental health care for children and youth in foster care across Colorado.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, DCW initiated virtual child welfare town halls that were utilized to bring county departments of human/social services together with DCW, community agency partners, and other stakeholders to discuss and work through different issues. Throughout the pandemic, these town halls became increasingly valuable to present information, engage invested community partners, and dialogue together on a variety of topics. These town halls now occur twice monthly virtually. The goal is to promote connections and resources, and will continue to incorporate important topics related to behavioral, physical, and mental health and well-being of children and youth whose families are involved in the child welfare system. These town halls are well attended and are recorded so that others not able to attend can view the previous town halls. Examples of recent topics include brain injury awareness; an overview of Pressley Ridge Treatment Foster Care; the intersection between child welfare and Medicaid; the NTDC final evaluation results (as Colorado was a pilot site); and the impacts of fentanyl.

Another recent town hall topic focused on Senate Bill 23-039[72] which became law and went into effect in January 2024 regarding county and criminal detention facilities' responsibilities for incarcerated parents involved in the child welfare system. This provides important considerations to Colorado's 2025-2029 Health Care Oversight and Coordination plan as DCW has begun training across the state in 2024 to various groups and county departments of health/social services on what is expected regarding keeping incarcerated parents involved in the medical decision-making of their children and youth, especially when those children or youth are in foster care. There are many aspects to implementing this new law in Colorado and an important opportunity for engaging parents to be informed and involved in the care of their children. DCW is supporting counties in understanding their roles and responsibilities in collaborating and connecting with incarcerated parents.

It is also important to note that Colorado has selected the NTDC as the preferred foster care curriculum for the state as Colorado was a successful pilot site. NTDC is trauma-informed to provide foster families with tools to help create a nurturing environment for children and youth in out-of-home foster care so each child or youth can have their behavioral, medical, developmental, and mental health care needs addressed to thrive. Likewise, Colorado has adopted Pressley

[72] https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-039

Ridge as the preferred curriculum to enhance and expand our placement services continuum with treatment foster care. Pressley Ridge curriculum is also trauma-informed and works to train foster parents to learn how to better meet the therapeutic care needs of children and youth while in out-of-home placement. These two preferred foster care curricula were in part chosen for Colorado to ensure a holistic, trauma-informed approach to training foster parents who play a critical role alongside parents, county departments, and treatment providers in ensuring accurate screenings and appropriate treatment. See “Staff Training” in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this CFSP for further information on NTDC and Pressley Ridge.

Please see Appendix F for the 2025-2029 Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan.

Disaster Plan

In consideration of leveraging Colorado’s Disaster Plan to advance equity in Colorado’s disaster response, CDHS has three family voice advisories/councils, two of which are overseen by the Division of Child Welfare, that works closely with DCW to better understand the needs of families impacted by the child welfare system from the perspective of those with lived experience. Recommendations and findings from the Family Voice Council (CDHS), the Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (DCW) and the Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee (DCW) will be used to continuously inform the development of plans, policies, and practices.

The Family First transition funds have also been used to enhance and expand the services continuum across underserved communities, which helps bolster resilience in times of disaster or state-wide emergencies. The time limited CAPTA ARPA funds have also been used to translate state forms into commonly spoken languages, to ensure equitable access across communities in Colorado.

As a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system, DCW held a joint Equity Convening in February 2024 with Colorado counties to bring consensus on EDI priorities, which includes more culturally responsive, language-accessible services for families, and reducing overrepresentation across all levels of child welfare involvement.

Please see Appendix G for the 2025-2029 Disaster Plan.

Training Plan

DCW is taking a new approach to developing training that meet the needs of the overall child welfare workforce and system. Over the years, DCW identified an opportunity to establish better alignment with the 64 counties that administer the directives for the goals and objectives of the state child welfare training program.

To achieve this alignment, DCW and CWTS representatives met with six regions of human services directors to gather feedback on the state of the Child Welfare Training System. As a

result of the feedback, CWTS implemented a hybrid fundamental training model to provide in-person training, to establish peer-to-peer connections and learning opportunities. DCW also convened a subgroup to establish a Code of Conduct for Colorado's child welfare workforce and make recommendations on Ethics Training. DCW is also collaborating with a facilitator from the University of Washington to facilitate discussions in redefining the goals and objectives of the training system and identify competency areas for the newly designed training areas. This includes a subgroup with representations from all 64 counties, members of the Training Steering Committee, CWTS, and DCW. Caseworker subgroups were also formed, representing caseworkers from all 64 counties with varying levels of experience, and caseworkers who were trained before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The caseworker competency/redesign workgroup goals are as follows:

a) Reach an alignment as to what competencies our training system should focus on
b) Redesign a Caseworker Fundamental Academy that is comprehensive and addresses the newly established competencies.

Please see Appendix D for the 2025-2029 Training Plan.